

Bonni: [00:00:00] Today on episode number 191 of the Teaching in Higher Ed podcast, Ric Montelongo describes how he creates immersive learning experiences in the online classroom.

Production Credit: [00:00:15] Produced by Innovate Learning, maximizing human potential.

Bonni: [00:00:26] Welcome to this episode of Teaching in Higher Ed. I'm Bonnie Stachowiak and this is a space where we explore the art and science of being more effective at facilitating learning. We also share ways to improve our personal productivity so we can have more peace in our lives and be even more present for our students.

Bonni: [00:00:52] Ric Montelongo is today's guest and he is an Assistant Professor of Higher Education Administration at Sam Houston State University. Ric received his Ph.D. in higher education from Indiana University and an M.S. in Student Affairs Administration and a B.S. in Psychology, both from Texas ANM University. His primary research interests include educational outcomes associated with college student involvement, factors influencing involvement in extracurricular activities, and impact of Latina, Latino, Latinx college student organizations on members. Additional research areas include diversity issues in higher education administration, college campus environments, and online in higher education. Ric, welcome to Teaching in Higher Ed.

Ric: [00:01:48] Hello. I am glad to be here.

Bonni: [00:01:50] I am excited to be talking to you today. And we're going to start out with something that I know is very exhilarating for you. Tell us about your love of roller coasters.

Ric: [00:02:02] I knew you're going to start with that. It's funny that you're asking about my love of roller coasters because even up until high school, I was really afraid of them. Somewhere between high school and I guess my undergraduate

years, I started loving roller coasters. And I think the thing that fascinates me about them is I've always had like a science background. At one point of my undergraduate career I was a meteorology major.

Ric: [00:02:31] And so I have a fascination with science and especially physics and the way things move and weather and in this case, roller coasters. So I look at roller coasters more like how do they do that? And how fast they go. And ever since I had that fascination it kind of broke that barrier of being scared of them, to the point where now it's like the bigger, the higher, the bigger, the steeper they are the more likely I would ride them.

Ric: [00:03:02] For me, it's the adrenaline rush and just being in awe of the engineering and everything that's behind them. So I'm probably going on too much right now. You can tell how excited I get just talking about roller coasters.

Bonni: [00:03:17] Well one of the things that was fascinating to me is just how that actually has informed some of your teaching. Stacey Jacob, a former guest of the podcast, introduced me to you and your work. And as soon as I read your description I thought "OK we've got to get this guy." Tell us now, how does your love of roller coasters connect with your love of the GoPro type cameras. I know GoPro is a brand name, but these smaller I forget- What do you call them? What's the generic way?

Ric: [00:03:52] Point of view action camera.

Bonni: [00:03:53] Yeah. So tell us then how does the point of view action camera come into your love of roller coasters? We'll finish this train of thought within bringing in your love of teaching.

Ric: [00:04:02] Yeah. So what I usually do when I'm taking a break from grading or developing lectures is I take roller coaster breaks and I go on the internet and watch you know point of view rides on my favorite coasters.

Ric: [00:04:18] And I started to notice that some of these videos have a point of view action cameras, such as GoPro cameras, that the rider videotapes the entire length of the ride from the point that they go through the cue all the way to the end of the ride. And when I started to notice that when I'm doing my roller coaster video watching that idea hit me about, I get excited watching these videos. Can I do the same thing and teaching in my online courses? And that's where the idea developed, by watching roller coaster videos.

Bonni: [00:04:57] One of the things that's so powerful about these point of view cameras is that it really does shift our perspective. My parents train their dogs to be search and rescue dogs. And they have attached these kinds of cameras to the dogs. And then it just helps in the training process to be able to really get in the mind's eye of the dog and what it might have been thinking and why. Because of course they're following the scent, and why they may have gotten off the scent for one reason or another. I mean it really just does help you put yourself in another person's shoes to a much better degree than if you were just to film from a normal angle. And I'd love to hear a little bit now about your visit to a nearby historical black college and university and how you made use of the technology for that visit.

