

The One About Our Jobs

[00:00:00] **Becky:** Hi, I'm Becky

Wayne: I'm Wayne

Mandy: I'm Mandy,

this is the two year teaching and tech podcast. In each episode, we share tips and best practices for teaching in person and online as well as how to effectively use instructional technology. Today, we're going to be talking about our different roles in the teaching and learning and technology assistance centers.

Becky, do you want to give us a quick overview of what your role is?

Becky: Sure. I'll go ahead and start.

I'm an instructional designer and what an instructional designer does is evaluates different learning materials that come in , create educational content. So taking into consideration the different learning styles that are out there. And that are going to be consuming the information. I create content in the form of workshops or videos, podcasts, things like that.

I work with the content experts to relate it to whatever [00:01:00] course that they're using it for. I also review the current course content. And then I set up and recommend different improvements that they can do for their courses. I train faculty and staff on different learning theories on course design and coordinate the training for our faculty and staff.

And part of that is researching and implementing different innovative teaching and learning things. I also work with all incoming faculty, all new, full time and adjunct faculty. I work with them one-on-one to introduce them to our LMS and help them get their first course set up.

I teach a class to teach our new faculty how to teach at a community college. To go over our policies, how to design a course, how to set up a syllabus, meeting student needs, whatever is needed. I kind of help develop.

Mandy: Wayne, what do you do?

[00:02:00] **Wayne:** Well, I am an instructional technology specialist and that position at different places, sometimes it's called instructional technologist and other places it's instructional technology specialist. I don't think there's any difference between the titles. I don't think, I'm only one of them, so I guess I don't know what an instructional technologist does is.

they help to integrate technology into education, in any level of education. So they might work in elementary K-12 or higher ed. My primary job role and this pretty typical is as the

administrator of our learning management system. But then we also use other tools that integrate into that

as well as other tools that are completely outside of that. but always. Typically anyway, maybe not always, but yeah, typically software related. So like web 2.0 kinds of tools [00:03:00] or integrating a publisher, learning management systems and materials into our learning management system to give the students and the instructors more of a seamless experience, even though they have to deal with 20 different systems, I'm trying to keep them all in one place.

So I'm a software Wrangler, I guess it's kind of

like, I love that you might put that.

Mandy: Yeah, I like that software Wrangler.

My role is kind of weird. My title is the director of assessment and faculty development. I oversee the teaching and learning center. It's really Becky and I working together and collaborating on a lot of things. And then we collaborate with Wayne

I help navigate what's going on, on campus. I get to go to a lot of [00:04:00] meetings and I represent the teaching and learning center and that way I'm able to hear about what some of the needs are on campus, what some of the expectations are of faculty at the administrative level, and then Becky and I can work together to come up with

some ideas on what we need to do as far as offering training or support. And then we work with Wayne to figure out how to make all of that happen. Another kind of unique part of my role is that I'm also a faculty member. And so I'm able to come at some of our conversations from a faculty perspective. .

I've been teaching for, almost 17 years now. My background is English, but I've had quite a bit of experience with our e-learning team and working with [00:05:00] instructional technology too. I get to bridge the gap between faculty and administration. I feel like I'm more of a collaborator and supporter, and then you guys do more of the heavy lifting part.

I was hoping you guys could talk a little bit about how your roles both complement each other and then where they kind of overlap. So if that makes

Becky: sense. Yeah. No, that makes sense.

So how these roles compliment each other? One thing I can think of specifically, if I have a faculty member come to me and they want to know how to incorporate active learning in their classroom. What can they do? They have this project, but we need to move it to online. How can they get them to work together?

And so I can look at different learning theories. I can look at different ideas for activities. Just recently, one of the faculty members I've been [00:06:00] working with wanted to figure out a way to have their students present, but not just present a boring PowerPoint. So we were going over some different options.

And so we have together, we came up with some really great ideas, but then when it comes down to how to actually implement that, they've got to pick the technology. And so at this point, I would defer to Wayne on what do we already have available? And if he perhaps knows of one product, that's better than another, than another product, I consider myself pretty tech savvy, but Wayne is definitely leaps and bounds ahead of me in that. And so he, can kind of help direct me to what we can and can't use and what will and will not work within our system. Because I might come up with a great idea, but if it's not going to work in our learning management system, then Wayne sets me straight and I can do what I need to do to make some adjustments for that.

So there's a big complement for me that when it comes to [00:07:00] the actual use of the technology and different types of technology, we really do need to work together on that, on figuring out what do we want to do and how can we do it effectively.

Wayne: Yeah, a really good example of where I need Becky's help is that I have taught a tiny, little bit, not very much. I don't have much experience with teaching.

And some of those tools that, from a practical standpoint, actually using them, like grade books sometimes, baffle me, because everybody sets things up differently. And, and so for me looking at that, it's sometimes just like Greek, like actually I have no idea. Sometimes.

