

**JOEL**

Initially, the course was taught in a more or less conventional manner where Blade

**SCHINDALL:**

and I did the teaching, and we had one teaching assistant who was actually someone that Blade new from Tufts University who came in and helped the students with some of the technical issues in the design problems.

But after the first term, some of the students volunteered to be teaching assistants the following term. And they brought a whole new dimension to the teaching of the course, because the students were encouraged to--

The students don't do their homework during class, they do it typically at 10:00 PM or 2:00 AM or 4:00 AM, any time of the day or night. And it's frustrating to run into an obstacle and not be able to get an answer to your question. So we established a website where the students can go to it and ask their question. And we have three or four teaching assistants who are monitoring that website 24/7. Literally 24/7.

And it's fun to watch the dialogue because you'll often-- at 2:00 AM a question will come in. One of the students will say, well, Jim is best equipped to answer this question, but he's sleeping now. I'm going to give you an initial answer. And about 5:00 or 6:00 in the morning, Jim will get back on and give you the rest of the answer.

We have probably, over the course of the term, at least 1,000 question-answer exchanges that take place. The students who evaluate the course often give perfect scores of seven to the teaching assistants. A little bit humbling for us and the faculty who are getting good scores-- 6.1, 6.2-- but the teaching assistants get the best scores because they're actually one-on-one guiding the students through a problem.

And they're doing it very much from the student's perspective, because this is the same problem that they had to deal with the previous year so they know what questions to ask. They phrase their answers so eloquently. You know, today's younger generation is accustomed to electronic tools, to chatting, you know, to

social media, and they have a very nice deferential and yet effective style of interacting with this communication.