Ric: [00:05:50] Yes. And again, the idea came just let me try this out and let me see if it can work. And so at that time where I was experimenting with using this point of view camera, I was teaching a leadership in higher education class. And one of the components that I developed for the class was I wanted to blend in leadership that minority serving institutions especially at HBCU's. And so they again using the idea, I wanted to- I went in wanting to just video the campus and whatnot. When the idea of using a point of view action camera came to my head, I started thinking well let me try to totally immerse the student in my visit to the HBCU. And so what I did was I actually use the the action camera for a recorded interview with the president of that HBCU. I used the small camera to drive around the neighborhood to have the students actually see what the surrounding neighborhood looked like because the neighborhood has those really interesting partnership with the HBCU.

Ric: [00:07:09] What was interesting was that the videos are supplemented by some readings and some local newspaper articles. And one of the articles that the students read mentioned how the surrounding community was very impoverished with boarded up houses and stuff. Well that was part of the reading, but my video showed what I would term a working class neighborhood. I mean there were manicured lawns and things like that. I had the students say OK you read this, but what do you see in this video that I provided to you with regard to how the neighborhoods described? So there was a little disconnection there because the students were saying well we didn't see that in your video and I was like uh huh. But to go the GoPro camera has this wide angle perspective.

Ric: [00:07:57] And so when you watch the video it's almost like you're much like riding the roller coaster. You were in my pickup truck driving around the neighborhood. When I was interviewing the HBCU president, you rarely saw me

on camera. I had the GoPro facing the president and when I asked the question that was developed by the students, I had this sheet of paper with their pictures on it.

Ric: [00:08:23] And so if Joe Smith or Susie Smith had a question. I would say ok the next question is from Susie Smith and I moved the camera to her picture and then I pointed it back to the president. And honestly that was done an accident because when I was using the camera when I had to read the student's question and so I had to turn and when I turned my arm was bending a little. And so when I saw the final video I was like oh my gosh the students are actually seeing their faces. And it's almost like they were asking the question. But that was done by total accident.

Ric: [00:09:04] And we also took a campus tour of the university. And so what I found out was since the cameras so small, I started noticing that in retrospect, there was a lot of interesting teaching pedagogical things that I started to notice. Like I just gave that example. I was just moving the camera because I needed to read the question. The students interpreted that as oh I like how you made the camera show our picture. It was almost like we were asking the question in you were our voice. Even the president of the HBCU was fascinated by my use of the camera to the point where he took a picture of it on a smartphone and he wanted to go and shop around for some. So a lot of things just occurred by accident. But I started noticing that there were some interesting teaching strategies and pedagogical things that I started saying wow, what more can I do with this?

Bonni: [00:10:05] Whenever we start experimenting like that in our teaching, we really can come across these happy accidents and without the experimentation that never would have been able to happen. And yet we also have the not so happy accidents. What are some challenges that you ran into in this process? And especially this desire that you had to make the content as authentic as possible, to feel like I am with you visiting this piece to you. What were some ways where it didn't work out the way you wanted it to and you either had to redo something or edit a lot or just hard to make it more like you really had envisioned?

Ric: [00:10:44] One of the things that I noticed right away was I was- you have to be familiar with the action camera and whatever brand you use because they're all different. And what I found with the action point of view action camera that I used was that it was very sensitive with audio. For example, I took a campus tour and part of the tour was a student leader took me on her golf

cart. While I was recording, little did I know that the camera had such a good Mic to it that when we were driving she was driving a little fast on the golf cart. It was hard to understand what she was saying because all you heard was the wind. Some of the challenges also is when you have the final product, when you have to work with the video files, you want to make sure that there's good video support that is at your campus or organization. Because luckily, fortunately, for my institution, we have a really good production crew that loves to work with those challenges.

Ric: [00:11:51] Some files came in a little wonky I guess for whatever reason. But they were able to troubleshoot it. But on my end, if I would have it done stuff by myself, it probably would've taken a lot of effort and time on my end. So just to make sure that if you experiment that you also look at what support your institutional organization has to help you out.

Bonni: [00:12:17] That's a really good point. And most people would know this, but just in case we have some people that are more of a beginner on this type of thing, if someone had footage like that that where the audio just wasn't clear enough, but you really liked the way the visual work of going on this golf cart and actually seen around the campus. Then of course you could add an audio track so you could take out the audio track that was garbled from the golf cart and the wind.

