Innovative eLearning Practices for Online Geoscience Education

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With the rapid advances in technology, and universally accessible high speed internet, online education is becoming an increasing part of the global education system. The online course is adding a different approach to how students learn and improve the learning process using innovative technological tools that promote interaction with instructors and course content. The learning tools may be the type of tools that students will be forced to use as they leave Higher Education (H.E.) and proceed to a work environment.

In Toronto, Canada, York University is undertaking a three year study to survey students in first year general education science classes including several courses with earth/planetary science themes. The objective of this study is to determine how best online course content and instructor interaction can be provided to H.E. students.

Selected results from the first year of this three year project will be presented. Surveys undertaken to date address the demographics of the student population taking the online course, their reasons for taking the course and their experiences and expectations of the elements within the course. The result of these surveys will help to better inform online instructors with respect to the type of students who take online courses, help them better design such courses to meet the needs of these students and help them prepare students to enter a society that is so increasingly technologically based.