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A Case Study of Professors' and Instructional Designers' Experiences in the Development of Online Courses

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A CASE STUDY OF PROFESSORS' AND INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGNERS' EXPERIENCES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF ONLINE COURSES

by

Karl B. Stevens

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ABSTRACT

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by

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Utah State University, 2012

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The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the experiences of instructional designers and professors during the online course development process and to determine if their experiences had an effect on the process itself.

To gain an understanding of their experiences, open-ended interviews were conducted, seeking descriptions of participants' interactions with project partners and their perspectives on technical aspects and current best practice guidelines. Five instructional designers and five professors from Utah State University (USU) who met selection criteria were purposefully selected and were recommended by an administrator from USU. Instructional designers included one female and four males, ranged from 2 to 6 years of development experience at USU. Professors, all male, had relatively little development experience, ranging from one to five courses, and had at the most, three years of online teaching experience.

Data analysis revealed five emergent themes: communication, commitment to quality online courses, commitment to building robust working relationships, mutual respect for one another's time and talents, and satisfaction in working with online course development. Communication was the most prevalent factor identified as having a positive effect on the development process. Lack of time was most prevalent as an impediment to the process.

In conclusion, a workplace culture that fostered good experiences and the opportunity to interact in a supportive environment was beneficial to the online course development process. Managers and others involved in the process should be mindful of the workplace culture and consider dedicating effort and resources to preserve its integrity.

(122 pages)

PUBLIC ABSTRACT

A Case Study of Professors' and Instructional Designers' Experiences in the Development of Online Courses

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The objective of this study was to examine the experiences of instructional designers and professors during their efforts to develop online courses and to determine what effect their experiences had on the development process. Five professors and five instructional designers at Utah State University participated in this qualitative, single-case study. Participants were purposefully selected as matched pairs of development teams based on their respective levels of expertise in course development.

The ADDIE instructional design model was used as a conceptual framework to which emergent themes were aligned. ADDIE is an acronym for analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation. The key themes that emerged from participants' responses were communication, commitment to quality online courses, commitment to building robust working relationships, mutual respect for one another's time and talents, and satisfaction in working with online course development. Each of these themes was determined to have a positive effect on the process, while lack of time was reported as a detriment to the process.

The implication to managers and course developers was that efforts and resources dedicated to establishing and maintaining a workplace environment and culture of collaboration and cooperation, with common goals and mutual respect, are to be considered for their positive impact on productivity.

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CONTENTS

Page

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A major part of daily activity pertaining to many higher education programs is the process of developing and delivering online courses (Meyen, Tangen, & Lian, 1999). As prescribed by accreditation standards, subject matter content and objectives of online courses are to be the same as their on-campus counterparts, organized in a suitable format to accommodate Internet delivery and a partially or completely asynchronous learning model (Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities [NWCCU], 2007). Subject matter content for a particular course may be from an existing course that has passed the institution's curriculum review committee for on-campus instruction or it may be new content being created specifically for online delivery. In either case the task is to prepare the content for online delivery in a synchronous, asynchronous, or hybrid format. This process is commonly referred to as online course development.

It should be recognized, however, that development consists of more than posting course lecture notes to the Internet. While the subject matter is the same for both face-to-face and online instruction, the pedagogy may need to be altered for online instruction to achieve the learning objectives. A melding of skills and knowledge from the subject matter expert (professor) and instructional designer is necessary to develop a product that achieves its intended outcomes. Such expectation may require transforming learning materials rather than transplanting learning materials (Xu & Morris, 2007).

Online enrollments in the US during 2000-2001were just over three million students (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2003). By 2006-2007,

online enrollments more than doubled to 6.5 million (NCES, 2009). This sharp increase is evidence of the higher demand for professors to develop courses for online delivery to students. In this effort, professors face a variety of issues related to the development process such as time constraints, varying technical aptitudes and abilities, philosophical disposition, and overall willingness to participate in online course development (Moore & Kearsely, 2005).

The development process typically involves working closely with instructional designers with technical expertise to transform classroom content from a face-to-face instructional delivery to a technology-based delivery. In their turn, instructional designers also face issues such as differing educational backgrounds compared to professors, the application of best practices applications, production deadlines, functionality requirements, and communication barriers. These circumstances carry the potential to misalign understanding between professors and instructional designers.

Proper procedures and feedback mechanisms between instructional designers and subject matter specialists need to be in place to facilitate decision making and resource allocation and to prevent break-downs in achieving the institution's distance education goals (Moore & Kearsely, 2005). Instructional designers and educators must work as a team to overcome institutional culture barriers (Berge, 1998). Additionally, Berge noted that cultural barriers can include instructional designers thinking "they know what is best for educational technology without any background in education." Through his involvement with distance education, the researcher of this study had observed interpersonal associations of professors and instructional designers as they worked

through the course development process together. These observations led to the conclusion that a better understanding of this relationship was needed to identify steps to improve effectiveness, efficiency, and productivity within the development process. Thus, the topic of this study was born out of perceived need. Researcher interviews of faculty and instructional design staff at a midsized university (Utah State University [USU]) produced important insights into the interface between these two groups.

This research examined the reported experiences of professors and instructional designers when engaged in the development process. Any meaning that professors and designers ascribed to those experiences assisted in drawing conclusions that may help program managers to improve the development procedure or resource allocation. This study involved USU's Faculty Assistance Center for Teaching (FACT) which oversaw the development process and resource allocation as it offered technical support to professors.

Problem Statement

In the relatively new discipline of technology-based instruction, there is a need for greater understanding of how the interpersonal experiences of instructional designers and professors (subject matter experts) affect the online course development process.

Purpose Statement

To better understand if and how the experiences of professors and designers affected the online course development process, this study examined how such

interactions impacted course development outcomes. The analysis of these experiences served to better identify for those involved in the development process the artifacts that contributed to or detracted from an efficient development process.

Research Questions

To guide the collection and analysis of data, the following questions served as the foundation for this research: (a) What were the experiences reported by professors and instructional designers in working with one another during the online course development process, and (b) what meaning did they ascribe to their experiences?

To keep the research focused, participants were asked prescribed questions outlined in the methods section of this report. However, to allow for more in-depth responses, follow-up questions were asked to thoroughly probe for deeper meaning.

Conceptual Framework

ADDIE (analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation) is an instructional design model that guides the development process toward an end product that serves the needs of the learner as well as the teacher (Gagné, Wager, Golas, & Keller, 2005). There are numerous instructional design models that are useful for course development. The ADDIE model is frequently referenced for its five major steps in systematic problem solving (Gagné et al., 2005). Figure 1 shows the association of the model's steps. As this study related to the process of course development for online

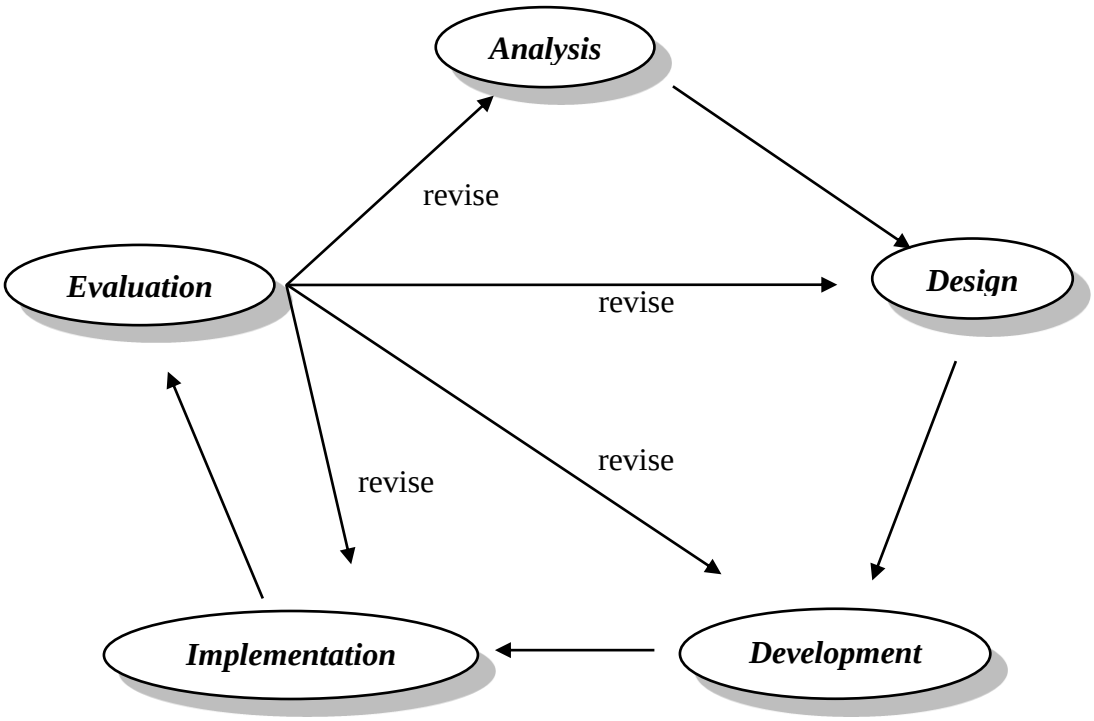

Figure 1. ADDIE instructional design model. Beginning with "analysis," the arrows represent the work flow from one step to the next. Evaluation takes place throughout and revisions made as needed (Gagné et al., 2005).

delivery, the ADDIE model for that process served as an appropriate conceptual framework. For the purpose of this study, the completed course was considered an extension of the development experience, but it was assumed that the deliverable course was acceptable according to the academic, pedagogical, and curriculum standards of the institution, and had passed through an established approval process. Therefore, course quality was not directly examined in this study.

ADDIE is an acronym for a framework of interlinking steps in the instructional design process. The steps include analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation. To better understand the use of the ADDIE model as the conceptual

framework for this study, each key step in the developmental ADDIE process as presented by Gagné and colleagues (2005) is described in the following paragraphs.

Analysis

As the task is undertaken to prepare subject matter content for a technology-based presentation, the analysis phase is used to determine what needs are to be met with the instruction. Such analysis is done in connection with the skills and tools available to the professor as well as the student.

Design

Design pertains to the goals and objectives to be achieved by the instruction. This may include lesson format, learning activities, time allocation, and assessment. The design phase can be considered the blueprint for the overall course development effort.