Yeah. And so, you know, being able to talk to someone who has worked with other people's grade books, as well as used one themselves, quite a bit more, things like that are, that's very, very helpful to me. And also just, when I find a cool tool, I don't necessarily [00:08:00] know if it would be beneficial to try to use on our campus.

And so that's where Becky and Mandy both are very helpful in being able to say yeah, that's awesome this is how I can see us using that or no, Wayne. That's that's horrible. Don't bring me that again. I'm just kidding.

Becky: I don't think we've ever done that. You know, where the grade book example is so funny because just yesterday, I was looking at because there are different ways to do grades and there are different reasons. Like on one you may want to do weighted, you may want to do points. Well, I was looking for a solution to just do kind of an incomplete, complete, or a meets or not meets.

And this is more for a workshop for my foundations course that I teach and I know what I want to do, but I do but I don't know how to make it, do it. And so that's where I went to Wayne and said, is this even possible? I want it to look like this. Can I do it? Because I just don't understand the technology [00:09:00] as well as he does.

Wayne: Well it's sometimes I feel a little bit like I'm like, you know how, there's been talk over the last decade or so of like doctor not wanting to tell you what you should do, but give you your options. Sometimes I feel a little bit like that, and here's some things you could use, which one might work best for you.

So I think we kind of did that with that scenario that you're talking about a little bit, like you could do this, you could do that. There's no perfect solution for the problem sometimes. We hope to find a perfect solution to these things, but that's not always possible.

Becky: So I think a lot of the times it depends on the, what the person who's going to be using.

It is most comfortable with. And so, I mean, there's another overlapping complimentary of the jobs is if I, if someone wants to do something, they come to me with a problem. And there's a couple different ways that we could handle that solution. And so figuring out which technology they're more, [00:10:00] most comfortable with, which will work the best by working with Wayne and then once.

We've picked that technology and we know how to use it. Then we can actually start incorporating those different aspects of actual content educational content into the courses.

Wayne: Hmm. I think a big part of that too, and finding new things is, that I try to keep an eye on is making sure that we don't have.

10 tools that do the similar things, you know, because kind of like you just mentioned Becky, sometimes it's finding and what works best for this instructor, but at the same time, we don't want to have five days different tools for, letting students record video for instance. And so we try to whittle that down to what is.

The most convenient, and seamless experience for everybody when we can. So I think that's a big part of the job also, and from what I've seen from other campuses that I've worked with, that's very similar [00:11:00] with regards to what I do, at their campuses.

Mandy: You brought up a couple of really good points. I really liked your analogy of how doctors are being less prescriptive and offering more recommendations, which that's a whole different thing, but

Wayne: not for this podcast,

Mandy: not for this podcast, but I do think it's really important though, because there are so many different ways that we can approach teaching and learning and that we can integrate technology.

I think it's more about helping people to think through what their needs are. And being able to give different options. I've really appreciated when I've needed help with something Wayne, and I've come to you and said, Hey, I want to do this thing. I know I've asked you questions about grade book things and rubrics.

I know what I want to do, but I don't know if it's possible or I don't really know how to set it up correctly. It's been really [00:12:00] helpful for me to be able to go to you and just say, here's what I want to do. Is this actually possible? And if so can you help me figure out what the appropriate settings are?

I've really appreciated that if you don't know the answer, and I know this goes for you too, Becky, that you will find it. So even if you don't have it right at your fingertips, you will research it and figure out what's going on. I think that's an important consideration too, is that you guys are experts in what you do, but that doesn't mean, you know, everything all the time.

I think that's a good thing for folks to remember is that if they come to you for help, then they know that. They're going to get help. It just might not be at that exact second because you might have to do some research. I know. Oh, it's so weird. You're just, you're not all knowing all the time, most of the, not all the time.

[00:13:00] **Becky:** Oh, I agree. And I think it's important to know, if we're talking about where, if a person, well, who do I talk to if I have a problem, and honestly, you can talk to either of us, we may not know the answer and we may send you to the other person, but feel free to get in contact with whoever to ask what direction to go.

I think for me, one of the biggest things is. Because I'm concentrating more on educational theory I just can't learn all the technology too. And so that's where Wayne has to come in. Wayne may not understand why would you use a weighted grade book versus a point based grade book or what, what is the difference?

But he knows how to set it up. I think people need to appreciate that we may not be the right person to talk to, but we'll help them find the right person. And also if it's a technical issue, if it's broken and it needs to be fixed, that's definitely more of a Wayne.

If it's a, "my students [00:14:00] are not engaged and they're bored," then that is more of a me, but then again, they come to me and I'm going to say, okay, well, let's do this now. Let's go talk to Wayne and find out which technology would be best to incorporate that into the course in the LMS.

