**Abby Ehlers:** Hi my name is Abby Ehlers and I’m a senior instructor in the hospitality and restaurant dept. here at MSU. And I wanted to visit with you today about a project I worked on with the people here at the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning. One of the courses that I teach is Intro to Food Preparation and it is a course that involves one hour lecture each week and then we have two two hour labs where the students go through the process of cooking and applying all the things they learned in the lecture. And I wanted to develop an online component to this course. There’s such an intense level of contact already with the students and my lecture was an 8 AM lecture on Monday mornings and obviously that is a rough time for students so one of my reasons for thinking about trying to do a blended course was to accommodate the students but in addition to that there is some much material that can be given to them that can prepare them for the labs and I didn’t always have time to get all of that done in my one hour lecture. And so I was looking for some methods to be able to introduce some additional information to give the students the opportunity to do a little bit of interactive work through simulations and so I decided that I would redesign the course to make it a blended course and had the great experience of working with the people here on campus.

And so a little bit about how I chose to redesign the course. I was looking for a variety of delivery methods. I did that because I think that in this day in age our students frankly become bored pretty quickly and so I wanted to not have only PowerPoint, I didn’t want to have just a dry lecture that was audio supported PowerPoint and I also was a little bit shy about doing it all as video. So I decided that I would do a variety of delivery methods incorporating all of those so I worked also with the textbook; they have an online component that I was able to use to good effect as well, although I must say that there were some challenges there and I was very grateful for the help of the staff here to help me negotiate my way through that because I really was brand new to the online component in that element of it. So as I was putting together these different components one thing I wanted to address was whether or not I was making sure that the students were indeed getting the content. If they are sitting in a classroom you have a general idea if they are awake at 8 am on a Monday that they have received a certain amount of the information or they at least know that you have delivered it. One of my concerns in putting together the online component was that the students maybe wouldn’t do the activities. They wouldn’t go to the textbook online component and do the simulations. So I worked to develop assessment components as well for each of the different delivery methods. A couple that I feel worked really well, once I started doing the video work, I found that to be more effective than I had thought. As I mentioned I was not sure about being on camera and doing things but that actually worked quite well. And I would encourage people to consider video. Your students I think get a little comfort level with you, because they are seeing you, they are not only hearing your voice but they are seeing you. I had a lot of positive feedback from my students regarding the video part. In particular I did some demonstration work in video and that was very effective, they were able to go back and look at those again if they were unsure about something. And then I had a variety of different assessment tools to just judge whether or not they were receiving the information and beginning to assimilate that, that they then would be able to apply it in their labs.
Another thing that was quite effective, I felt, were the audio assisted PowerPoints. I had not before used that, and I have started doing that a little bit in other classes, even classes that aren’t a blended class, per se, because there maybe are times when you have to be away for a conference and you have the information that you want to share with them, but I have really found that I’ve used it even more where it’s a challenging topic and I need to give the students a lot of background information and I want them to have that background so that when they come into the classroom, we’re able to then build on that foundation and move forward from that.

I have to be honest, in starting this project, I had some reservations, I was not convinced that just because we were using technology that students were going to get all of it, or there would be an understanding of the material delivered in that way. I’m not a particularly techno-person, and so I was a little uncomfortable at first with the delivery method, but I really found that the students responded well to it. I’m looking forward to continuing on with this, I really learned a lot as well as a faculty member. I had to look at my material and be very clear about what I wanted to deliver and how I wanted to deliver it. Because of course I’m not there in the classroom with the students and they are not able to ask questions immediately. From a faculty standpoint it is very effective because it makes you bead in on what it is that you are wanting to share with your students.

One of the new software programs that is available that I’m really excited to work with is called Soft Chalk and it’s a way for me to be able to build my own simulations for my students. I did have a little disappointment with some of the simulations in the book and so I had made some notes of ways I thought I could do that more effectively so I’m really looking forward to that. I also am excited because it interfaces with Blackboard and that was another challenge that I had with my specific textbook. The online component did not match so I encourage people if you are considering doing a blended course and you are going to use information online components with a textbook to ask that question whether or not as you run assessment as you do things, whether or not they are able to interface with Blackboard.

Overall, I have to say it was a remarkable experience for me. One that I feel was very positive for my personal growth, my professional development and I also believe it was a very effective method or methods of delivering content to students and I look forward to continuing to do that not only with this course, but with the other courses that I teach in my department. Thank you!