Bonni: [00:12:47] And then you could add in yourself or even some of your students narrating that portion of it. Or worse comes to worse. Many times people are willing to come back and help you fix whatever error you've made. I have- I guess I'm embarrassed, but I guess I should be happy this only happened once but I did have a time when a file just completely was gone. I had inadvertently deleted it off of our SD card, not realizing it was not on our computer and that podcast guest was willing to come back and re-record the interview.

Bonni: [00:13:18] I was so embarrassed. Especially it had to be someone from the Middle East, it couldn't have been someone in the same time zone as me or something like that. But a lot of times people really are willing to help you out, just to fine tune it to get it to where you want to because they want it to look great too and and represent the institution well. So there's lots of options for us when we do these experiments and they don't go the way we want them to.

Ric: [00:13:40] Yeah. The thing I found out was the use of these cameras is I would term it is very innovative because you know when I share my ideas most

like to you you know there's a definite interest because we haven't really used them as much in this format. And so what I'm finding out is as I continue to use these action cameras in my courses to be a little proactive and sort of what could happen.

Ric: [00:14:09] Another challenge I forgot to mention was the camera is only charge up for a length of time. And so in my HBCU visit, guess what. The camera ran out of battery juice. And so what I did was I actually started recording on my smartphone. And so, my final product had a combination of GoPro footage and smartphone footage that the production team merged together. And so it didn't eliminate the experience, because I think the students were still in that mindframe of I am in the setting. And again, I didn't put myself in a lot of these videos, you heard my voice but a lot of it was just me pretending like I'm you know showing through the eyes of everyone.

Bonni: [00:14:59] Talk a bit about how you addressed issues of privacy.

Ric: [00:15:05] That is an important topic and I'm glad you're bringing that up. One of the things that I wanted to make sure prior to going to the campus was pulmonary early communication with the campus I was visiting. I let them know that I was bringing this action camera with me and that I wanted to also take a campus tour, would it be OK to record using this camera? They were pretty open, at least this specific campus were just like they wanted to showcase their students and their leadership and whatnot. But on my end, I was very mindful. OK I'm going to talk to someone that was a part of my itinerary before I even recorded, I was going to ask them is it OK? And even after that fact, I was going to check with the campus.

Ric: [00:15:56] Fortunately for me, that didn't occur too much. I was assigned one student. That was my host throughout the whole day. The people that that person had me interact with were aware of my purpose on campus. The only time that I had to ask is it okay was there was a student worker working in a greenhouse on the campus farm and the young lady who was to give me the tour interacted with him because they were friends and I asked them, I'm recording then after I was like do you mind? He was like go ahead it's fine.

Ric: [00:16:30] But yeah if there were any other faces either blurring them out or making sure that they were aware that they were being recorded or another organization or institution. I would say if you're going to go this route for instruction to be very mindful of the privacy. Not everyone likes being recorded. I know we live in a day and age of smartphones and stuff. But just be respectful

not only students but also staff and faculty. If they're OK, then I would double check just to make sure that they're OK with other folks seeing their faces and then just reassuring them that- like I uploaded my videos to YouTube on my channel but they are unlisted so only the students that had the link can view it. And so just was just an additional layer of privacy.

Bonni: [00:17:26] I think it's worth reviewing those. I know I've mentioned the three ways you can post videos on YouTube previously, but it's always worth revisiting. So I can put a video on YouTube and it becomes a part of my channel. And so anyone who would come visit my channel would see these videos. Or as you mentioned, the one I almost you know 90 percent of the time go for is unlisted. It's a part of a class, I don't necessarily want it as a part of my channel, it doesn't have to do with the broader reasons I might be posting things on YouTube.

Bonni: [00:17:59] But it's specific to a class and so it's unlisted such that if you came into my channel you don't see it. If you search on YouTube, you will not find it. But it doesn't have any kind of a password associated with it such that when I embed it on the Learning Management System or somewhere that it's not going to be inconvenient for someone to try to watch it.

Bonni: [00:18:21] The last one, the last option, I don't use very often but I find people use it actually too often is the private option. And that's where you get into issues of them having to have a password and it just makes things not anywhere near as easy for people to be able to access the content. So I think it's worth posting that little tidbit of information if people want to try this. I always find unlisted is a really good option for people.