Wayne: Sure. Yeah. I think, I think something that just came up with the whole pandemic is that, sometimes we have instructors who have only really ever taught face to face and maybe have used the technology that we've had for a long time. Maybe they haven't had a need to really dig into it much, but now they're trying to look at how to make that face to face course fully online.

I can think of at least once in the last couple of months that Becky and I planned a time to meet with an instructor specifically to kind of go over what he wants to do. And then we can help to decide how best for him to do that. So, as far as how our jobs kind of overlap, there are cases like that where they, it's, you know, at [00:15:00] the same time we're talking about what do you want to do?

Okay. Well, here's a way you could do that tech-wise.

Becky: And it's case intermingles. So we have to do, like I'll have a point and Wayne will have a point and then I'll have a point. So we have to do it together. It's not just, work 50% with me and then go work 50% with Wayne. It's a lot better just to have all the minds in the same

room at the same time, collaborating on whatever we're doing and getting that end product together.

Mandy: Definitely. I was thinking too, it would be good to make sure that people know that if they did need more comprehensive help, it would be a really good opportunity to just schedule a meeting with the two of you at the same time. So then you could all talk through what that person needs and then make a game plan.

Just like that example, you were just giving Wayne, that a person who's really unfamiliar with teaching online probably needs that kind of support from [00:16:00] both of you at the same time. So it isn't like they can only talk to one of you at a time or something.

Becky: Yeah.

Wayne: Right, right. Exactly.

Mandy: For sure.

Wayne: I was, I was kind of just thinking too that, you know, and this isn't meant to be a negative thing at all, but, yeah, preface it because it might sound that way.

It's not meant to be, but that people don't always know exactly what they need and so they don't necessarily, if they don't really know what they need then they don't know who's going to be able to help them with that. It's definitely not a bad thing. I mean, we would never look down on someone for coming to us with a problem that's not our area. We do everything we can to help everyone that we can.

Becky: Exactly. And I would just follow that with asking to have some kindness to us as we try to get you to the right person and don't be frustrated just because the first person you go to can't help you.

Appreciate that we're finding the right person for you and not just saying no and sending you on your way.

[00:17:00] **Wayne:** That I can, I can think of not saying it's never happened in the history of the world, but.

Becky: I think for the most part, people are pretty understanding when trying, they just want help and they just want to get to the right person.

So they're pretty good about starting somewhere and working their way to where they need. There may be times, so they've started with me and I have to send them to Wayne and Wayne helps them a little bit and then has to send them back, act me for the next step. It really is a back and forth with everything. And that overlap is just such a huge part of both of our jobs. Well, mine, at least, Wayne does a lot of other stuff that I've nothing to do with too.

Wayne: Yeah, I guess maybe that's important to mention is that at a small school, sometimes you have additional duties that aren't necessarily something you came into the job thinking you would be doing.

And that's not a bad thing either. It makes the job very interesting but I get to do a lot of other things. I didn't mention any of that at the beginning because that's not typically what an instructional technologist [00:18:00] is. But ,at a small, smaller, school, sometimes you just gotta jump up there and do what needs to be done if you're the person that can do it.

Mandy: You wear many, many hats, Wayne.

Wayne: Yeah, it reminds of that reminds me of a Shel Silverstein poem. Yeah, a lot of hats.

Mandy: I think that it's helpful to be able to talk about how there is this back and forth that people might need to expect when they are seeking help. I think we touched on this a little bit earlier, but if we were going to make a decision tree to help people figure out who to go to first, what would you suggest?

Wayne: That's a good question. Becky, you were kind of saying before that, if it involves, like how do I engage [00:19:00] learners, what can I do to better impact them, that kind of thing, anything related to how to get that knowledge into their minds that's, it's kind of you, right.

And as far as, how do I literally use the technology , not what technology might be best for this, but how do I use it? that ends up being me.

Becky: Right? Yeah.

Wayne: Did you have anything to add to that?

Becky: I think that it's probably the best way if it's, how does it work, goes to Wayne and if it's , how can I make my students know, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. How can I engage them if it's that? If it has to do with learning to learn, whatever that is, more me

Mandy: Perfect. All right, friends. That was great. Thanks so much for talking through your very, very important roles on our campus.

Wayne: That that was fun. I don't know. I don't know when I last [00:20:00] explained what I do. So that was fun.

Becky: Yeah. We should add that etcetera at the end of your job description.

Wayne: Yada yada, yada,

Mandy: Other duties as assigned.

Becky: Yes.

Mandy: Well, thank you friends. I hope that was helpful for our listeners. It was definitely helpful for me. And, I hope you guys have a great rest of your day.

Becky: Thank you,

you too. And we'll see you next time or hear you next time. Bye.

Bye.