On March 12, 2020, Utah State University announced it would transition to remote course delivery starting Wednesday, March 18. While students, faculty and staff shifted away from in-person instruction, Utah State and its Uintah Basin campus was uniquely prepared to provide an uninterrupted educational experience as one of the nation’s long-time leaders in innovative online education, including what’s known as flipped-learning environments.

Flipped-learning is a teaching method in which students process new course material outside of the classroom, either through reading or video. Time in the classroom is spent understanding and applying the content through discussion or projects that actively engage teachers and students.

“My professor already practiced flipped-learning, so I was already getting good lectures from videos online,” said Julie Lyman, a graduate student working on her prerequisites for admission into a Physician’s Assistant program. “Dr. Christiansen was really supportive as I asked him questions all the time. I loved not going to class since time away from my family at night is one of the hardest things about going back to school. Having classes shift to online was the coolest thing ever so I could do my work whenever was convenient for me.”

Mike Christiansen, an associate professor in USU’s chemistry department, was prepared for the shift with his flipped-learning classroom and well-developed YouTube page with 28,000 subscribers even before the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to recording lectures for YouTube, he also has distributed “funny videos” for comic relief of his students. His channel is so successful, it’s helped students across the nation get into dental school. Even those not enrolled in his courses rely on his videos to better understand chemistry concepts.

Jake Richardson, a Uintah Basin graduate, explained, “My friends and I were reminiscing about the dental school application process and discussed how we prepared. One of my buddies mentioned he used the YouTube channel, and then six others chimed in and said the same!”

As Christiansen shifted his lectures to remote, he did not have to cancel a class. During his sabbatical in 2019 he published a fully online, digital textbook containing approximately 700-800 videos that aided the transition.

Christiansen and all of USU Uintah Basin’s professors are in constant contact with students whether it be via Canvas, e-mail or phone. Students in the student mentor programs are contacted bimonthly with e-mails just to check-in.

Lea Ann Jolley, an instructor at USU Uintah Basin who teaches Human Anatomy and Human Physiology, quickly shifted her labs to an online format. Using the video platform service Kaltura, she recorded and edited videos of dissections in order to deliver the lab component of her courses. As with many other faculty members, she shifted typical face-to-face office hours to a virtual format. She stays in touch with students through messages and announcements on Canvas.

Recent graduate Kai Rasmussen said the shift to remote “wasn’t much of an adjustment for me because I have taken online classes before. I felt that my professors handled it very well and were very understanding about the impacts this may have had on students. All my professors worked with me when it came to homework due dates and provided as much material and help as they could, and then some!”

With the shift to remote coursework, Rasmussen was able to support her children in their transition to online schoolwork.

With many disruptions from the coronavirus pandemic, it wasn’t perfect, but Utah State was able to mitigate some of its impacts to students and faculty with 25 years of experience in online innovation. For those interested in returning to school, new incoming students can jump start their online education with a free online course this summer. USU has also extended its freshman scholarship deadlines to June 1, 2020. For more information, visit uintahbasin.usu.edu.

1. Statewide Campuses Home
Also from Statewide Campuses

window.addEventListener('DOMContentLoaded', function()
{
  $('.embed-feed .card').each(function()
  {
    var link = $(this).find('a').attr('href');
    if (link.search(window.location) > -1)
    {
      $(this).closest('.col-md-4').remove();
    }
  });

  if ($('.embed-feed .card').length == 4)
  {
    $('.embed-feed .card').last().closest('.col-md-4').remove();
  } //

  $('#content > .row.justify-content-end').remove();
});