Ric: [00:18:46] In all my videos that I produce using the action camera and anything related to my online classes that use YouTube as a viewing platform is always unlisted.

Bonni: [00:19:00] It's also good practice to ask whether it's your marketing department in smaller institutions or someone within your school or department if there is a template to use for a video release form, especially if you're going to do a formal interview. It's worth having someone sign it. I changed how I do the podcast that way. And actually Ric, already know this, where I make sure that people understand the kind of license that I use for the podcast.

Bonni: [00:19:24] And in my case it's a creative commons license that is very open so other institutions can use clips of the podcast, they don't have to ask me for permission. It's possible but I just like people to understand you know this is

how your interview will be shared and that people agree that they understand that in advance I just think it's always a good practice to have that.

Bonni: [00:19:45] I would love to hear a little bit about the other examples that you've come across of people using these kinds of cameras in their teaching. And there was one that you had from CBS this morning and it was a Google virtual reality tour of a museum would you talk a little bit that one or any other ones that you want to share as examples too.

Ric: [00:20:07] You know these ideas come from me watching- Staying on top of technology trends especially technology trends and how they're being implemented in the classroom and in education. And so one of the vivid examples, I think I shared a piece with you, is in fact around this time last year, I saw a news story where there was a first grade or maybe even kindergarten classroom where students were using I believe it's called google box. It's like a very inexpensive version of the VR glasses that you can now buy for like 20 bucks now. And so it was fascinating to see these young students, these young learners all wearing these VR headsets and they were walking around their classroom. But the fascinating thing was that the story showed what they were watching and they were watching a tour of an art museum in Europe. On the news story you saw how the students could manipulate their viewing perspective, seeing you know the different pieces of art and stuff. And then they showed the classroom and they showed all these little kids just like walking around holding their VR headsets. It was just really interesting to see. And so that part of me again just fascinated me but it also reminded me that these are going to be my students in 18 20 years from now.

Ric: [00:21:43] Hopefully I'll still be teaching and on this Earth then. If we don't keep up with that, then we're going to be you know really trying to struggle how to teach these new learners. And another example that I had experimented with is called 360 view videos and there are cameras and that will allow you to do 360 viewing perspective where students can actually manipulate the video to where they can move like a cursor on the video and they can't just it's almost like Google 360 view that some of you may be familiar with. You can actually make a video where when you're talking. The students can actually manipulate while they're viewing your video. Again, I was fascinated by seeing that again on the news and how it was being developed. And so when I came back to my campus after last year's holiday break, I talked to my production person, my contact and I said I saw this thing about 360 video cameras. Have you heard anything?

Ric: [00:22:51] And right away, within five minutes he emailed me back and was like "omg we just got a camera, we are playing with it." Long story short, I'm just very open to playing and experimenting with this technology because I'm an online instructor for graduate classes and I want to stay, I want to do my best to stay two steps ahead. And so we, a long story short, we used this camera for a doctoral class, a Face-To-Face doctoral class on leadership.

Ric: [00:23:24] And this time I used it to talk about the concept of adaptive leadership where say like for example, a natural disaster occurs at an institution. How does leadership adapt to that challenge? So I used that 360 camera to visit an institution that dealt with the hurricane here on the Gulf Coast. When I visited the campus, I walked around campus but I told my students "OK if you look behind me you will see the port of Galveston." But I kept the camera in front of me.

Ric: [00:24:01] That was my cue for students to change the perspective. I would say that technology is very challenging, it's very difficult especially on the production end. My lecture was two weeks late because of that challenge.

Ric: [00:24:21] There was some getting used to by viewing that lecture. And interesting enough one student mentioned that she got motion sickness because that's how immersive that experience can be. But they were very receptive and like "hey you know it was kind of cool that while you were talking, we could move the camera to go look at the building next to you. And still return back to you." So that's where we're going, I think, especially with online education.

Bonni: [00:24:52] I just love that creative of an example. I don't know if you know this because I don't think I shared it with you, but my background is in organizational leadership, that's what my doctorate is in. And I would never think of that just because I would hear about the 360 and I would think well you know our content is mostly just straight on.

Bonni: [00:25:11] I couldn't even envision how you might use that and I just love how creative your mind is in exploring the possibilities you hear that something's out there and then you've got this colleague or probably more than one colleague that you can brainstorm with how you might bring it into your teaching. It's just wonderful.