Development

The development phase involves preparation of instructional materials and, in the context of online courses, represents the technical aspect of the development process. In a situation where an instructional designer is providing technical assistance with content format and the learning management system, the development phase is where much of the interaction between professor and instructional designer takes place.

Implementation

In online course development the implementation phase is represented by the delivery of course content to the student. This delivery may vary in its format and

sophistication, but it is generally the mechanism by which the student receives course materials (technically and cognitively) and participates in the learning process.

Evaluation

Evaluation is an ongoing process and may take place at any time during the course development and delivery.

A word of caution: the ADDIE model describes logical connections more than procedural connections. The framework within which developers are working pertains to efforts required to achieve desired learning outcomes rather than to observance of internal policies or procedures (Gagné et al., 2005). This may be relevant when professors and instructional designers attempt to find commonality in their perspectives of the course development process.

The concepts of the ADDIE model served as reference points against which the researcher compared study participants' experiences in the online course development process. The assumption was that each participant had a perspective of the experience that translated to a reality for that participant. An individual's perspective of reality became a factor in the various aspects of a relationship in a given situation. By identifying the common themes of the participants' individual experiences and the impact they had on the relationship and process, a greater understanding was achieved which could serve as a foundation for more effective decisions and efficient use of course development or training resources.

For this qualitative study the connection between components of the ADDIE model and participants' experiences was relevant.

Operational Definition of Terms

It is helpful for the reader to have a definition of terms used in this narrative. The following are commonly used terms and their definitions.

- *Online course:* Academic course whose content is delivered to students interactively via the Internet using a learning management system.
- *Learning management system (LMS):* A software system designed for the development, hosting, and delivery of subject matter content.
- *Subject matter content*: A collection of knowledge, concepts, or skills related to the course curriculum intended to be delivered via a learning management system.
- *Course development:* The activities undertaken by both professors and instructional design staff to prepare traditional or create new course content to be a deliverable package of materials via the LMS and Internet.
- *Subject matter expert (SME):* For this study, the SME refers to the professor.
- *Instructional designer:* One who provides technical and pedagogical expertise for development and delivery of subject matter content.

It is wise to clarify at this point that there may be various names used to describe the instructional designer. Some institutions may refer to a technical assistant, production designer or other descriptive term. Any of those terms may be appropriate. For consistency in this study, and for the purpose of a more accurate description, the term "instructional designer" was used.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Evolution of Online Education

Distance Education

An early example of distance education consisted of students in the 1700s sending writing assignments to their teacher (Holmberg, 2008). Over the decades postal services improved and the practice of distance education increased. In the late 1800s, the first "correspondence schools" were established (White, 1982). In the 1900s a major contributor to distance education was the US Army. In 1941, the Army established an institute that offered more than 200 courses to more than 7 million students over a 30-year period. As technology advanced, radio and television were incorporated into distance education, extending the reach of educational institutions to broad audiences (Moore & Kearsley, 2005). Today the Internet plays an integral role in distance education, which has brought about the need for improved instructional design. Gagné and colleagues (2005) stated "instructional design must be aimed at aiding the process of learning rather than the process of teaching." Clark and Mayer (2003) asserted that successful learning has taken place when the learner is able to retrieve needed information from long-term memory. Without retrieval, the information cannot be applied and becomes meaningless. This speaks to the importance of sound instructional design principles and application.

In some form or another, instructional design has always been at the foundation of

teaching and learning. As distance education has evolved instructional design systems have become more complex. Instructional designers now come from educational backgrounds that include extensive training in the emerging technologies and pedagogy. Instructional designers come prepared to provide valuable resources to the development team. Instructional designers and professors now work together as partners to help online students achieve the learning outcomes associated with course curriculum (Gagné et al., 2005).

Development teams typically consist of a few members who bring specialized skills to the process. They determine the appropriate format for course content and they organize materials to optimize the learning experience. Teams commonly work together in some form of a centralized work place, similar to USU's FACT. Having physical access to a common work location facilitates the design process (Moore & Kearsley, 2005).

However, working together in one location is not always possible. Eseryel and Ganesan (2001) focused their research on development teams whose members were not in close physical proximity to one another. Communication became even more important but more challenging than it was for teams who were able to work together in the same location. The study took place as computer-based communication technologies were emerging and found that open communication and working collaboratively lead to improved productivity (Eseryel & Ganesan, 2001). With technological advances over the last decade and the evolution of instructional design models and practices, much has changed. However, the need for communication and collaboration has not.

Development Team Experiences

Collaboration

As this study explored the experiences had by faculty developing course content for online delivery, it was important to understand the association between professors and instructional designers. Working with an instructional designer may help the professor identify and address the differences that exist between traditional in-class delivery and online delivery. Identifying such differences may contribute to the experiences had by faculty in the online development process. Traditional face-to-face development and delivery offers a measure of flexibility and creativity that may be difficult to duplicate in online delivery (Meyen et al., 1999). In face-to-face delivery, the professor typically operates independently, free from encumbrances of Internet protocols and cross-platform requirements, and for the context of this study, instructional designers. Meyen and colleagues made a very salient point of the relationship between faculty and instructional designers in relation to the transition from independence to collaboration as traditional content migrates to online delivery.

> This interdependent relationship distinguishes the development of online instruction from traditionally delivered instruction. Not only must the two sets of skills be brought together, the dynamics between team members must be such that the result is effective instruction. Both technical developers and instructional developers have much to learn to make the process work efficiently and effectively. (p. 5)

This relationship between instructional designers and professors may necessitate a shift in perspective for those unaccustomed to working in teams (Oblinger & Hawkins, 2006).

> Developing and delivering an online course requires numerous and varied skills—skills that are unlikely to be found in a single individual. Teams will probably be more effective. For many faculty, working as a member of a course-development team is a unique experience, one in which autonomy yields to collaboration. (p. 14-15)

To coincide with the need for a professional relationship between the professor and the instructional designer, each needs the ability to adopt new views and strategies for teaching and learning. Understanding and adopting technology as a pedagogical tool may help lower barriers between tradition-based professors and technology-based instructional designers. Professors have an expectation of input in development decisions and that the results match their style and ability. Additionally, professors need access to technical support personnel (Feist, 2003).

A dilemma seems to exist when faculty members believe subject matter content takes priority while instructional designers believe learning management systems take priority (Feist, 2003). This again calls for a professional relationship and flexible understanding from both faculty and instructional designers. This relationship is further complicated as faculty do need technical assistance, but the individual they must seek out for the assistance is the same individual who is imposing technical requirements on them in the first place.

Enculturation

A study conducted by Waddoups, Wentworth, and Earle (2004) found that design teams built around "naturally occurring alliances" allowed for integration to quickly develop and added to success. Additionally, design teams should create a "context of practice and reflection necessary for…personal and cultural changes," even among team

members from different disciplines. This concept relates to the culture of an environment or group setting, which, is in essence "a pattern of shared basic assumptions and beliefs established by a team as it copes with various problems" (Smit & Schabracq, 1998, p. 14). Boyle and Boice (1998) proposed that the enculturation process comprises three essential components: collegiality, mentoring, and structure.

Pan and Thompson (2009) found that team culture and collegiality emerged as elements that contributed to the success of a development team, concluding team members were empowered as equal partners. The positive atmosphere resulted from the leadership style and collegiality, and improved the team information processing (Pan & Thompson, 2009). In terms of collaboration among instructional designers and professors, Pan and Thompson stated the following:

> The instructional designers' expertise in Web-related instruction was valued by the faculty. The faculty turned to the instructional designer for problem solutions. This is referred to here as a task-related mental model, which is embedded in the instructional designers via training and experiences. The instructional designers were expertly aware of the process of the Web instruction systems both in the Department and in the University. (p. 40)

Additional research found that a worker's motivation, professional competence, and job performance can be affected by environmental attributes if the institution does not create a supporting culture (Pan, Deets, Phillips, & Cornell, 2003). Furthermore, an implicit trust develops between a designer and professor as they work together in a mutually supportive effort (Pan et al., 2003).

From a strategic management perspective, Thompson and Strickland (1998) stated, "A culture grounded in values, practices, and behavioral norms that match what is needed for good strategy execution helps energize people to do their jobs is a strategy-

supportive manner." While this statement was made in relation to a business environment, it demonstrates the need for a workplace culture that is conducive to achieving the common goals of the organization.

Cooperation

There is a danger of losing sight of the student while dealing with potential difficulties when actively engaged in the design process. Development myopia can cause the product's end user, the student, to have a less-than-optimal learning experience if differences among faculty and instructional designers result in courses whose quality and function have suffered from unresolved issues (Ceraulo, 2005).

Meyen and colleagues (1999) indicated that though such differences may exist, it is important to mitigate them by clearly identifying each person's responsibilities in the development process and let those responsibilities, along with sound guiding principles, direct the activities of online course development. Correspondingly, clear understanding of roles and expectations were identified by Gellman-Danley and Fetzner (1998) as important factors in smoothing the path during the online course development process. They suggested an established framework in the following:

> Asking the tough policy questions in advance can mitigate future bureaucratic problems and roadblocks. Most educators know that even a minor mid-stream policy skirmish can draw the focus away from their most critical concern—teaching and learning. Policies can provide a framework for operation, an agreed upon set of rules that explain all participants' roles and responsibilities. (p. 1)

However, care should be taken to avoid the potential offense resulting from mandated changes. Instructional designers should observe professors to be more able to identify ways to use technology to assist the professor, rather than declaring what

professors must do to fit within a prescribed template (Zawacki-Richter, 2005).

Development should be driven by the desired learning outcomes, not by the available technology (Wang, 2008). Imran Yousuf, Anwar, and Sarwar (2008) indicated this point should be agreed upon by professors and instructional designers, stating that course content is the fundamental element of an online course. Such a belief might indicate that the subject matter expert's position is given priority while establishing the important role of the instructional designer. Imran Yousuf and colleagues identified organization was lacking in the development process and recommended that more effort be focused on communication and organization through team meetings to improve the understanding of each person's role with the expected outcome that the finished course would better serve students' learning needs.

Successful Online Courses

Success Factors

Scholars have identified numerous factors that contribute to high-quality online education and desired learning outcomes including good use of technology, interaction with students, good assessment practices, adherence to best practices, and instructional design. Courses that are well designed have been reported to produce improved learning outcomes which are made possible by engaging in design strategies that include committed faculty and capable instructional designers (Twigg, 2003). Bates (2011) noted that professors' resistance to committing to distance education was a barrier to success and that such resistance could be attributed to a lack of training and understanding of

online pedagogy and theory of online teaching and learning. This indicates the need for an entity such as USU's FACT to foster the support of well-trained development teams.

