Ep. 055: New Student Technology Training

Podcast: https://ProDev.illinoisstate.edu/podcast/2019/ep055.shtml

We're excited to be joined by Stacy Ramsey, Associate Director for Enrollment Management at Illinois State, about a new program to help ease students into their complex digital life on campus.

Transcript

JIM:	Hi there, I'm Jim,
STACY:	Hi, I'm Stacy.
JIM:	Let's Talk Teaching.

[Music playing]

JIM:	Welcome to Let's Talk Teaching a podcast from the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology here at Illinois State University. I'm Jim Gee joining me today is a special guest, Stacey Ramsey. She's the Associate Director for enrollment management here at ISU. Stacey welcome.
STACY:	Thank you Jim.
JIM:	So, we've been talking about something in a committee. I know that probably doesn't sound real exciting to people listening, but it'll get better, trust me, talking about technology training for new students, and we're taking another swing at this, this semester here on campus. But it's been something that we've been talking about for a long time on campus and trying to figure out different ways of doing it. Isn't it?
STACY:	Right. We have had made several attempts of doing technology training over time. Some of it, way back when, was mandatory during Welcome Week. You had to sign up, as you know, as a class to go and do technology training. Some of it's been optional in labs across campus, but this approach is a new online module approach that we're taking for the fall 2019, and we've been talking about this for several years. Since we went live with the new student information system, about five years ago.
JIM:	Cool, and of course this spring you gathered some of us together to talk about doing this, and we had a survey of faculty members and some academic advisors, and one is a very small survey done very quickly because we were pressed for time. Do you remember what some of the things were, that they talked about, that are kind of pain points for students. That faculty members are saying that students, they think, they should know. How to do something but they're not able to do it?
STACY:	Yeah, in particular, you know, a little bit in general navigation with ReggieNet. How to maybe appropriately email a professor, and communicate with the press via email and general Word documents? A lot of students coming from high schools, now especially, you know, are familiar with Google Docs. So, they're not as familiar with the office suite technologies as we might expect them to be.

JIM: Right. Yeah.

STACY: So, in general and some of the advisors also had some comments about, you know, registration type items, navigating Campus Solutions, which is the part of this new student information system. So, we try to incorporate all the feedback that we got to make a good overview. Just brief tidbits about all things we could think of, and all the feedback that we got so that students would at least get an introduction to each of the pieces.

JIM: Yeah, and I think it's interesting how, just listening to all of the different pieces that you named, and I think one of the challenges to this is that from a student standpoint they don't differentiate between the pieces as much. They don't know what Campus Solutions is versus ReggieNet versus something else. There's all kind of one digital experience for them, right, that seems to be, like, one of the challenges that we also have to overcome as appreciate user interfaces and stuff more they're not really thinking about how the different pieces fit together.

STACY: Right, and in fact, in our survey and even through some of the feedback, we got in the survey everybody seems to feel that everything is ReggieNet. So, everything is called ReggieNet. SMI called ReggieNet. ReggieNet called ReggieNet. Emails called ReggieNet. everything is ReggieNet.

JIM: Right, so you know, we don't know if we've ever actually talked about it on the podcast. Come to think of it, there was a contest that was held when they were getting the new learning management system. For those, and we do have a lot of listeners who were not on campus. For those who are unfamiliar with ReggieNet, as a term, it is the learning management system on campus. So, it's the virtual classroom and learning space and so they, actually they, being some of my predecessors here at CTLT, I think held a contest among students to name it. Well, obviously, they did a good job because it's a pretty catchy name and it's become kind of a generic term like Kleenex or Xerox for the generic term for the product or whatever. So, and ironically enough, or appropriately enough. I guess I should probably say ReggieNet is going to be kind of the solution to help deliver this training. Right?

STACY: Yes, it's actually going to be a course that we're going to deliver in ReggieNet to all new students, so, new freshmen, new transfers, and new graduate students.

JIM: mm-hmm and, this is, this sounds pretty ambitious to me honestly and when I first kind of saw what they were looking to put together, and students don't have to sign up for this. This is something that will just appear for them in ReggieNet.

STACY: Yes, that's correct, so we will automatically assign them the course. They don't have to pay for the course. It is optional for them to take. It will be there as a resource for them beginning Welcome Week and throughout their first semester at Illinois State.

JIM: Yeah, it's pretty cool, and it's very self-paced so I think it will be interesting to see how they use it. There's a lesson on using ReggieNet, and there's a lesson on, as you said, all of these other different things. Getting their email and doing these different tasks. I will be interested to see how many of them kind of go through all of it. How many of

them come back very frequently and kind of pick and choose and maybe use it as more of an ala carte sort of learning experience.

STACY: I think it'll go either way. I think people may go in and do specific items and then there may be even some instructors who might want it to be part of their class instructions, so they may say "go out and complete the course", and at the end of the course there is a certificate that students could print and provide to their professors to show they completed the course. So, there's little quiz questions along the way it's interactive. It can be taken in short little lessons, or it can be all one setting all the way to the completion.

