FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

Dr Kristy Grayson
Assistant Professor of Marketing and Marketing Program Director

DSU CENTER FOR TEACHING & LEARNING
Dr. Kristy Grayson, Assistant Professor of Marketing and Marketing Program Director has been at Dixie State University (DSU) for two years. She received her Doctor of Business Administration from Creighton University through a hybrid program that was delivered through seventy percent remote learning and thirty percent in-person residency.

Dr. Grayson has done an exemplary job of integrating remote learning in her courses when halfway through the spring semester, all classes were abruptly switched to an online format. Grayson is teaching Marketing Strategy, Consumer Behavior, Digital Promotions Management, Entrepreneurial Marketing, and a Marketing Practicum of 9 students who are working on unique marketing projects for local businesses. Each course is uniquely designed using pedagogy based on the skills that are required for students to transition into a career in the field of marketing.

Most of her courses have a blend of strategy development based on theory coupled with hands-on marketing applications. A few of the pedagogical strategies include: design thinking activities, interactive tool-kits, team activities, integrating actual business problems into projects and assignments, and obtaining marketable industry certificates.

In response to the transition to remote teaching, Dr. Grayson spoke about living in a world without walls. Businesses in global teams are spread throughout the world. Thus, working effectively in a virtual environment is a necessity for people. Now, more than ever, students need to learn to adapt to remote work situations. As part of her pedagogy, she hopes to provide students some exposure to how remote learning will enhance their ability to manage working remotely in their careers.
The courses are designed to use many remote learning tools, such as bite-size videos and knowledge-checks using quiz technology. Also, group discussion boards, idea sharing forums, team member reflection, peer feedback, and marketing software simulations designed for team learning that can be delivered in either virtual or in-person format. These technologies assist her by flipping traditional lectures outside of the classroom into smaller, manageable “chunks” of learning for students where engagement and knowledge may be assessed. She enjoys this format because it provides in-person class time for students to practice marketing applications that they will use in their careers. It also gives her, as an instructor, time to mentor and challenge students while they work in real-time. Although Grayson has incorporated many active learning strategies in a remote format, hands-on team learning in an isolated environment has been a challenge since moving to a remote format.

Most of her courses include one class period each week where hands-on group activities are delivered in-person to allow students to work on critical thinking and complex problem solving while experiencing the human joy and challenges that come with working in teams. These social interaction skills are necessary for students to be successful in the workplace. “This human connection is more challenging to capture in a remote format, yet I am up for the challenge of finding an innovative way to solve it moving forward.” She says this is an academic research problem that she plans on exploring this summer.
EXPERIENCE WITH REMOTE TEACHING:

In a circumstance that demands swift agility both from faculty and students, remote learning requires more than just a change in pedagogical design and new delivery channels. It requires a high degree of heart-work. Dr. Grayson shares: “Personally, heart-work has been the most challenging factor in moving to a remote environment. Software capabilities help to deliver content, creates a means of interactivity, and provides analytic tools to help understand gaps in student engagement. Still, faculty must get to the root of an individual student’s challenges, often before the student even recognizes their issue. This becomes the art of teaching the “whole person” in a virtual environment. In our current environment, most students are struggling with fear, uncertainty, and doubt, and many with time management and stress from losing a job. Some students are managing a home populated with children. They are attempting to navigate these challenges, all the while attempting to fit their learning into a new normal. Understanding these challenges creates an opportunity for faculty to innovate and pivot to a nontraditional delivery format using the traditional high touch communication model that many students crave from a traditional learning environment. Below is the formula that has worked for me.”

- Start every communication by letting students know you hope they are safe and well. This puts them at ease as they understand that you care about their well-being beyond the class.
- Thank students for their patience with faculty. Show students that we are human. We make mistakes.
- Be nimble and flexible; if something isn’t working for students, try something new.
Allow students to communicate in the means by which they are most comfortable. This includes text, phone call, email, chat, and virtual office hours using Zoom. Over-communicate the channels you have available to them. Even if they don’t use them, it’s a comforting safety net.

Know that our students care about us!

DR. GRAYSON’S METHODS WITH REMOTE TEACHING, IN HER OWN WORDS:

- **Benefits**

The benefits of teaching remotely include learning new technology, stretching myself to practice new ways of teaching, and connecting with students in a way that is comfortable for them.

- **Negatives**

I’ll be honest. Teaching remotely requires an enormous amount of time and emotional energy. Proactively managing communication and interaction is essential for student success, particularly for those who are not familiar with nontraditional teaching practices and for those who are hurting from personal challenges. Although teaching is never an eight 8 to 5 job, I’ve found it difficult to turn-off the role of instructor, advisor, and counselor over the past several weeks. A distinction between home and work life is blurred. I am working on balancing this challenge and a trusted group of colleagues who have been a fantastic support system.

FEEDBACK FROM DR. GRAYSON’S STUDENTS

“Thank you for checking in. I am doing better, but the past week has been really rough and forgot about the assignment. I am working on it now and will have it turned in soon. Thank you so much. You have no idea how much this message means to me.”

“Thank you very much for checking in on me! I haven’t mentioned it yet, but I really appreciate how you have handled things over the last few weeks! You are very kind and a great example of charity.”

“Thanks for being a great person. If you need ANYTHING, please let me know. Tips, connections, a great banana bread recipe, anything. If I remember right, you are relatively new here, and I don’t want you to feel or think you’re alone.”
Dr. Grayson has a passion for what she does and especially loves making a difference in student’s lives. She cares deeply about each of her students. “Students are amazing! They are adaptable and resilient. Overall, I believe that most students have adjusted well to remote learning, considering the circumstances. As I mentioned previously, many continue to be hurting emotionally. I’ve found that maintaining my focus on teaching the “whole person” and providing proactive communication has helped students adapt and cope.” Link to Video