Missing Spokes

Much of the literature focuses on either the relationship between students and professors or on the process of designing a course that meets certain objectives. There is much written regarding training professors to effectively present course materials in a technology-based format. However, little is available on the relationship between subject matter expert (SME) and instructional designer. The absence of literature suggests one of two possibilities: either SMEs and instructional designers are assumed to have sufficiently healthy working relationships with one another or their relationships have not been identified as being relevant to the development process. The latter is the assumption of this study.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

This study was qualitative, following a single-case case study method of data collection and analysis. The qualitative method was chosen for its ability to "build a complex, holistic picture, analyze words, report detailed views of informants, and conduct the study in a natural setting." A qualitative method is particularly useful when a topic involves human experience that needs to be explored (Creswell, 1998).

The participants for this study were purposefully selected from those professors and instructional designers who were involved with online course development at USU. This qualitative single-case study did not rely on random sampling to maintain its validity (Yin, 2003). Validity refers to how closely the research findings represent reality. However, since the researcher serves as an interpreter of the data, and cannot observe a phenomenon without changing it, particularly in a qualitative research setting, it is critical to validity to account for any bias the researcher may have (Merriam, 1998). This made it important to identify biases prior to collecting data through bracketing interviews with the researcher. It was also important to include those participants who offered cogent input for data analysis. Participants needed to have taken part in the online course development process and been able to identify their experiences and describe them in a way that creates an accurate representation of reality. Therefore, a preliminary screening effort took place to ensure a selection of participants who could readily contribute to the study. Creswell (2002) categorized the case study as a subset of ethnography and Yin (2009) asserted that a strong case study can stand on its own and does not need to rely on

the use of other methods.

Case study research design has five components: the research question, proposition, unit of analysis, linking the data to the proposition, and the criteria for interpreting the findings (Yin, 2003). These components are described next in more detail relating to this specific study.

Research Questions

This simply refers to the research questions to be answered by the study. As noted previously, the questions for this study were: What are the experiences reported by professors and instructional designers in working with one another during the online course development process and what meaning do they ascribe to their experiences?

The Proposition

The proposition refers to what should be studied to answer the research question. For this study, the reported experiences of professors and instructional designers were the objects of analysis, but the meaning of those experiences was critical to drawing any conclusions. The experiences and their reported meaning were viewed within the context of other factors that bear on the development process. Some examples of those factors included development policies and procedures, constraints on time or resources within the process, proficiency with technological hardware and software, differing educational backgrounds of those involved, extent of participants' development expertise, and individual objectives of the courses being developed.

To draw out the responses from participants, the interviews used open-ended questions. The interviews took place face to face (with one exception). Audio recordings were made, transcribed, and archived to preserve the tone of the responses (see Appendix A for interview protocol). The interview questions included the following.

As you undertake the online development process:

- What success factors contribute to the production of online content?
- What factors of the development environment impede production of online content?
- How would you characterize your experience with professors/instructional designers in developing online content?
- How would you characterize the technical aspects (such as software and technical requirements) of your online development experience?
- How would you characterize the human aspects (professors/instructional designers) of your online development experience?
- What would you add that describes your experience in working with others on the production team?
- What does this mean? (Potential follow-up question to the above questions, which may include probing for more detailed responses, narrowing from the general to the specific.)

While other questions arose during the interviews that enriched participants' responses, the above list provided a framework within which to structure the conversation. Participants were encouraged to offer any insight they felt was relevant.

Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis for this study was the collective group of professors and instructional designers involved in the course development process. Though interviewed individually, the subjects' responses were compared and contrasted to provide a confluence of themes for analysis.

Linking the Data to the Proposition

An effective method of linking the data to the proposition was pattern matching. This method involved identifying pieces of information from the case that could be related to a conceptual framework, which for this study was the ADDIE model. Both the individual responses and the collective themes were compared to the concepts of the ADDIE model. As the patterns of responses converged with or diverged from the conceptual framework, the strength of the data's link to the proposition was possibly determined.

Criteria for Interpreting the Findings

The ADDIE model served as the framework to which the research findings were aligned. Each of its components—analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation—provided a filter for identifying emergent themes in the reported experiences of professors and instructional designers, and how those themes flowed from one to another.

Delimitations

Delimitations are described as inherent factors which arise from the restrictions imposed by the research design, that prevent the researcher from generalizing the study's findings to populations other than the one studied (Bryant, 2004). This case study was a single-case study, which by its own design placed restriction on generalizing the findings to another population. This was an appropriate method as the study of the phenomenon was to better understand the problem with no intention of generalizing the results to another agency.

Limitations

Limitations resulting from the methodology can include bias, presuppositions, limited sample size or participant response, and embellishment or minimization of experiences. Some of these limitations do not immediately manifest themselves. As they become apparent, they must be addressed in connection with the findings of the study.

The researcher might have presuppositions about what the results will be. Included with such a limitation can be the researcher's bias, and together, if not recognized, can reduce the validity of the findings. The researcher's background as an administrator of an online program could have resulted in bias in this study. His presupposition was that there would indeed be a relationship between professors and designers, but such supposition was the very basis of this study. To account for any such bias, a bracketing interview was conducted by an objective third party. Included were questions that asked about the researcher's role in online course development and his

experiences in working with professors and designers and mediating their interactions. It was made clear that he had no course development experience, but had been involved as an observer and consumer. It was also known that the environment and culture from which his observations were made were quite different from those of the study participants. Documenting the researcher's opinions on course development and associating them with policies and procedures that pertain to his work environment aided in addressing his biases related to participants' responses (see Appendix C, Bracketing Interview; Appendix D, Letter of Verification).

In a qualitative study, a relatively small sample should not be of concern if the purposeful sampling of participants can provide "information-rich" responses (Merriam, 1998). Care was taken to select participants who had substantive experience in online course development. An administrator at USU who was familiar with the potential participant pool selected pairs of instructional designers and professors who had worked together. This was done in the hope that richer responses might emanate from and be attributed to their partnership. However, to preserve the anonymity and spontaneity of their responses, none of the participants was informed of identity of other participants.

It was possible that participants would be reluctant to accurately describe their experiences, particularly if negative. Participants were be given every assurance via an informed consent letter that their identities would be protected and no response that might be damaging would be attributed to any individual in an identifiable manner (see Appendix B, Informed Consent). Conversely, it was acknowledged that participants might embellish their experiences. There was little that can be done to prevent such from

happening, but it was hoped that honest questions, appropriate interviewing techniques, scholarly integrity, and a clear purpose of the study would encourage participants to be accurate in their responses. Triangulation of all thematic responses helped to modulate extreme responses. In qualitative research, triangulation is a process of comparing and contrasting responses to establish meaning. Stake (1995) stated, "We assume the meaning of an observation is one thing, but additional observations give us grounds for revising our interpretations."

Presenting the Findings

The research participants' responses were coalesced into common themes which were aligned to the corresponding steps of the ADDIE model. This report was presented in a narrative format identifying categories of questions and responses to assist the reader. The steps of the ADDIE model were illustrated in a visual manner along with the corresponding responses from participants pertaining to each step.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This research was conducted to determine if the experiences of professors and instructional designers during the online course development process had an effect on the process itself. The results indicated that in the views of the research participants, there were indeed several factors that affected the process.

It is necessary at this point to address the issue of researcher objectivity. In a qualitative study, there is typically a measure of researcher bias resulting from the limitations of the research method (Bryant, 2004; Stake, 1995). A qualitative researcher is immersed in the environment being studied, and thus may be influenced by that environment. An effective method for countering such bias is to identify researcher bias in advance by conducting a bracketing interview (see Appendix C, Bracketing Interview). Through the bracketing interview and with the assistance of the interviewer, the researcher attempts to account for existing bias and acknowledges its potential influence on the data analysis (Cresswell, 1998). One of the items noted by the researcher's bracket interviewer was his personal and professional investment in online education, but not to the point that he was blinded with the notion that online education should replace traditional learning formats (see Appendix C, Bracketing Interview). This represents a measure of both familiarity with the topic and objectivity that are helpful in analyzing data more accurately.

Participants

All of the participants in this study were assigned coded identifiers that designated them as either an instructional designer (D#) or a professor (P#). Additionally, pairs of designers and professors were identified as development partners. For example, D1 and P1 were designer and professor who worked together as partners. Each participant was made aware by the informed consent letter and again during the interview that identifying codes would be used and actual identities would be concealed. Participants were not informed that their respective development partners would be interviewed. The participants included one female designer, four male designers, and five male professors. Gender was not considered relevant to this study and is mentioned here only to establish the future usage of pronouns. The purposeful selection of participants was based on varying levels of development experience, particularly those of the professors, and for a broadened participant perspective, a mixture of Logan campus and regional campus personnel. As purposeful selection was desired, and the researcher had no information relating to which professors and designers worked in teams, what their level of experience was, or where they were located, a USU distance education administrator provided the researcher with names of ten prospective participants who met the above selection criteria. Each individual was contacted by the researcher (see Appendix B, Informed Consent), and each consented to participate.

To establish relative context for each participant's response, some basic information was gathered relating to years of experience, and online course development background (see Table 1). Following is a summary of those data.

Table 1

Summary of Participants

Participant	Years in current position	Number of online courses developed	Online teaching experience	Campus
D1	4.5	About 100	0 Courses	Logan
D2	6	More than 200	1 Course	Logan
D3	3	18	0 Courses	Logan
D4	5	More than 1,000	40 Courses	Logan
D5	2	About 50	0 Courses	Regional
P1	1	1	1 Course	Logan
P2	30	1	1 Course	Logan
P3	16	1	1 Course	Logan
P4	4	3	3 Years	Logan
P5	3.5	5	2 Years	Regional

Note. D = Designer, P = Professor.

Instructional Designers

D1 had been with USU for 4½ years. He earned a master's degree in instructional design, which included learning theory and adult education. He had developed about 100 online courses, and, while he had not taught an online course, he had served as a teacher's assistant.

D2 had been with USU for 6 years. He earned a bachelor's degree in graphic design and a master's degree in instructional technology and learning science. He had developed more than 200 online courses and taught online for one semester.

D3 had been with USU for 3 years and earned a master's degree in instructional technology and psychology. He reported having developed 18 online courses and more than 100 face-to-face courses. He had served as a teaching assistant on four courses.