JIM: And as we're recording this, the semester is getting ready to get underway so we will link to, there'll be some online resources, kind of advertising this, and we'll link to some information for professors to actually direct their students to this and so maybe professors know a little bit more about what's in it, as well. So that's pretty exciting when we're talking about this sort of online training and these sorts of technical resources. I mean, you're an enrollment management, so obviously, we on this podcast, we talk a lot about the teaching side of things, but can you talk a little bit about the relationship between enrollment management, teaching in the overall mission of the university because I think this is a good example of kind of how that connects together?

STACY: Sure, you know, we bring in students who, you know... We have smart students who are coming in and ready and ambitious, and we want to make sure that we set them up for success, and I think them having to navigate all the technology on campus has been a struggle. And for retention purposes, as far as students persisting, and being able to move forward to graduation, starting off strong and setting them up for, you know... Here is the thing that you need to know to get started at Illinois State instead of having them struggle with how to navigate things. I think is going to help with retention. I think they're going to come in, they're going to at least have a resource that they can go to understand the different systems, and then they will be given resources. If they have questions or need additional assistance, that they can go seek out, we are also having, as part of this, we're having some open labs the first week of classes Monday through Thursday in Milner library third floor, and in the Julian Visor Center from 1:00 to 4:00. So, students can actually get on hands help with learning and navigating the systems and all of this, will hopefully help in their transition to Illinois State as new students. Instructors use ReggieNet and the different systems very uniquely, sometimes. So, it's not meant to replace those things it's just meant to kind of set them up for a good beginning. So that they are not so nervous and anxious about how to navigate technology when they arrive on campus and in the classroom.

JIM: Yeah. And concentrate on learning them.

STACY: Yeah, right, exactly.

JIM: So, they're not as worried about that. I think this will be something that faculty members will welcome and I'm sure we'll get feedback from them as well as from students on what can be changed and improved and stuff like that. I think it's

interesting how you pointed out, because we've often said, and I certainly, this comes up in discussions I have all the time about how instructors use ReggieNet differently. You know, we do an annual survey of students. We do one with faculty, as well. We do an annual survey of students who use ReggieNet and I think the number one thing they say nowadays is "I just wish you would make all professors use it". Well that's not going to happen because professors need the freedom to use the tools they think. You know, they should use… But also, be... "you should make them use it the same way", and That again, that's not going to happen either. You know, professors need that freedom, as well. So, I think what's interesting about this training is, it is very basic foundation area level. It's just enough to get them into the space. Whether we're talking about ReggieNet, or we're talking about office 365, or any other tools we have on campus. Just enough to get them in the space so they can start to poke around and figure out what they need to do.

STACY: Exactly.

JIM: Yeah, I think that's, I think, that's an interesting, a good approach, because otherwise... because so, when we say it's a course, it's not the equivalent of a three-credit hour course.

STACY: Oh no.

[laughter]

JIM: It's like a series of tutorials and stuff like that. So, this is exciting. I know that you kind of mention there's going to be a lot of other outreach. You have a week, you know, there's an audio podcast, we can't show it, but you have a pamphlet that our colleagues over at Administrative Technologies put together. It's kind of shaped like a smartphone and unfolds and stuff like that.

STACY: Yeah, anyway, that instructors and faculty would be able to help us reach out to students to let them know that these resources now exist. That would be excellent because we are doing quite a bit of marketing. We do have pamphlets that are going to be in residence hall rooms, they're going to be giving them out on a quad, they're going to be at a table during the Welcome Week picnic, with giveaways to prizes and...

JIM: Oh yeah, prizes.

STACY: That's right, there is going to be quite a bit of outreach, but anything that instructors and faculty can do to help, would be greatly appreciated.

JIM: Exactly, and so professors can feel comfortable that they can talk about this and it's not in a vacuum. That students should be getting this message. Especially new students to campus, we're talking about, should be getting this message from several different directions, hopefully. So, what's next with this project because this is just kind of the first step, right?

STACY: This is so, being that it's new, we will do an evaluation probably again with faculty, advisors, and students after our initial go live to see how they thought that the course

went. In fact, there's an actual evaluation in the assignments section of the course itself. So, students can take that after they're done with the course. But we'll be reaching out to get feedback, make improvements, and maybe even go, you know, since this is such a broad based, you know, get your feet wet type of course. We talked about maybe being able to provide modules later that went more in-depth on certain topics. So, where we see students may be struggling a little bit more. We can provide a more in-depth course that can get them a little more knowledgeable about certain things in certain areas that we feel like students are struggling with. So, I want to thank our committee and Administrative Technologies specifically for all their assistance with this project.

JIM: Oh, I think that's great. I'm glad you did that in fact we were talking today in our, we had, a meeting, right. We had a meeting this morning we, in the interest of full disclosure, we had a meeting about an hour and a half ago before we recorded this. Just kind of, putting kind, of the final plans in motion and whatnot and I commented then that I had conversations with some of the committee members. It has been, it has been, a really good example of how the different parties on campus, that all care about Student Success, can come? How they can come together and actually try to achieve something.

STACY: Exactly. It's been great and I loved working with everybody. What a collaborative team. Go Redbirds.

JIM: All right. Thank You Stacy.

STACY: Thank you.

JIM: and that's all the time we have for this episode of Let's Talk Teaching. Find out more about this initiative, and about our poky little podcast. Go to our website CTLT.IllinoisState.edu, look for the podcast link on the home page. For Stacy Ramsey, for all of my colleagues here at the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology, until we talk again, happy teaching.