

Attachment 4 – Statements from Current Students

A draft of the award application was sent to 34 honors students in the current Introductory Biology II (BISC208) course with an invitation to (1) comment on statements in the application, and (2) state how the course helped them learn and how they were transformed by it.

Dr. Hodson has truly enhanced the learning environment by incorporating Sakai into the daily routine. We can see lecture outlines on Sakai, view lab information, and Dr. Hodson even monitors a chat room the nights before tests to give live feed back while students study. There are many aspects that Dr. Hodson has used on Sakai that I did not know existed including the assignments where we submit a question about each chapter we read before class weekly. Dr. Hodson has also used Sakai to give help about how to perform functions on our computers for lab assignments. –D.F.

My idea of an ideal course design has some important requirements. First and foremost, it must be informative and thought-provoking, i.e. stimulating higher order thinking. It must also be engaging, so as not to drag on monotonously. And finally it must be highly organized and efficient. Professor Hodson's use of Sakai easily fulfills all three of these requirements.

When I come into class every Tuesday and Thursday, I can look at the projector and see a list of student-submitted questions via Sakai, including my own, relating to the topics to be covered that day. Immediately the class exceeds the normal linear lecture style of other classrooms. As I read down the list of questions, I am able to see others' thinking processes, become aware of concepts I overlooked in the chapter, and have a clear understanding of what Professor Hodson is referring to in his lecture. This is a thought-provoking environment. Our questions all help to build on the total class knowledge.

These questions also create an engaging class atmosphere. With student questions posted on the projector, we can have time to ponder them, and then can be ready when the Professor calls on one of us to expand the discussion. It is much easier to pay attention and be involved when you can see what topics are coming next.

Furthermore Professor Hodson's use of Sakai carries with it the utmost efficiency. This is seen most prominently in our labs. All of our lab data is compiled onto one computer, and uploaded to Sakai where we use it to make our lab reports, also submitted via Sakai. Everything is just right there on the website. There are no lost or disorganized papers. I can also easily compare my lab results to those of other groups. The efficiency here is top notch.

Professor Hodson's use of Sakai goes so much farther than what is just minimally required to run the course. It provides a thought-provoking classroom, it encourages engaging discussions, and it is highly efficient. –K.C.



After using Sakai for the past one and half semesters, I found it to be a very useful resource. Though many of my professors utilize it, Professor Hodson has been, by far, the most efficient user. This program has been helpful in Introductory Biology I and II; both semesters, Professor Hodson has found a variety of uses. For example, the weekly discussion questions we are required to submit not only force us to read the text in preparation for the lecture, but also give us the chance to ask questions about topics we find confusing or just want to know more about. I also really like the “resource” section. Professor Hodson is able to share helpful and pertinent material without wasting paper; though we need to read it, there’s no need to have a hard copy when it’s available on Sakai any time. The chat room feature is often used, in which we can ask questions of the class and the instructor even when we’re not in lecture. Overall, I’ve found Professor Hodson’s incorporation of Sakai to the course to be extremely valuable to my educational experience; it has definitely helped to provide a better connection between the class and the professor.

I know that, personally, after discussing things on Sakai (with chat room or even discussion questions), I'm more willing to discuss the material in class. With the discussion questions, like I said before, we have to look at the material. Even if it's a quick read and not outlining, when I go back to outline, it's something I'm somewhat familiar with. When you post the questions, it gives us points to focus on later when we want to study, and we are able to look for answers ourselves too, after discussing in class. Basically, what I'm trying to say is that it's been helpful for me to both prepare for lecture and study for quizzes after these discussions. –C.M.

Lecture: Using Sakai has helped make lectures more involved and interactive. By submitting questions online before class, we are prepared for class and are able to focus on concepts of a particular topic that we did not understand or want further explanation on. Further, we can ask questions that will challenge our peers to think outside of the textbook. I find this style of teaching very helpful because it allows us to gain a deeper insight on the information we are learning. For example, we can spend less time in class covering basic material that can be learned from reading the textbook and can spend more time focusing on outside information that contributes to a better understanding of the subject matter. Thus, questions help to distinguish what we've already learned from reading the textbook and how that knowledge can be further expanded. Lastly, we can go even further in our studies by reading the materials in the resource section on Sakai, which contain articles and scientific papers about the topic we are covering.

Laboratory: Using Sakai with lab is very useful, as resources, procedures, and data can be posted online for everyone to access. It is very helpful in writing a lab report to have an easy and organized way to access data. Further, the chat room, which is monitored at an announced time by our instructor, is a very effective tool in preparing for lab and analyzing data, as it allows us to get instant feedback to our questions. –M.S.

Regarding the use of discussion questions submitted via Sakai, I have found them to be an effective tool for learning the material. Not only do they force at least some basic understanding of the material before lecture, they cultivate thought about the information. Coming up with a discussion question makes one consider the chapter more thoroughly, and answering other students' questions during lecture causes one to have to access the knowledge they have about the subject. –L.M.

My utilization of Sakai has allowed me to bring my educational experience from the classroom to my own home. Prior to Sakai, I was accustomed to ending class and not having additional resources to further expand upon my knowledge base. Through Sakai, I have been able to review the educational media (videos, news articles, journals, etc.) that we viewed in class. The simple format of the website has kept me very well organized and aware of upcoming deadlines. In my Introductory to Biology course, we used Sakai efficiently for a variety of tasks. Discussion questions, extended assignments, and even labs were submitted electronically via Sakai. This environmental friendly method saved paper and was popular among my peers. Perhaps the most beneficial aspect of Sakai, in terms of our biology class, was the interaction between student and instructor. Through chat rooms, students were able to share ideas about various topics. In addition, they were able to ask clarifying questions about both lecture and text book content. Sakai provided a pathway for a more intimate discussion of biology between instructor and student. The announcements and messages sent by the instructor through Sakai helped students stay up to date with changes in lecture or lab schedule. Taken in totality, our use of Sakai not only transformed, but enriched my learning experience. –H.B.

One thing I find helpful in the use of Sakai is updating grades on a regular basis. Granted, we have a quiz every week so they go hand in hand but I like being able to go on and see what grade I got. Also, submission of short and long reports through Sakai is nice, especially receiving comments on them. Lastly, submitting questions and having the discussion based learning is effective but only when I have read the chapter(s) beforehand. If I haven't really studied the material yet it is hard to follow what is going on in class so this could either be a good thing or bad thing. It could be good in that it puts pressure on me to get my reading done ahead of time. The bad part of it is that when I don't get my reading done ahead of time, lecture is not very beneficial to me. –M.M.

The speed of communication with my professor has been sped up through the use of Sakai. As students, we do not have to worry about having unanswered questions pertaining to the course material because we submit any questions we have on Sakai. This allows our professor to know our trouble spots before the lecture so that he can emphasize their sections for the whole class. This method makes lecture more personal and interesting. –L.D.