D4 had 5 years' experience with USU. He earned a K-12 teaching certificate and

a master's degree in instructional technology and learning theory. He reported development of more than 1,000 courses. He had taught 40 classes.

D5 was the instructional designer at the regional campus. She had 3 years' service with USU and had previously worked with the FACT as an intern. She earned a master's degree in instructional design. She had a background in assessment and lesson plan development and had developed approximately 50 online courses.

The instructional designers all held master's degrees in some area of instructional technology. It was commonly noted that their master's level training included learning theory or pedagogy. Each designer appeared to be relatively young (25- 40-years-old), energetic, pragmatic, and dedicated to his or her profession and responsibilities. A general attitude of helpfulness was present, and each seemed to be appreciative of the efforts put forth by the professors with whom they worked.

Professors

P1had been a professor for USU for 1 year and had a background in pedagogy. He was teaching his first online course.

P2 had been with USU for 30 years. He had taught one course online and had worked with broadcast media for his courses.

P3 had 16 years' service with USU. He had taught one online course and reported being familiar with the general functions of the LMS.

P4 had served with USU as a web developer prior to becoming a professor. He had been a professor for 4 years. He had web development experience previously and, since becoming a professor, had taught three courses online.

P5 had previously served as a librarian for USU at a regional campus and had been a professor for more than 3 years. He had taught one online course multiple times over the last 2 years.

The professors had much more varied backgrounds than did the instructional designers. Their time with USU ranged from 1 to 30 years, and their levels of experience in online course development were significantly and consistently less than the instructional designers with whom they worked.

Research Environment

The survey of subjects took place in their respective workplaces. This was done to foster the most genuine and comfortable environment for the subjects and to allow the researcher an opportunity to observe their work environment. The instructional designers on the Logan campus work in a centralized office suite which did not offer complete privacy, so a small conference room was used. One exception was a designer who was ill the day of his interview, so we conducted a video interview later by Skype. Since the researcher had already observed the working environment and culture of the FACT, the Skype interview was rich and productive. The instructional designer at the regional campus was interviewed in her office. Each of the professors was interviewed in his respective office.

When presenting the dissertation proposal, it was decided that survey participants would be matched pairs: instructional designer matched to the partner faculty. This was to provide an opportunity for stronger correlation of responses. However, the participants

were not made aware that their respective counterparts would be surveyed. While the researcher made no prediction as to whether responses would include observations about one's counterpart, several participants, mostly faculty, made mention of their counterparts. This can be logically explained by the fact that faculty had typically worked with just one instructional designer, while the designers had worked with multiple faculty. Therefore, if the designers had any notion that a partner professor might be surveyed, there could be little more than a guess as to who it might be.

Presenting the Results

In presenting the survey results, a matrix of responses was used. Commonalities and divergences for each question were portrayed among instructional designers (D1through D5) and correspondingly among professors (P1 through P5).

Pretext to the Study

As the researcher first set out with this research topic, he based his preliminary description of instructional designers on his own observations of those with whom he was associated. He used the term "production designer" because he felt the realm of responsibility and expertise was limited to production functions. As he began interviewing "production designers" in this case study, the researcher quickly came to realize that the level of expertise and sophistication within the USU FACT certainly surpassed any description of a production designer and included the elements of expertise in both instructional technology and pedagogy that fit a more comprehensive description

of instructional designer in relation to supporting a self-directed learning model (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). This expanded understanding of how an instructional designer contributes to the course development process served to add to the ethnographical description of the prevailing culture among those surveyed.

In looking at the apparent culture within the FACT and those professors served, it was evident that a healthy mutual respect permeated the working relationship. While the relationship was certainly symbiotic, there were differences in how each side participated in that relationship. The FACT team members seemed to view the course development relationship as somewhat of a negotiation toward accomplishing an objective. They knew what needed to be done in a technological sense, as well as a pedagogical sense, and that they needed to somehow orchestrate that effort to optimize the expertise and abilities of the professor. Each instructional designer seemed to be aware of the delicate balance of meeting learning management system (LMS) needs and individual professor's quirks. Designers were skilled at achieving that balance through sound advice and practical application of development and delivery strategies while remaining mindful and respectful of the professor's part in the process.

The professors seemed to have a genuine appreciation for the dedication, innovation, and willingness demonstrated by instructional designers. There was a discernible air of humility when some professors spoke of the assistance they received from their partner instructional designer. This was quite striking in some cases. It gave the impression that the professor, for all his years of experience, could not accomplish something on his own that seemed so simple to the instructional designer. Clearly any

barriers of differing background or philosophy were lowered by a working relationship that became more like a friendship or brotherhood.

Interview Questions and Responses

Interview Question

Interview question 1 stated: *"Please describe any significant or meaningful interactions you have had with your development partner."*

The participants were informed from the beginning that this research was to explore their interpersonal experiences and determine if they ascribed meaning to their experiences. Several identified aspects of their interactions that they felt were significant, and that seemed to add value to their associations.

Designers. Instructional designer D1 indicated that he looks forward to solving problems together. He stated, "My favorites are when the professor comes in with some real concerns about how it [online course] is going to work. We've been able to address challenges and come up with an approach to solve problems." When asked if he found that there are some professors who are more workable or agreeable, he responded, "Yes, there are differences in professors. I think it has to do with their level of motivation, their commitment to their course and to teaching online."

Designer D2 noted that communication, cooperation, and collaboration are important in helping each other.

> If you are willing to listen to your partner then I think it goes really well. But if you have your own thoughts and your own process to finish the project, then I think you get conflict which means the designer and professor are at a different levels. It's not something that you have to try to change in your companion

developer, you have to change yourself.

Another designer gave an example of his experience working with a professor who entered the online instruction realm with no previous technology background but a substantial pedagogical foundation from years in the classroom. D3 spoke of that professor's progress.

> The one that stands out the most is working with "Q." He's an emeritus faculty with a lot of experience. He was retired from teaching print-based classes. When we first started working together, he had a very traditional pedagogy. He didn't know anything about online teaching or instructional design. Of course, he had all his years of experience and what worked. To his credit, in the last three years he's evolved into one of the best online teachers in this institution.

Designer D4 said he had some very meaningful interactions with his development partners. He said, "It always starts with the initial consultation where I listen and try to understand their pedagogical beliefs, what's important to them and also to understand their background." He added that it's important to not only understand the professors' teaching style and subject matter expertise, but also to understand them as people, to take the time to get to know them. "It's the classic relationship-building," he said, "and sort of a trust activity that I always do with every one of them."

Instructional designer D5 had a different perspective on her experiences with her partner professors. Her observation focused less on the outcomes of the technical process, and more on the interpersonal aspect of the association. She noted that she began as a student employee and subsequently transitioned to a full-time instructional design staff member, and that the associations that she had started to develop as a student continued as she began working full-time with professors.

I had developed a previous relationship with them as a student and some other

> background that I had otherwise, so it was nice to come in as someone they knew and willing to help them and come to their office. They were really excited that I was there.

Professors. While the instructional designers focused more on their experiences related to the technical aspects of the process, the professors gave examples more closely tied to their interpersonal associations. Several seemed to feel their relationship lead to a better working environment and a more desirable outcome.

> I work with D5, and she is easy to work with. She doesn't try to impose her thinking. She might make some suggestions how things would work a little better technologically, but she made the comment to me that she liked the way I do my slides because they are clean and they speak to the student, and that kind of thing is good feedback. She has been great; she makes her regular rounds and comes to my office and has given some great training. (P5)

Another professor stated:

> One of the designers was really interested in pedagogy. We didn't get too deep into my content, but he took what he could glean from the content and asked me challenging questions, "What do you think about this concept vs. another." It went beyond nuts and bolts; he knew what could be done in an online environment and he gave me some options. It was helpful. (P1)

P2 spoke of his partner designer's willingness to teach him. He said, "The designer could have taken over the project and done it. But I would much rather learn how to do it, so I can do it."

P3's comments were in relation to his first course development effort. When asked if the fact that it was his first course and the designer had substantial development expertise had any effect on his overall development experience, he responded:

> It did a little bit. There's some history there. We were developing this at the same time we had some budget cutbacks, the designer I worked with inherited a lot of deadlines. We basically said, "Let's get through this first one, make it basic, and make sure the students have a fairly good experience, if we can do that." The designer was great. He took my hard copy forms and gave students access to

them. It's worked pretty well.

P4 had perhaps the most descriptive response, "My instructional designer and I are tight."

Follow-Up Question 1

The follow-up to the interview question was, "*How did that interaction affect your development efforts?"* A follow-up question allowed participants to describe how their interactions affected their efforts.

Designers. In response to this follow-up question, D1 stated:

> I give all sorts of time and attention to courses that I know professors are really engaged with. If I see they want a great course, they're working hard, I'll stay up nights to help. I think there's a lot of locked up innovation. We see a lot of courses so we have locked up ideas. We are looking to innovate, so we help professors unlock those ideas.

D2 gave an in-depth description of the effect his experiences had on his efforts, reflecting on the service he provided for his partner professors.

> We call the professors our clients, so we have to put ourselves as the person who is going to provide customer service to them. Yes, we do have certain knowledge about instructional design, however instructional design started after teaching started. Teaching started first, then instructional design is a new thing that came up. Then we go in and try to systemize *(sic)* how instructors are teaching with their teaching skills. We evaluate and analyze how they teach, then we provide this new way to help their teaching. So, if we think we can drive the instructors' teaching skill, that's wrong. We have to get their attention and try to compromise with how they teach. That's why we have to have knowledge about teaching. If you have no experience [about] how to teach, then you're not going to understand the subject matter expert, so it's going to be conflicting all the time.

D2 added his thoughts about the importance of identifying his partner's approach to teaching. He noted that listening and building a rapport is important.

> When I go in with my knowledge, they say, "No, that's not my teaching style. I

> don't want to talk to you. It's my course, I'm teaching this way." But when I go in with a service-oriented mind… "May I listen to how you teach? I really want to analyze how you teach," but not in a bad way, they'll spend about thirty minutes telling me, and it's my intensive time that I have to start using all of my knowledge about instructional design and learning theories to provide some better ways to support and improve their teaching.

D2's rich description prompted further questions. He was asked to respond to his experiences related to his discussions of pedagogy with a professor. What kind of reception did he get from a professor who had been teaching for thirty years while D2 was relatively young, did not have a background in that professor's discipline?