Ric: [00:25:27] Yeah and I think that's the cool thing, this technology just isn't limited to online classes. Like I said this adaptive leadership lesson was done for

Face-To-Face doctoral class. I think with this technology, especially what the point of view action camera and the 365 fly cameras, you can't just really be creative with how you want to deliver information because you know one thing about these cameras is they're so tiny they're so small.

Ric: [00:25:58] The 360 camera with the things that it did, believe it or not that camera was just the size of a golf ball. So when you have technology that's that tiny that can do so much. That's where you can really tell yourself OK as an instructor how can I use those to blow my students minds. I found for that semester, using it for leadership class where it gave me some good opportunities.

Ric: [00:26:33] This semester I'm teaching leadership. I plan to visit a Hispanic serving institution that is located literally on the border. And so I want to use my go pro camera to visit this institution to talk about leadership in this current climate where, I don't want to get political, but we all know when you're talking about border, the issues that come when this institution literally its grounds go to the Mexican and U.S. border.

Ric: [00:27:07] And so I just want you to know that that's you know down the road from me. And by using a GoPro camera to immerse the students in that environment while we're talking about leadership in this current age of higher education leadership.

Bonni: [00:27:24] Before we go on to the recommendations, you were so generous in providing me with many links and I don't want to go past this without caring about this resource unless it is your recommendation. But should we talk about Salsa, Soul, and Spirit: Leadership for a Multicultural Age now or is that what you plan on recommending later.

Ric: [00:27:44] Oh we could talk about it now. That's a really great discovery I made as an instructor for this class and it really shapes how I teach leadership so much to the point where yeah I'm using the go action cameras pointed action cameras to have students learn a little bit more about multicultural leadership.

Bonni: [00:28:08] That sounds like a wonderful book. And all of these links will be in the show notes for people at teachinginhigher.com/191. And this is the point in the show where we each get to give our recommendations. And I wanted to talk a little bit about FlipGrid and officially recommend it, I've actually shared on recent episodes about my use of it.

Bonni: [00:28:29] I used it this past semester with undergraduates and most of the students in that class would have been somewhere around 20 and some of our juniors and seniors maybe as old as 25. And then I also used it with my doctoral students which of course are, in most cases, not all, but in most cases quite a bit older than that. It was a delightful success in both contexts.

Bonni: [00:28:53] FlipGrid, if you have not used it before, it's kind of like taking all the good parts about what discussion boards were supposed to be and actually using them and getting rid of the bad parts which are we've just made them so transactional discussion boards traditional ones and you know go reply to three other people. It doesn't bring the content that we're trying to explore in a class to life in such a way as video. So with FlipGrid you can set it up where you determine the length of time that you want videos to be allowed.

Bonni: [00:29:26] In some cases, I would go for two minutes. In some cases I'd bump it up to two and a half. But one of the many great outcomes that I heard from my undergraduates was that FlipGrid helped them learn how to be more concise because it was one of those things if it went over, they'd have to rerecord it. And I didn't anticipate that. It was not one of the reasons I adopted it. I didn't anticipate as an outcome, but I can say that what a gift it is that we can give to people just to help them be more succinct when communicating their ideas.

Bonni: [00:29:57] And I teach business students and what a wonderful talent and skill to be able to be building into our students, especially as many of them are going out to do interviews or are in internships or seeking out internships, that really is a great skill to have built even though I did not anticipate that as one of the many benefits.

Bonni: [00:30:15] It allows them- so I can pose a question. And I can pose a question in text. I can pose a question myself on video and then they could reply to my video prompt. Or I could even post a YouTube video of someone else and then ask people to react to it using FlipGrid and they can- there's lots of different ways that you can set it up, you can allow for students to be able to reply to each other's posts, if you want to. You can allow for them to give a thumbs up to each other or to like videos.

Bonni: [00:30:46] Lots of options that you can either turn on or off depending on what your purposes are. And you can have a grid be public, so anybody could go view it and make it very open. Or you could keep it just private within either your learning management system or within your own website or however you're

hosting that information, or even within flipGrid you can require a password. Lots of different options for how you want to set it up.

