



# How instructional design was the key to Centennial College's education continuity during the pandemic.

**Centennial College** in Toronto, Ontario, is one of North America's leading providers of hospitality training. It boasts a world-class Culinary Arts Learning Lab, and its hands-on career training is second to none.

But when last year's COVID-19 lockdown hit, the College found itself with just weeks to translate its famously practical learning experiences into a digital medium before the start of semester.

"Our student population consisted largely of direct entrants, attending in person," said Michelle DeCoste, Dean of Centennial College's Centre for Part-time and Online Learning. What's more, half of the College's students originate from overseas. "As lockdown loomed, we needed to find ways to operationalise online. And fast."

The situation set in motion a wave of digital innovation for the College. At its heart, a digital curriculum created through tightly coordinated instructional design.

## The Brief

The College, which until then had limited online options, needed to create 44 high-quality, interactive online programs, requiring the development of approximately 400 courses that would offer students flexibility and assured revenue streams for the College.

When lockdown arrived, it had six weeks to migrate to distance teaching across seven facilities. Despite the time crunch and enormity of such a shift, the College was adamant no corners would be cut on quality.



**There were more than a few sleepless nights. However, it's a testimony to our partnership with Janison that we were able to achieve the seemingly impossible.**

**Jo Booth**  
Senior Manager, Part Time & Online Learning  
Centennial College



## 600 hours

of course material transitioned to a virtual learning environment with an estimated incremental growth of 1,223 learners



## 16 courses

fourteen-week courses delivered in six weeks



## 44 programs

Diploma, Advanced Diploma and Graduate Certificate Programs developed in 14 months and a 24% ROI upon launch



It set down three rules:

- Faculty subject matter experts (SMEs) were to be consulted and drivers of their own courses
- Content must be easily adaptable to the needs of each of the seven faculties involved
- With no available internal human resources, every project was to be full service, including multi-media instructional design, course building and integration with the College's learning management system (LMS), D2L Brightspace, a Janison partner.

### The Solution

Centennial College formally engaged Janison's instructional design team, owing to Janison's deep understanding of the online education space. Central to success would be the Janison team's ability to operate as a true extension of Centennial's, quickly assimilating college culture, objectives and knowledge.

### Winning teachers' confidence

There needed to be a huge effort upfront to understand how students learn online, and to imagine new ways for them to interact. The same applied to professors, many of whom were anxious about an entirely different teaching experience.

The Centennial project team placed a significant emphasis on change management, facilitating regular Zoom calls between SMEs and Janison designers. "This relationship, in particular the instructional designers' in-depth understanding of SMEs' anxiety and stress associated with unexpected change, was a huge factor in our ability to keep things moving forward," says Jo.

### Navigating the hands-on challenge

Representing hands-on experiences, such as

cooking and baking, in a remote format was a sizeable obstacle. The Janison team worked with Culinary Arts professors on digital experiences that provided equivalent value to in-person.

By summer, pandemic restrictions had eased partially so that SMEs were able to go on campus to record their own videos. "This is where we saw real creativity, in Master Chef-quality, highly engaging productions featuring well-known chefs," says Jo.

### The Result

Undoubtedly the big win was turnaround time. Both Michelle and Jo can still hardly believe that they were able to go from zero to fully online in six weeks with the first round of courses.

"Janison was exemplary in coming to the table with a willingness to deeply understand the various learning elements. They were 100 per cent there for our SMEs," Jo says.

It's down to the strength of this working relationship, which Jo describes as "open, honest and respectful on both sides" that 44 fourteen-week programs were delivered in a year of lockdown.

Centennial College was able to maintain continuity of enrolments throughout thanks to the online programs. Moreover, it achieved 24% ROI right out of the gate and is on track to achieve 100% over the next four years. Its domestic enrolment is steadily growing.

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