> Well, I respect their thirty years of teaching because that's their teaching method and skill. If we ignore or don't want to talk about their teaching skills from the last thirty years, that's wrong. We have to respect that. He probably has all different sorts of teaching components. But yet he has not really systemized [*sic*] what he has thought about his teaching. As a system designer, I provide positive feedback and show them other ways to look at it. I don't give them much information about instructional design, but what I do is usually just give them one thing that they can try in the coming semester.

During the course of interviewing D2, it was revealed that he was working on his Ph.D. One of the original questions that inspired this research topic was whether differences in background played any role in the development process. This afforded the opportunity to ask D2 if professors received him or responded to him differently in relation to his advancement toward his Ph.D.?

> Yes. However there are two types: one is yes, they do respect. The other is that if I don't talk about that I'm doing a Ph.D., they really want to see if it's working, and then if they find out I'm doing a Ph.D., then they really listen.

D3, who spoke previously of "Q," the emeritus professor who had become a very skilled online instructor, stated that the relatively young age of online education presented the need to work together with professors for desired outcomes.

> Distance education is such a new field, comparatively, that there aren't a lot of standards that we can triangulate against, so it's really just me vs. you, and I could win that game by forcing my personality, but then ultimately the students will lose because now you're teaching a tool that is driven by me, not by you. So I try to figure out what resources will work, and I believe the most important resources are the soft ones: attitudes and beliefs about the technology. Then there are harder ones like your time. I try to take all that into account and build the best course I can under those circumstances. That's the problem I have with a lot of instructional design, that it is driven by idealism—"What's the best we can possibly do?" and then you find you don't have the resources to back it up. So I prefer very simple, linear designs that evolve as the course goes along.

When D4 was asked how his interactions affected his development efforts, his response was immediate.

> Fantastically! There's a trust; they understand where I'm coming from and I understand where they're coming from, and I contribute to some extent that there are times that they don't care where I'm coming from, which totally fine, and I try to understand that relationship of how they want to work, and it provides me with the ability to sympathize to how they're communicating and the choices that they're making and the beliefs that they have in terms of teaching and structuring their materials.

Designer D5 answer the question in a similar way. She spoke of building relationships and understanding their needs and of gaining the professor's trust to do what needs to be done in a constructive way.

> I think any time you develop a relationship with someone, and they know that you're going to come through for them, they're more likely to get you what you need when you need it. If they know that I'm trying to help them and I'm looking out for their best interest to have their course ready, they're going to be more likely to give me something that I can work with. When we have a good relationship, and I have to make edits, they know I'm not being critical of the work they're doing.

Professors. The professors' responses to the follow-up question were more succinct, and during the interview it was felt that in some cases, their previous answers were sufficient to cover this question as well.

Addressing the effect of his experiences, P2 stated, "It helped really well. Because of that, I can put my own tests up on BlackBoard. I've developed other courses, training courses for students to do training in rural mental health, so I use what they have."

P1 responded, "The designer was really good about saying, 'Let's get you into the shoes of your students,' to make the assignments more useful. He helped me streamline what I wanted in the absence of face-to-face interaction."

P3's previous answer was inclusive of this follow-up question, and P4 simply said, "Unbelievable. I couldn't have done it without him."

P5 again spoke highly of his partner designer, "I think the striving for a level of not just proficiency, but for excellence has pervaded the whole thing. She is a quality person and highly organized which helps me to be the same."

Follow-Up Question 2

Follow-up question two asked, *"What success factors contribute to the production of online content?"*

Designers. In response to this follow-up question, D1 stated:

> A good understanding of the instruction goals and intended outcomes. The professor has to have a good idea of what is going to represent success on the other end: the objectives and learning goals. It doesn't have to be statistical or measurable. An anecdotal idea of what they want to achieve helps the process go better. Also they (and everyone involved in the process) needs to have a clear understanding of the students and of the abilities and constraints of the students being taught. It helps to shore up where the weaknesses may be.

Designer D2 had a similar response:

> Understanding the big picture of technology, which means there's a context for online environment. For example, we're using Canvas or BlackBoard, or all the technology that we have, and we have to understand our institution's history and

our faculty's culture.

When asked if he could expand on the above response, he spoke of the university's culture and how different professors approach the development process.

> We can make that culture as a system or part of a system because when we develop training, we usually train faculty who are not on tenure track or who are part-time or adjunct or graduate students. Faculty who are on tenure have no time to even come to our training so they send their TA or ask peer instructors. So we make our training geared toward those non-tenure track faculty. (D2)

D2's statement prompted the interviewer's comment that instructional designers had to be very aware of who they were training and what the professor's situation was. D2 responded:

> Exactly. Those tenure-track faculty don't care about the LMS system so they hire a TA to do their job. You can't push from the top down to make faculty use the LMS. It is better if it is from the bottom up. The student wants the professor to use it.

In reference to success factors, D3 also pointed to understanding the professor. He referred to customizing his efforts to work with the current circumstances, with the notion that doing so was a better investment of his time.

> I'm going to try to understand what your beliefs, skills, and practices are and document them, and then design around them. In my mind there's a huge difference between an original course that you've never taught before, and a re-design. For an original design, I'm putting all of my eggs in your basket because that way I get a course that's most fully aligned with what your skills and practices and beliefs are. I think it's my job as a designer, that if you tell me something that I don't agree with (you think all students should write their papers in long-hand), I'm going to say that I think there's probably a more effective way to do that. But if that goes down to the core of your belief, that's how I'm going to design it because otherwise you'll either not be capable of administering it or you'll sabotage it because it's something you don't agree with. (D3)

Both D4 and D5 identified communication as a success factor.

> Clear communication. Over-communication and over-organization, if there can be

> such a thing. The successful experience of developing a course is how much time I'm willing to document and share with the partner of what I'm doing and what I'm understanding in terms of the end product and the design. It's like a course map. I map out their course based on what I understand and then I get their feedback and have them re-evaluate it. (D4)

> Good communication is absolutely essential. When I was a director of distance education in Logan, I learned this idea of return and report, that I do something, and I let the instructor know that it's done. Then they know if they need to take any action on their part. That way we know where we stand at all times. (D5)

Professors. Professors also identified a number of success factors. P1 stated, "Connecting with them [instructional designers] early. They are a resource. They can help apply technology to your ideas or help identify problems. Respecting one another's profession acknowledges appreciation for what each does."

P2 cited one of the success factors as the instructional designers' readiness and availability. "The second," he said, "is their willingness to seek out answers to problems." He continued, "The third is the fact that they really demonstrate care, a genuine care. Their attitudes are really exceptional. I don't know any of them that I don't feel comfortable going to."

P3 gave an example of the technical aspect when he said, "Being able to voice over some PowerPoints and reading assignments so that information was available to students. Technician's being flexible with immediate needs."

P4 was again brief in identifying a success factor. "Organization. I have a cluttered mind, and I love to think outside the box, and D4 always brings me back to systematic."

P5 responded to the question of success factors with this statement:

> Honesty. D5 is very open to helping with what the instructor wants to project. She

> has given me some ideas as to how that might be done. I used to put my old pictures on the Elmo, and she has helped me learn PowerPoint which is so much more clear and pristine. She is very helpful in driving home a thought or concept with the placement of a word or picture.

Follow-Up Question 3

Follow-up Question 3 asked, *"What factors of the development environment impede production of online content?"*

Designers. Four of the five instructional designers identified the lack of time as an obstacle to development. D1said, "Limited time probably is the biggest. I've seen courses where everyone had great intentions, but limited time made it so it was less than it could have been." When asked if it was a logistical issue, he identified it more as a philosophical issue:

> There's a certain amount of attitude involved. If there's an attitude of apathy toward the process, that can obviously limit it. In a sense there's the instructor's own pedagogical beliefs that influence it a lot if they feel like all these students are slimy little buggers that try not to get anything done, it will result in a different kind of a course than an instructor that sees potential in their students.

In response to a follow-up as to whether a difference in the background between the technologist and the professor had any impact, D1 said, "I think so. There's an impact there in the sense that some of it comes down to personality depending on how much the one party feels that their chosen profession is superior to the other's." He further added:

> So there can be factors there that affect the whole relationship whether the designer and instructor are willing to actually listen to and work with each other or it's going to be, "This is my way and you're going to be along for the ride." And it can go either way.

D3 indicated that the lack of time was related to the role of the university and its effect on tenure-track faculty.

> People just don't have the time to do it. It's a research-based university so time is very limited, especially for a tenure-track professor. Where professors are in their career arc is a huge part of their time commitment. The ones that I feel have the best potential to be good online instructors are adjuncts and tenured professors. So you need a model that is sensitive to reality.

D4 responded, "Time. Not having enough time. When I don't have enough time to organize. I have to make assumptions and that's usually difficult. We end up cutting corners in documentation and communication."

D5 echoed the issue of time being an obstacle.

> Other projects and just busy-ness on either person's part. So if I have things that are coming up that are important, but they don't necessarily go with the process like hiring committees or extra stuff that gets in the way. Sometimes the distance does get in the way. I may not be able to visit all the sites frequently enough but I have a hard time justifying spending six hours in a car to go meet with one person. So that may get in the way of progress because sometimes people don't feel they need to do something unless you're right there at their door saying, "Hey, is this done? Where are you on this?" And you don't know that they're out to a conference or something, so distance does get in the way.

D2 differed in his response. He asserted that the faculty's pride and ego get in the way. In other words, "they know what they're doing." When asked about his own pride, D2 responded:

> I'm not saying that I don't put myself up against that. If I meet with the faculty, and their first word is that it's not going to fly, then I put myself up against that and try to protect myself. So, "If that's what you want, then let's go for it," but in my mind I'm still a service entity, I have to satisfy what they want, but I'll continue to push a little bit toward that faculty because I respect their pride and ego. We have to take their pride and ego and turn it into a success factor.

Professors. The professors noted time restraints, workload, technical expertise, and production facilities as impediments to the course development process. P1 responded, "The standard nine-to-five thing, Monday through Friday. I work with my students at night and on weekends, so dealing with emergencies, having access to an

audio room, or having somebody available to help, is difficult. A time and availability constraint."

P5 addressed the time issue in terms of his workload. "On a personal interactive basis, I can't really say anything from my experience other than perhaps workload. But with D5, I don't have to wait very long for any kind of help," he said.

