

THE 2017 GREAT ONLINE TEACHERS SEMINAR

LUTHERIDGE CONFERENCE CENTER, ASHEVILLE, NC – OCTOBER 12-15, 2017

GOTS.WORKS



Seminar Summary

*Submitted by Steve Smith
Seminar Conductor & GOTS Co-Founder*



Photo courtesy Andrew Smith – View from Pisgah Inn on the Blue Ridge Parkway, 11 OCT 2017

ABOUT THE SEMINAR

The 1st *Great Online Teachers Seminar* (GOTS) was held at the [Lutheridge Conference Center](#) in Arden, North Carolina just outside Asheville. GOTS was run as a self-supported event through [1st Person Seminars Higher Education Consulting, LLC](#) without any commercial or outside business vendors. The Coordinator/Conductor for the seminar was [Steve Smith](#).

SEMINAR LEADERS AND PARTICIPANTS

Steve Smith (1st Person Seminars) conducted the seminar assisted by GOTS Co-Founder Michelle Pacansky-Brock (@brocansky, [@ONE/Online Education Initiative](#), California Community College system). Experienced seminar staff included Kay Crouch (*Caldwell CC & TI - retired*), Chuck Bowling (*McDowell Technical CC*), Ellen Bland (*Central Carolina CC - retired*), and Andrew Smith (*who provided an informative, excellent NC craft beer tasting for interested participants!*).



DEMOGRAPHICS

Twenty-seven (27) faculty members & staff representing fourteen (12) community colleges and two (2) four-year universities participated in the seminar. The range of experience included first year faculty to those with over 30 years of online & F2F teaching experience. Disciplines from all multiple instructional were represented including Mathematics, English, OTA/PTA and SLPA, Biology, Drama, Nursing, Music, Kinesiology, Health Education, Faculty Development, Humanities, Psychology, Business Administration/Management, IT, Instructional Design, Art History, and Government.

COLLEGE REPRESENTATION

The following community colleges were represented at the seminar:

- Southeastern CC
- Wake Technical CC
- Caldwell CC & TI
- McDowell Tech
- Cape Fear CC
- Foothills CC (CA)
- Grand Rapids CC (MI)
- Appalachian State University
- Mott College (MI)
- Sandhills CC
- Forsyth Tech
- Cerritos CC (CA)
- Southern New Hampshire University
- Medicine Hat CC (Alberta, CA)

SCHEDULE AND ACTIVITIES

The inaugural GOTS opened Thursday evening with an introduction to the seminar history, purpose and philosophy. The significance and new aspect of online teaching as the seminar focus was introduced. The participants engaged in a sorting exercise designed to highlight social and experiential commonality avoiding mention of their college, discipline, and/or teaching field. This was followed by a more reflective activity that allowed participants to dedicate their week's work to a great teacher in their own life.



Friday morning was devoted to small group discussions of the innovation papers prepared by participants, and later that afternoon focused on discussions of the educational problems and problem solving. The “tricks of the trade” were presented in a large group session on Friday evening followed by a group closure activity.

Saturday morning the topics that were identified by seminar staff during the facilitated small group meetings were introduced to the entire seminar contingent. Participants reviewed the list of topics and voted on those they wished to discuss further. Relevant topics and selections that included topics such as student engagement, building community with voice/video, using soft skills, establishing meaningful relationships with students, PowerPoint “rehab”, online accessibility issues, group work, as well as several others.

The topic sessions were held in more traditional, conference –style sessions. Participants engaged in a positive, solutions-based discourse of teaching methods, strategies, and teaching innovations. Saturday afternoon was an opportunity for participants to individualize the seminar.

Saturday's evening session focused on three faculty who were new to online teaching. Participants shared their thoughts and advice for successful teaching and responded to questions from those new to classroom teaching.

Sunday morning closed the seminar with group presentations on understanding the nature of “The Great Online Teacher”—all of which were profound representations of the art and spirit of teaching. Certificates were awarded to participants in the infamous “*Great Teachers Graduation Ceremony*”! The final closing circle gave each person an opportunity to express what he or she was taking home from the seminar. In addition to the structured Seminar activities, participants found time to share ideas and thoughts during meals, early morning walks around the wooded grounds of Lutheridge and in late night discussions. Many participants stretched themselves through new activities of various kinds.

UNIQUE ASPECTS OF GOTS: HOW THIS SEMINAR WAS DIFFERENT

Normally the use of technology such as an LED projector, use of Wi-Fi during small groups & meeting times, and the encouraged use of computers & devices by participants is not found at a traditional Great Teachers Seminar. However, this seminar embraced the use of technology and, in fact, endeavored to demonstrate a multitude of instructional technologies for use in teaching & learning and in its design for participant preparation. The following is an edited excerpt from [Michelle’s Blog](#) and is a snapshot of her thoughts of the seminar several days after its conclusion. It also provides a nice overview of what faculty were expected to complete prior to the seminar.

Before the Event

I designed a resource site (using Google Sites and Docs) for the event that served multiple purposes. First, it included a pre-seminar module that participants completed prior to the event, preparing them for deeper engagement on-site, modeling the effective use of digital tools for learning, and engaging faculty in a student role.

To complete the pre-work, faculty clicked on the Google Docs that I shared with them. In the Docs, they contributed a summary of an online teaching problem, innovation, and a trick of the trade (a simple tip that other faculty can easily adopt). They also engaged in video reflections using FLIPGRID. These video exchanges enabled the participants to make important connections with their peers prior to the face-to-face meeting. Several participants noted that the Flipgrid interactions gave them a sense that they had already met their peers when they connected at the event the first day. Throughout the seminar, a simple, editable Google Doc served as the group’s collaborative notes, which accrued a list of tools, books, links to teaching examples and policies from other systems/colleges, as well as unanswered questions.

Now that the event is over, the site serves two ongoing purposes: it is a digital archive of the participants' contributions and a resource site to support the participants' ability to continue to learn from one another.

During Event

Great Teachers Seminars are like a glass bowl. The GOTS event provided a space for faculty to share and discuss problems and innovations from their classes. The facilitators spend time listening and identifying themes in the conversations, which are then used to develop breakout sessions for deeper dives. Sharing is the foundation. There are no experts. The agenda adapts as needed. Learning derives from the collective wisdom of the group. All ideas must be framed in a positive way. Laughter is frequent. Food is plentiful. Relationships and community flourish.

After the Event

There is a stronger affirmation that collaborative, face-to-face professional development events are key to supporting innovations in online teaching and learning. The trust, relationships, and community that are fostered through a Great Online Teachers Seminar provide institutions with opportunities to improve sharing and mentoring across a campus and across multiple institutions.

The 2018 GOTS is *tentatively* slated to be held in October @ Asheville, North Carolina and will be hosted by [1st Person Seminars Higher Education Consulting, LLC](#) in conjunction with [Highroad Professional Development, LLC](#) (Cedar City, Utah).