

Teaching Naked: How Moving Technology Out of Your College Classroom Will Improve Student Learning by José Antonio Bowen.

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Teaching Naked: How Moving Technology Out of Your College Classroom Will Improve Student Learning by José Antonio Bowen (review)

Julie E. Owen

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REVIEW

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

Reviewed by:

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Teaching Naked: How Moving Technology Out of Your College Classroom Will Improve Student Learning

José Antonio Bowen

San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2012, 352 pages, \$32.94 (soft cover)

How has technology changed the nature of community? What is the appropriate balance of humanity and technology? In *Teaching Naked*, author José Bowen explores ways technology can both enhance and detract from student learning. Drawing heavily on [Astin's *What Matters in College* \(1993\)](#), Bowen argues that student engagement and faculty-student interaction matter most in student learning. This is hardly news for many student affairs professionals, and is fortunately becoming common knowledge among faculty and academic administrators. This book is one of a cadre of recent publications focusing on e-learning. What distinguishes it is the author's attempts to integrate seemingly disparate fields of digital design, student development, the scholarship of teaching and learning, and higher education reform. While depth is sacrificed in places and the author risks antagonizing readers who might argue with some of his future forecasting, on the whole this book offers a provocative view of the future of the academy in an age of e-learning. Bowen wrestles with the seeming paradox that technology is among the most effective levers of student engagement and interaction, but is most powerful when used outside of the traditional classroom as a way to enhance "naked," nontechnological interaction with students inside the classroom. Technology, then, becomes a *technique* to support effective pedagogical practices, rather than a more wholesale *strategy* that changes the way learning occurs.

Teaching Naked is divided into three sections. Part One sets the scene of the new digital landscape in higher education (chapter 1), where e-learning is "the experience and the expectation" of entering students (p. 3). Bowen works valiantly to survey the scope and spread of e-learning initiatives. Drawing from examples as wide ranging as military training,

foreign language learning, religious credentialing, Google University, and Kahn academy, the author depicts the ubiquity of global demand for “cheap high-quality online education” to satiate a seemingly inexhaustible appetite for convenient and flexible learning (p. 9). Bowen examines current business models of higher education and interrogates assumptions about college costs, student debt, and the shifting marketplace for higher education. He likens university pricing schemes to that of wine pricing—where status and credentials are valued as highly as student learning, or wine taste to extend the metaphor. Rather than trying to compete in a fixed marketplace, Bowen argues that universities should instead focus on value creation which involves a return to the competencies of liberal education. The Association of American Colleges & Universities campaign, *Liberal Education and America’s Promise* (AACU, 2007), is one of but many cited reform reports that call for focusing less on content delivery and more on the development of intellectual curiosity, oral and written communication skills, information literacy, and civic capacity, among others. The ability of institutions of higher learning to respond to these seismic shifts will determine the fate of higher education.

In chapter 2, Bowen examines social proximity and the digital classroom. He argues **[End Page 751]** that “time for reflection and interaction is a casualty of the digital age, and that one of the primary goals of higher education should be to reclaim this time” (p. 27). He goes on to offer examples of how to use numerous digital platforms such as Facebook, twitter, Skype, to foster virtual and in-person communities. Pragmatic tips on classroom e-communications policies are offered. Bowen calls on educators to become “less oracle, more curator”—that is, to focus less on content delivery and more on learning design. Readers should critically question this idea that educators are now assemblers of knowledge rather than creators. Bowen acknowledges that this shift will likely result in more work for faculty and cautions that “social networks and e-communication will extended learning, but we will need to consider carefully how to create and perhaps teach new social boundaries” (p. 46).

In chapters 3 and 4, the author makes an extended case for adapting principles of video game design to the facilitation of active learning environments. He enumerates fifteen qualities of...

Book Reviews

REFERENCE

Thelin, J. R. (2011). *A history of American higher education* (2nd ed.). Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.



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Reviewed by Julie E. Owen,
George Mason University

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