P2 made a humorous reference to the recording studio when he said:

> It may be the space. How much [physical] space there is for us to work together. One of the things is, when we go up to do the tapings, students ask, "are you doing this from a jail?" The soundproofing in the back looks like I'm in a psych ward, so I think that impedes some of it.

But P2 acknowledged that as being a logistical issue, and affirmed that the instructional designers do a great job.

P3 cited his technical abilities as an impediment. He said, "My inability to use all the technology. That's why we eventually hired a TA." But he affirmed that had nothing to do with the dynamic between him and the instructional designer.

Correspondingly, P4 cited technical abilities, but viewed it as a positive opportunity when he stated, "Coding. If I showed you my online course, you'd see what I mean. I don't think there's anyone out there that's done what we've done. Our… courses don't have to be taught live; they can be done independent study [online]." When asked if he had encountered any obstacles that impeded his progress, P4 said, "No because when I do that which I cannot do, I learn how to do it. D4 and I work that way. We're doing the impossible. If we have an obstacle, we overcome it."

Follow-Up Question 4

Follow-up Question 4 asked, *"How would you characterize your experience with professors/instructional designers in developing online content?"*

Designers. In response to this follow-up question, D1 stated:

> It's been positive. Most professors who come in here are willing to work with their designers. They're willing to acknowledge that they haven't taught online before so they come in with a fairly open mind and with questions. I've had a few bad eggs (maybe one or two) where they just wouldn't work with me at all, they would just be very, very difficult. (D1)

To the follow-up question of how he handled the situations with the "bad eggs," D1 replied:

> It's their course. They're the ones that are ultimately accountable for what comes out of it, and my role is that of a facilitator in getting their course up, so I just sort of say, "We'll make this work, we'll make it do what you want." I can't force their pedagogy; they're the ones that are going to manage the course. If a course comes out of this process that they can't deal with, it's not going to be a successful course. So in a lot of ways I have to work with their pedagogy; I have to work with their approach, so in those cases, I just have to say, "OK."

D2 described his experience as being service oriented. He said, "I characterize myself as a listener. If I listen, I am learning at the same time. Then I can add my value to their teaching skill."

D3's response was, "We have a model that includes a frame of understanding where it puts professors at the top, calling the shots. Our interactions have been largely positive."

D4's response was a bit more personal.

> Very good. It's a good experience. I would say it's quite pleasant. The way I approach all of these is as if it's almost a relationship. Many times it's a friendship. It helps me enjoy my job more. I enjoy working with students, and I miss out on that, so I take this as an opportunity to work with them.

However, his above response was tempered somewhat when speaking of the added burden resulting from budget cuts which have required fewer designers to work with more professors. When asked about the effect, he said, “It’s a little too soon to say, but I will admit that my comfort level (everyone’s comfort level) is a little off.”

D5’s description was positive.

> It’s been really good; it’s a good process. We can meet and make sure we’re on the same page from the beginning to get an outline of what needs to be done to get the course created—who’s going to do what. I kind of act as a project manager. I do my portion and then ask them where they are on this. Some of them like it, and some of them probably don’t because they probably feel that they’re kind of taking direction from me, but that’s not my intention.

She continued by referring again to communication, “It just helps to have that communication line open to bridge that gap and to make adjustments as necessary.”

Professors. The professors were unusually succinct. “Very positive. They’re top notch” (P1). “Excellent” (P2). “Great” (P3). “It’s been great” (P4). “It’s been excellent” (P5).

P5 did make an additional comment about his experience with his development partner.

> Very rewarding and educational. I go to bed at night very often thinking about class content and discussions with D5 and how to make things different and better. It’s been extremely enjoyable. I consider myself to be a creative, right-brained kind of person. In my earlier years, I was actually a contractor. I suffered a back injury, went back to school, and here I am. But I still have that creative side. It’s just that I have to be a little careful what I do, so this has been a form of expression as well as projecting historical content.

Follow-Up Question 4

Follow-up Question 4 asked, *“How would you characterize the technical aspects*

(such as software and technical requirements) of your online development experience?"

Designers. Each designer felt the technical aspect was an integral part of the development process. They generally reported that it is a significant portion of what they do.

> It plays a big role. I like to think that we come up with whatever it is we need to do. We try not to make the technology a limiter, but in some cases it is, or in some cases it affects the way we have to design a course or an approach. In an online course the interface, the technology that the student is confronted with, it's kind of a pedagogy of its own, it puts forward a feel to the course that I think kind of sets the stage for the student. I've had students that indicated in focus groups that the look and feel of the organization of their course in a lot of ways substitutes for a sense of passion and organization they get from a face-to-face course. If the course is well organized, they feel the professor really cares about the topic; there's been some real thought put into it. But if it's scattered all over the place, they feel the professor is aloof and has not given a lot of care. (D1)

D2 reported, "I have fifteen years of program background, graphic design, and web design. You have to understand how technology has been developed and designed, otherwise you're not going to provide better reason for faculty."

D3 addressed the question in terms of the group of individuals who make up the FACT. He said, "I've been fortunate to come into a group that is considered a premier group for innovation in BlackBoard. Because we've had some success with people adopting some of our ideas, it's lead to them having better experiences."

Another spoke of the technological aspect of course development being a deciding factor in the university's vote for which new LMS was selected to replace BlackBoard.

> It has a tremendous amount of effect. In fact that aspect influences a lot of decision-making and in selecting a new LMS. We could have gone with software that had more bells and whistles, but one of the criteria we had was that the software be more useable on the professor's side than on our side (those of us that

> are comfortable in the technical realm). We could have selected something that we had more control over, more abilities to design more fantastic courses, but we weighted that less than the instructor's side, and the reason being this development process—to support that. It comes down the development process and that is influenced by the atmosphere that we're in; the constraints that we're given now are much more than they were four or five years ago; less budget, less employees. We have a different management which values things differently and as a result there's much more attrition, we have less resources in our full-time staff, so we put as much as we possibly can back on the instructor instead of being able to do it ourselves. (D4)

Though the question pertained to use of technology, Designer D5 still seemed to acknowledge the personal implications in expecting professors to use technology.

> The technical experience can be different depending on who it is that's doing the development. An instructional designer on campus would tell me, "The first time when I'm building a course, I just do it for them [professors]. Then I tell them how to do it. Then I make them do it." So there's kind of a three-part process and I kind of like that because they know that I'm willing to do it for them initially, then I'm willing to teach you how to do it. It's kind of like a weaning process. It's worked well for me in a lot of cases.

Professors. The professors had much less to say about the technological aspect of the process.

P2 and P1 said respectively, "Very good" and "It's good. I don't see it as too restrictive."

P3 expanded his comments a bit more.

> Good. From their [designers'] standpoint, my inability to understand all the technology is probably the biggest problem. And it's just a time commitment—in order to keep up with all the technology, you need time to sit in front of a computer screen, and I don't have that time because I have other assignments.

P4 reflected his positive perspective when he said, "It's been a great experience. I'm probably a hard person to interview because I really get frustrated. I take this as a challenge, and when there's a problem, I'm a problem solver."

P5 referred again to his partner instructional designer, “Patience! I always refer to myself as being a definite end user. I don’t understand all the inner workings of a computer. So as an end user, D5 has been very helpful and patient.”

Follow-Up Question 5

Follow-up Question 5 asked, *“How would you characterize the human aspects (professors/instructional designers) of your online development experience?”*

Designers. D1 spoke about how people tend to do the best they can with the tools available to them.

> I’d say the human element has more to do with the outcome than does the technology element in the end. Humans will make the technology work in whatever way they can. They’ll find work-arounds if need be; in the end they’ll make a good course with what technology they have. In some cases the technology will make it easier, it will allow for better courses, but technology is just a tool.

D2 again referred to building a relationship of trust, “I think it’s really important to build rapport and trust. Otherwise you’re angry all the time. It’s more like respect. You have to respect faculty.”

D3 referred earlier to soft resources such as attitudes and beliefs. He made mention of them again when characterizing the human aspect of the development process.

> When you get on the soft side of things, there’s a tendency to say you can’t quantify it or qualify it, you can’t make it explicit, and I don’t agree with that. I think you document it and make it explicit without necessarily having to judge it or try to change it. I think the most important thing I can do is help an instructor understand what their teaching style is; a lot of them don’t even know what it is, because it’s this amorphous thing that they’ve inherited. If their style is in conflict with what students are asking for, then showing them a route for changing, not just saying, “You need to change that.” The advantage that we’ve had here is that

> there was a vision for the FACT. If the instructional designers were to leave tomorrow, there would be no FACT. In talking with other that have similar shops, if you were going to try to build something up from scratch, it would take an investment of ten to fifteen million dollars.

D4 only added that communication and trust are important.

D5 referred again to the evolution of her association with her former professors who became her development partners.

> I've had really positive experiences, I think partly because I knew a lot of the people I work with before as a student of theirs. They knew I did my work and did the best I could. So that piece of me wanted to do a good job. So having a pre-established relationship has been a good thing for me. But I've also been able to establish new relationships with people, and that has been positive.

Professors. Characterizing the human aspect of the process, several professors were brief. P1 said, "That is the highlight. I've worked with three of them, We have a pretty good rapport."

P2 and P3 said respectively, "Very genuine and empathic," and "Really good."

P4 said, "Been a lot of fun. It's to the point where I probably want to do online full-time."

> In describing his thoughts as a professor, P5 reflected on his time as a student. When I dropped back in to college, they were just starting with some of these projected classes, which bothered me. "Where is the professor?" It's nice to have him in the classroom. But the rewarding thing about these classes is that you develop them and your range of reach is all over the place. It's very rewarding to have all that diversity of student body, and you've created a class that in away is a piece of art, and you're selling this topic. All of the positive impact and success of a class builds you up, and D5 has been a helper in all of that.

Follow-Up Question 6

Follow-up Question 6 asked, *"What would you add that describes your experience in working with others on the production team?* This question gave

participants an opportunity to talk about anything they felt was relevant.

Designers. In response to this follow-up question, Designer 1 stated:

> It would be interesting to see if the design process has ever been the same from one course to another. I think it helps to go in with a good process, but even when you do, typically it's still a pretty fluid process depending on the instructor. How often do we meet, who does what, how quickly things are done, how happy the instructor and designer are with the course as it evolves—it's always a very fluid process, but it helps to start out with a good design process. A good understanding of a general design process can really help navigate through that fluid process.

