Lighting Design Microcommunity

Context

The structure of the MFA in Stage Design program is sequential, and as such, there are limited opportunities for teaching situations where students in all three years of study are together. I wanted to address this by creating a "hook" to have regular interaction—outside of class—with me and among peers. Concurrent to that, I also wanted a digital repository for information and example files that are either not course specific or are applicable to all courses.

Project

I created a Canvas course site called Lighting Design Microcommunity that creates a virtual interaction space for the lighting design students and faculty. There is a Yellowdig board, which is great because it forces the social media interaction in the microcommunity to be focused on performance and design-related ideas.

Objectives & Outcomes

The project is still in rollout, so there is not enough data yet to determine whether there is an objective impact on student learning. Subjectively, however, it is clear that students are interacting via the Yellowdig board—and that that interaction is as focused as I want it to be. Also, they are accessing the reference materials housed on the site.

Results

I think the project has worked well insofar as there is now a vehicle for the kind of out-of-the-classroom learning I want to curate among my advisees. I have no idea how to assess as of yet; at this point I need to observe how the site is used for a quarter or so and then determine what works, what doesn't, etc.

Lessons Learned

A takeaway for me is that accessibility is all. Graduate students are busy, therefore the more accessible the resources, the more readily they will access them. This could include examples of the kind of documentation I want them to produce, or posting something to the Yellowdig board. So as I construct the back-end of the microcommunity, I need to be aware of that.

I wish that there were a way to incentivize interaction. Because this is tied neither to a class nor to a grade, I can't incentivize the students to interact in traditional ways. I need to think about that.