Bonni: [00:31:13] And then so my undergraduate students totally loved it. What they reported to me was they loved how they learned how to be more concise. They learn how to be more confident in their delivery of information. In that case, I was having them go out and listen to either a podcast called Planet Money or a podcast called Marketplace and then they would pick a few stories out of that experience and report it out to us in that truncated amount of time. And it went super well.

Bonni: [00:31:41] I used it with my doctoral students probably too late. If I were to criticize myself I would have brought it in much earlier in this eight week class because I sort of long story- actually listeners know that I was working on the open textbook, so it was a class with lots of new tools and lots of learning which I've written a little bit about on my blog. But if I were to do it again, I certainly would bring it in sooner. But I can report they loved it. I only used it for two small assignments toward the end of that class but they absolutely loved using the tool.

Bonni: [00:32:12] And what I loved about just both audiences as they both were equally playful. You can put little stickers on your image. So you record your video and then there's a little thumbnail that shows, you can actually take your own picture to be your thumbnail. And there were stickers you could put on like he could put sunglasses on or a crazy hat.

Bonni: [00:32:32] It was just so funny how both groups of people just never even mentioned the stickers. But they're just using them because they're there and they're used to using those and other types of social media. It was just great fun. So I want to recommend FlipGrid. I do want to mention that I have talked about voicethread before on the class and haven't used it but I understand it is also an excellent tool as well.

Bonni: [00:32:53] So there's a FlipGrid, voicethread, I'm not officially recommending because I haven't used it but I have heard good things and I am now going to pass it over to Ric for your recommendation.

Ric: [00:33:04] The one thing I would just recommend is- I'm not going to do any product endorsement with regards to my point of view action cameras, but I would recommend if you are going down this path to have it as part of your instruction, to really educate yourself on the capabilities of these cameras and

you know to find out what they can and cannot do because you don't want this to be a frustrating exercise. So there's a lot of technology web sites out there and that's what I use. And there are some big names out there and I'm finding out also institutions are finding out that they're very cheap and are having them as part of their resources for faculty or college education. Actually I just found this out, they just recently purchased like a GoPros that I'm going to attach themselves to this upcoming semester. I briefly mentioned the Juana Bordas text *Salsa, Soul, and Spirit: Leadership for a Multicultural Age*.

Ric: [00:34:09] It's a book that I'm including with other resources in my leadership class. Leadership is the class that we focused a lot on for this podcast, but I've found that this book is very interesting and it speaks to leadership but it carries across different areas especially in higher education especially in this day and age where it seems like leadership now is all about winning.

Ric: [00:34:36] And when you read this book, hopefully the messages is leadership can include winning, but what does winning mean with regards to community, with helping others and what not. So I recommend this book not just for leadership but for understanding how teaching, in a way, is creating leaders for our communities. I'll stop there.

Bonni: [00:35:00] Well Ric, thank you so much for coming on today's episode and I also want thank Stacey Jacob who you went to school with for recommending you. You lived up to even more than what she promised. And what a delight it's been to learn from you today and also to be inspired by you to just be more curious and experimental and our teaching.

Ric: [00:35:19] Well I appreciate it. This was fun. So thank you for the invite and thanks to my colleague Stacy for giving me the connection to you and your podcast.

Bonni: [00:35:30] Ric Montolongo, thank you so much for coming on today's episode of Teaching in Higher Ed. If you have not been listening for very long and want to get all of the links about that GoPro, and the roller coaster database, and *Salsa, Soul and Spirit: Leadership for a Multicultural Age*, You could go to teachinginhighered.com/191.

Bonni: [00:35:57] You could instead just kind of kick back on the couch and wait for the weekly update to come in from Teaching in Higher Ed which will have a blog post written about teaching or productivity by me and also will include the show notes from the most recent episode. You can subscribe at

teachinginhighered.com/subscribe. Thanks so much to Stacey you for your ongoing recommendations to the show and especially to introducing me to.

Bonni: [00:36:23] See ya'll next time.

Teaching in Higher Ed transcripts are created using a combination of an automated transcription service and human beings. This text likely will not represent the precise, word-for-word conversation that was had. The accuracy of the transcripts will vary. The authoritative record of the Teaching in Higher Ed podcasts is contained in the audio file.