D2 added the following:

> As a design team, you have to first contribute your knowledge about instructional design. Sometimes there are many different things that made instructional designers diverted from what they're doing. For example, if you focus too much on technology as a designer, you already have bias. If you focus more on design, you're biased. So you have to know how to balance all those so the faculty are free to teach students. So it's faculty, teaching, learning for students.

D4 simply reiterated that, "It all comes down to communication."

D5 said, "The positive feedback when the process is done is really telling of our experience and process together."

Professors. In response to this follow-up question, Professor 1 stated:

> It's been a challenge to teach online, but that's because I'm an interactive person in the class. We do a lot of experiential types of exercises, and there's a limit to what you can do in an online format. But I have been pretty surprised with the feedback I've gotten from students, and some of that is due to folks [instructional designers] setting the ship straight beforehand, and convincing me that this would be a good idea.

P2 spoke of cutbacks in resources.

> What has bothered me over the years, having been here, is what's happened to the FACT. It used to have a multitude of resources available and then they took one group out and they moved over to another building. They have been divided to the point where you can't conquer any more. There are so few of them. They do an excellent job, but I don't think we have the depth of resources in the FACT that we had five years ago.

When asked if he saw that as having an effect on his efforts and the efforts of others, he replied:

> Yes, I do. When I need certain things and they say I have to pay for it or go somewhere else to get it, you think, well gosh, now I have to go see if it's in the budget. So we've lost some resources, and that impedes us. (P2)

P3 placed a high value on the interpersonal aspect of the process, noting that it made up for his lack of technical expertise.

> I got along just fine. It's a frustrating experience for me because I am not as fast as I would like to be to use the technology. That's why you hire a TA who can do it. I can tell you as a clinician that the interpersonal experience is probably ninety per cent of whether or not I would even go to the FACT. The relationship in my opinion makes the whole difference as to whether or not you go work with someone and you get acquainted with them. You feel like you're welcome, so I really believe that the interpersonal component is essential. Take that interpersonal part out of it, and I could read a manual. But you put someone in who cares about you, it makes me want to go back.

P4 said, "I want to keep doing this, make it better, refine it. I want to get more feedback from people. Specific feedback is very critical because more and more people are going online."

P5 spoke of doing more course development.

> It was a huge undertaking when I was first asked to develop a class. Now I'm actually looking forward to doing some others. It has a lot to do with this idea of if you love to teach, which I do, how do we make that delivery? This is a process that gets that done whether you're using best techniques or not. Somehow, even if a class has to follow a protocol, it still has to carry your voice.

Follow-Up Question 7

Follow-up Question 7 stated, *"Describe how your best practices for online development and delivery affect your experience."* The question of best practices was included because of the potential that a "rule book" has to influence the experiences of

those involved in the development process (see Appendix E, Best Practices for Online Courses). In general, the designers felt best practices were important, but could remain hidden unless needed. This seemed to be borne out by the professors' unfamiliarity with best practices.

Designers. For this follow-up question, D1 stated:

> From our standpoint, best practices are very much seen as important and we see them as very useful guidelines. They're useful and beneficial, and we try to stick with them as much as possible because they've been developed after the experience of many courses. We've seen the quality of our courses go up quite a bit. We've put a lot of focus on that over the past four years, and you can actually tell which courses came from which time period. So they [best practices] are very useful. Some of that depends of the ability of the designer to "sell" the process (best practices and guidelines), and the effort the designer makes to sell those, and the instructor's willingness to be sold. In most cases the instructor is open to best practices, and is willing to say, "OK, that works best." In some cases they are seen as more a thorn in the side.

D2 gave a thorough explanation of the value of best practices.

> It's a service-oriented mind. Second, you have to have a human factor of respect. Third, you have to have a knowledge of instructional design and principles. Fourth, when you use your own experience without learning theories, that falls down to human factors, and you are losing your control. You have to put your theoretical lens to describe the problem. Fifth, you have to have model in order to work all of those, and then you push faculty a little bit into that model. You have to have a really flexible model, but you have to build your model based on those learning theories, instructional principles, human factors, and context that you're in. If you have a gap between a Ph.D. faculty and a BS designer, the only way to close that gap is with knowledge of instructional design. But if you push too much to the faculty, they're going to get overwhelmed. So you want to balance the time and resources and give the right amount at the right time.

D3 was also thoughtful in his response.

> When you're teaching face-to-face, you can pretty much fake it because of the force of your personality or because you're putting in extra time, but when you get into online courses there's a time/space separation - you can't fake it. If you don't have an organized structure, it's very obvious to the students right from the start, so that makes for a miserable experience for both parties. In our case, we

> don't just say "Do this," we've actually built out tools that will allow them to put into place the best practices that we've been talking about. Technology is not pedagogically neutral, and unfortunately, the technology that BlackBoard is built on is a computer science framework. Technology forces instructor to make pedagogical choices, and if their choices are not based on their context, then it puts them at a disadvantage.

D4 took a less pragmatic view of best practices. His comments were oriented more toward matching the development process to the skills of those involved.

> I'm a minimalist. My best practices in all teaching are two questions: understanding the motivations of the students, and how much feedback can we provide the student from the expert that is personalized? That is it. I make that very clear when I work with instructors.

When asked if he gets involved in discussions about technical requirements, he replied:

> I do. I do influence that, and I do have ideas of what I think is best, and I try to interject those ideas. However, I would say most of those technical aspects are not as important as looking at the big picture. Let's come back to feedback. I hear arguments over naming files and where they should be putting those files and how they should be organizing them. I hear this all the time. Whereas what I do is step back to that question and ask how is learning going to occur? Meaning, how are you going to provide feedback to the students in your tolerance level (time allotment, email capability). I figure out where their comfort level is and what they would perceive is the solution and then I structure in such a way that they come back to me and say, "I don't know, what would you recommend?" and then I can provide best practices.

D5's comment reflected a more tempered approach.

> Not really any issues. People don't really think of them as a rule book, rather, this is what I know works. So, if you want to achieve this goal, let's go through this process. They're usually pretty open to that because they want what's going to work for them, and that's the whole reason they ask me for my advice or opinion on something. I don't know that we necessarily force best practices upon anyone. If I have an instructor that wants to have a 35 page syllabus and it takes a long time to download, complaints from students causes the professor to ask what they can do make this better, so we kind of let the students' demands on the instructor drive what changes need to be made. But if I see something that is going to be a problem, I point out why it's not going to work as well as doing it another way….

> I find it more as a guide or a resource. If I run into something, I can suggest the professor review the guide and what we recommend.

Professors. P1, P2, and P3 all said they were not familiar with the FACT's best practices for online course development.

P4's comment was not related to his experiences with best practices, but with the concept of them.

> As an administrator and a teacher, I understand the importance of scaffolding, and a lot of professors right now disagree with teaching online because they're not familiar with the scaffolding of teaching online. If you don't have a system in place you'll go right or left, so it has to be programmed really well.

P5 essentially verified that D5's approach to applying best practices was what worked best.

> To me, that hinges back to whatever ignorance I have of the system. I think I've been running a little bit blind, and if it hadn't been for D5, in a lot of cases I wouldn't know what I was doing. I haven't ever seen a best practices guide. But I can tell you that if someone had handed me a book of rules, I'd have said skip it. Some guidance and maybe how to do things and then get out of the way is the approach that D5 has taken.

Overview

In the familiarity and privacy of their respective workplaces, the study participants were comfortable expressing their opinions and describing their experiences. Their responses were candid; leading the researcher to believe the results accurately represented this group's lived experiences and what they meant in relation to their development efforts.

Instructional designers typically focused on technical aspects; occasionally referring to documentation, Internet protocol, and LMS parameters. Professors referred to

importance of the interpersonal association and the support given by designers to shore up professors' technical weaknesses. In general, each demonstrated a sincere appreciation for the efforts and abilities of the other.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the case study was to examine the experiences instructional designers and professors had during the online course development process and, by focusing on the meaning participants ascribed to their experiences, determine what effect their experiences had on the development process. To gather information for this study, five instructional designers and five professors at USU were interviewed in their respective work places.

The participants chosen all had some level of experience in developing online courses and were purposefully selected to include varying degrees of expertise as well to match designers and professors who had worked together as development partners. Each participant was asked the same series of primary questions, with occasional follow-up questions to probe for clarity or more meaning.

Ethnographical Lens

Ethnography is an art and science of describing the culture of a group and serves as an effective lens for distilling, purifying and concentrating qualitative research responses (Fetterman, 1998). Referring to ethnographical analysis, Miles and Huberman (1994) stated, “The analysis task is to reach across multiple data sources and to condense them with somewhat less concern for the conceptual or theoretical meaning of these observations.” This does not imply that an ethnographical lens gives a less robust analysis than other methods. On the contrary, the ethnographical lens involves triangulation,

which tests one source of information against another to strip away alternative explanations (Fetterman, 1998). In this chapter, the results were triangulated to identify common themes that aligned with the conceptual framework and to search for meaning within the participants' responses.

Study participants were informed in advance of the nature of this research—that their responses would help determine whether their experiences had any effect on the development process (see Appendix B, Informed Consent). With few exceptions, the responses given were positive in nature, particularly those from professors. While there was no indication that the responses were not genuine, the result might be framed by the Hawthorne effect. A series of studies at the Hawthorne Works facility of Western Electric near Chicago in the 1920s and 1930s was intended to determine if different lighting conditions and other stimuli affected worker productivity. Worker productivity did increase during the studies, but it was determined that the increased productivity was due to the fact that workers were being observed rather than the effect the stimuli may have had on them (Landsberger, 1958). Landsberger referred to this phenomenon as the Hawthorne effect, a term that is common today. In this study the positive responses from designers and professors may also be due to the Hawthorne effect—knowing that their statements would be made public in a published report, the participants may have been reluctant to relate negative aspects of their experiences in an effort to portray themselves and their colleagues in a more favorable light. The possibility of this occurring was addressed in Chapter III as a limitation of a qualitative case study.

Development Teams

As the decision was made to identify and interview matched pairs of designers and professors, the researcher hoped for cogent responses that could be attributed to their development team dynamic. However, it did not appear that interviewing matched pairs resulted in significantly richer responses, at least on the part of instructional designers. A single instructional designer may have worked with many different professors. Therefore, when citing certain experiences regarding their interaction with a professor, it was not readily apparent in most cases to which professor the designer was referring. The Logan campus instructional designers did not mention professors by name, so little could be inferred in terms of the corresponding professor who had been selected for interview. Conversely, many of the professors' comments were specific to the instructional designer with whom they were paired. This resulted in a somewhat one-sided description in terms of the quality or performance of the development team dynamic. Those professors who mentioned their instructional designer by name were generally effusive in their praise, indicating a healthy regard for the designer's ability or professionalism. This is not to imply that the instructional designers were not appreciative of the professors' efforts. Rather, the researcher observed that specific professors simply were not identified by designers and therefore could not be correlated directly to any similar or differing observations of the professors interviewed.

