July 29, 2016

Greetings!

This Monday, August 1st, will mark the launch of a new podcast – Leadinglines – that will deal with educational technology in higher education. The podcast will be made up of one-on-one interviews with leaders in the field of educational technology and will cover a broad range of topics. The podcast can be found at http://leadinglinespod.com/ and on twitter @leadinglinespod.

The first podcast will highlight a conversation between Vanderbilt's Director of the Center for Teaching, Derek Bruff, and George Siemans, the Executive Director of the Learning Innovation and Networked Knowledge Research Lab (LINK) at the University of Texas at Arlington (and a major theorist/writer on learning in digital environments who is credited as one of the inventors of MOOCs). Thereafter, Leadinglines will be "released" twice each month, featuring a variety of experts in educational technology both from Vanderbilt and other universities. The interviews will be conducted by a number of people, including members of Vanderbilt's Center for Teaching (CFT), the Vanderbilt Institute for Digital Learning (VIDL), the Central Library, and my own office.

While you will soon be able to see the full lineup of topics for the podcasts (and I am genuinely excited about the lineup we've built), I'm actually more impressed with a different aspect of this project – the collaboration that can occur between different offices that makes us more effective than we could be apart.

Here is the story of how this podcast got started: I was at a meeting during which members of VIDL, the Library, and the Center for Teaching were planning a series of presentations meant to inform Vanderbilt's faculty and staff of the different digital education resources on campus. While we were talking, I mentioned it might be a good idea to have a podcast to help us easily provide information to our faculty and staff without having to physically be in the room.

Hearing the word "podcast," I saw Derek Bruff's eyes light up, and he informed me that it had been a long-term goal of his to produce a podcast as a means to efficiently distribute information. However, with other work obligations, it was difficult to find time to also produce a podcast. Almost all at once, the entire room hit upon the idea of a shared venture – a podcast that would draw together our collective resources, talents, and interests.

Over the course of the previous academic year, members of each group met, argued over a format, figured out a name, agreed on a few shared questions, and designed an overall format for the podcast (honoring his long-term desire to have such a podcast, Derek Bruff will introduce each podcast regardless of who is doing the interview itself).

We agreed on resources that we could each contribute, including the purchase of new equipment by VIDL and awesome production work by the CFT's Rhett McDaniel. After dividing up tasks,

we began recording interviews—remotely and on campus—then turned the recordings over to Rhett, who produced the podcast itself.

I'm proud of this little venture. I think it allows Vanderbilt the chance to (A) show some of its strengths in educational technologies, while (B) positioning itself as a center for discussions about the future of educational technology. I'm also thrilled that we are doing this together, across a variety of campus offices. As is often noted, when we find ways to successfully collaborate, we can accomplish so much more than if we were alone.

I invite you to listen to Leadinglines on a regular basis. We have a lot of exciting interviews coming up in the first season. And as you listen, know that a large collective effort went into it.

John M. Sloop
Associate Provost for Digital Learning