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[Book Review] *A Pocket Guide to Online Teaching: Translating the Evidence-Based Model Teaching Criteria*, by Aaron Richmond, Regan Gurung, and Guy Boysen

In March 2020, the academic world was turned upside down. Faculty across the country had to move their courses from traditional, face-to-face instruction to some version of emergency remote teaching (ERT) due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They were forced to realize that face-to-face teaching was not advisable. The transition to ERT was incredibly challenging for many faculty, as they had little to no training on the difference between typical classrooms and virtual classrooms. The confusion over what was happening was rampant. Many faculty and students often referred to ERT as online teaching. This misunderstanding has, in many cases, led to a disdain for online teaching and learning among faculty who believed that it is inferior to traditional teaching. However, good online instruction has been shown, repeatedly, to produce equal learning to face-to-face instruction (e.g., Means et al., 2013; Nilson and Goodson 2018). The key is, of course, good online instruction. And good online instruction is not emergency remote teaching.

In their book, *A Pocket Guide to Online Teaching: Translating the Evidence-Based Model Teaching Criteria*, Aaron Richmond, Regan Gurung, and Guy Boysen offer a framework for seeing the positive aspects of online teaching, setting up a strategy for strong online course development, and delivering it in a way that leads to excellent student learning. The book takes the position that while the adage “teaching is teaching” is, in fact, true, there are differences between strong face-to-face teaching and online teaching (not to mention ERT). In *A Pocket Guide*, the authors draw from the previously published work on Model Teaching Criteria (MTC), which was originally designed to support face-to-face teachers. The authors point out that to develop the MTC, they drew upon a great deal of research from reputable resources and engaged in the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) work themselves to demonstrate that the MTC captured behaviors consistent with excellent student learning outcomes.

The book heavily emphasizes SoTL research to illustrate main arguments. For example, in one chapter, there is a section entitled, “The Great Debate,” which describes the controversy over the use of synchronous versus asynchronous forms of presenting material. The important point discussed in this section is not that there is one easy answer, but the SoTL research seems to suggest that there are differences with regard to how effective the approaches are, and the authors refer to the body of research that has demonstrated these differences. The authors, all psychologists, have taken the time to review a great deal of SoTL research on the effectiveness of online teaching and have woven that into the book. Each argument they make about what to do and how to do it is couched in literature that supports the

approach they take. When unable to identify a superior approach, the authors discuss that as well. But they also talk about boundary conditions in which you might consider one approach over another. That makes the book both prescriptive and flexible, which is, in our opinion, a really nice feature.

In the early chapters, the authors correctly identify some really important issues to consider when teaching. In that section, they describe the use of student learning objectives (SLOs) as key indicators of how to structure courses. The SLOs drive conversation and assessing them allows both the faculty member and the students to know if they are making progress. The authors recommend that faculty put SLOs and assessments on the syllabus and in the LMS so students are keenly aware of both. Later chapters discuss student interactions with course content, other students, and the instructor. We believe effective online instruction includes humanization and student-centered pedagogy. The authors echo this by emphasizing the importance of course design, student learning experiences, and learning goals.

A Pocket Guide asks model teachers to be technologically competent. The question is, how can faculty develop the technological competence required to be effective in a new age of higher education? The authors of *A Pocket Guide* successfully simplify the objective. Whether the authors are discussing opportunities for interaction in the classroom or how good feedback is integral to relationship building, *A Pocket Guide* always alludes to technology as a potential tool and not a barrier. The point being, faculty who teach in an online environment can strive to be model teachers without dramatically changing their philosophy. There are resources available to faculty and this guide is an example of how faculty can take advantage of them.

Readers of *Teaching Learning & Inquiry* would find the book highly approachable, useful, and thoughtfully constructed. This is emphasized in each chapter by the following features designed to enhance readability and utility: short callouts within the text, black boxes that contain model online teaching hacks or #MoT, “Working Smarter” and “Worked Example” boxes that further expand on information by providing personal examples from the authors, chapter checklists for reader self-assessment, and lists of resources. The authors took great pains to ensure that any claim they made was based on data, and this guide was clearly written as a “how to” book.

In conclusion, *A Pocket Guide* is meant to contrast the differences between in-person and online teaching modalities. The authors support this message by highlighting the importance of equity in the online classroom through practical conclusions and evidence informed suggestions. Readers are reminded that teaching just for traditional students or the major demographic of the institution would be a mistake. Instead, model teachers recognize the importance of treating each student as an individual and learning how to celebrate the differences between them. As the landscape of higher education continues to shift and unearth the inequity in education, the authors emphasize the value of connection through sharing perspective. ERT has been a challenge, but *A Pocket Guide* can help make the change easier.

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