Key Themes

In qualitative research, analysis of the data is facilitated by identifying emergent

themes. These may be layered into major and minor themes. The practice of interconnecting themes is a way to "report the stories of individuals" within the context of the study (Cresswell, 2002).

A number of themes emerged from the responses given by participants. They were generally positive in nature, reflecting a good relationship among designers and professors. Some of the common words used were motivation, cooperation, communication, collaboration, trust, and listening (see Appendix F, Response Coding). Participants also spoke of building relationships, providing good feedback, and appreciating others spending the necessary time to solve problems. Out of these themes emerged five general categories, stated below, but not necessarily in any order.

- Communication
- Commitment to quality online courses
- Commitment to building robust working relationship
- Mutual respect for one another's time and talents
- Satisfaction in working with online course development

Each of these five themes will be discussed in the next section.

Connecting Findings to the Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was the ADDIE model. The five steps in this course development model were analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation (Gagné et al., 2005). The researcher did not expect to observe a perfect alignment of each step of the model with every response from the participants, nor was

such the case. But many responses did correlate with one or more of the steps in the ADDIE model to the extent that triangulation was possible and a central core of information could be established.

The ADDIE model serves mainly as a systematic guide for sequential steps in instructional design. But the structure it provides for instructional design tasks also provides a framework to which personal experiences may be aligned for individuals involved with those tasks. Figure 2 shows an alignment of the five themes with one or more components of the ADDIE model. Some of the themes perhaps could have been

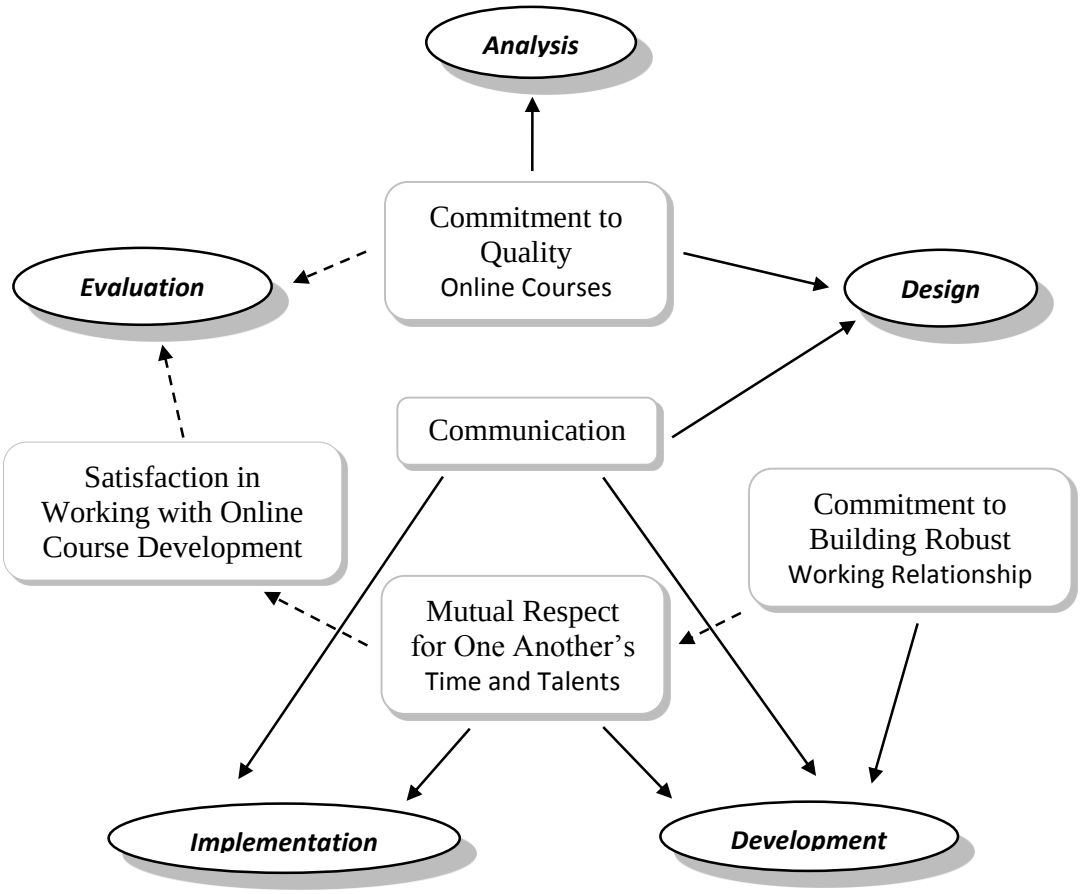

Figure 2. ADDIE model as a conceptual framework. The solid arrows represent primary relationships of themes to corresponding ADDIE components. The dashed arrows represent continuity among themes as they relate to one another and subsequently to an ADDIE component.

aligned with each of the ADDIE steps as they have far-reaching effects. However, it is worth noting that the ADDIE model did not necessarily pertain to development teams. Gagné and colleagues (2005) only referred to a single instructional designer in their description of the model's application. Thus it became necessary for the researcher to expand his inferences of the model to make substantive connections in the context of these survey data and the ADDIE model's components.

Communication

The five themes were not necessarily given any order of importance, but communication was mentioned first because it was a very common subject cited by both instructional designers and professors. The background from which the researcher came lead him to anticipate that communication would indeed be a central factor in designers' and professors' experiences. Several participants considered communication as the essential success factor.

Communication aligned with design, development, and implementation. The design step corresponded to communication through identifying course objectives and defining learning activities. The instructional designer and professor needed to communicate well to insure a unified effort. D5 stated, "Good communication is absolutely essential."

Communication was connected to the ADDIE development stage as this stage involved making decisions about how course materials and activities were to be ordered and presented to students. D4 said that cutting corners in communication was an impediment to success and added that his experience was made more meaningful by,

"Clear communication. Over-communication and over-organization, if there can be such a thing." D2 made a similar observation, "If you are willing to listen to your partner then I think it goes really well."

Communication seemed to have a weaker connection to the implementation step of the ADDIE model, but implementation did involve both designers and professors due to the need to coordinate support for students. To a lesser degree, implementation involved identifying the end user for the finished course, but that did not seem to be a function in which designers and professors took part.

Commitment to Quality Online Courses

The ADDIE model indicated that the quality of the course was related in part to the time available to developers and what they might accomplish in that amount of time (Gagné et al., 2005). Several of the participants noted that a lack of time was an impediment to their development efforts. It was evident that each had an attitude of professionalism and wanted to produce the highest quality course possible, but they struggled to manage the time demands with their existing workloads. However, none of the participants implied or stated that time restraints had a negative impact on their development experiences, only that it was a challenge. It was also evident that instructional designers and professors were mindful of one another's time. This appeared to be a positive contributing factor and a benefit to their collaborative efforts, which was in keeping with the suggestion made by Ceraulo (2005) that fewer differences among designers and professors helped preserve the quality of the course and provide a more optimal learning experience for the student.

Commitment to Building Robust Working Relationship

This theme began the deviation from the technical side of the process to the experiential side, which was the original focus of this study. This theme was still aligned with the development stage of the ADDIE model, but it was also in touch with the interpersonal aspects of the development process, which began to flow into a cultural context. Figure 2 indicates the indirect relationship this theme had with two subsequent themes.

The development stage was the one that involved the most collaboration and direct interaction among partners. This provided the setting for the establishment of the partners' working relationship. As decisions were made and tasks were assigned and carried out, the partners came to know one another as professionals as well as individuals. Several of the participants indicated that their interactions were rewarding on a personal level. Professors in particular noted the skill of their partner designers, but also observed their qualities as people, distinct from their professional attributes. One of the more personal comments was made by D5 when she said, "I think any time you develop a relationship with someone, and they know that you're going to come through for them, they're more likely to get you what you need when you need it." She went on to say that having a good relationship made critiquing the professor's work easier.

D3 made reference to "soft resources," which related to one's attitude and beliefs. The notion of soft resources served to build bridges from one theme to the next, particularly those themes that were more experiential in nature—the desire to build relationships, having a mutual respect for one another and finally, simply enjoying

working with the development partner and building online courses. The soft resources flowed toward the evaluation stage within the model, the stage where those involved took time to examine the experience as a whole. This was considered a reflection of the evaluation process.

Mutual Respect for One Another's Time and Talents

This theme was directly aligned with both the development and implementation stages of the model. As the development stage was the most task-oriented, collaborative efforts were important in achieving objectives and fortifying the experience of working together. The implementation stage involved providing student support as needed. Both the development and implementation stages were contributors to designers' and professors' enhanced experiences by recognizing the need for respect of one another's time and talents. D2 said, "If you are willing to listen to your partner then I think it goes really well." Correspondingly, D1 reported that he was willing to spend more time on a course if he knew that the professor was working hard toward a better course. The researcher inferred that the willingness of the development partners to accommodate one another made up in part for a reduction of resources in the face of budget cutbacks.

Satisfaction in Working with Online Course Development

The emergence of this theme was not from direct statements made by participants. The researcher inferred this finding based on observations of the work environment and culture in which the development partners worked. The professors in particular spoke of

the rewarding experiences they had in working with their partner designers as well as their satisfaction with the results. P3 represented the general attitude of all participants when he said, “The relationship in my opinion makes the whole difference as to whether or not you go work with someone and you get acquainted with them.”

The evaluation step served as an auditing function that could be employed at any point during the course development process. In the context of this study, designers and professors were able to take the opportunity to evaluate their roles in the process and what their feelings were with respect to how well they interacted with one another as well as the more technical aspects of the process.

The evaluation step also provided an opportunity for self-reflection and to consider one’s motivation for participation in the course development process. For designers, their primary responsibility was to provide service to professors, and therefore self-reflection may not have been as relevant to them. However, professors likely had more flexibility in their decisions to participate in online course development, and therefore the evaluation step of the development process may have included more than evaluation of the finished product, but also the potential reward for having engaged in the development process (intrinsic reward such as sense of accomplishment, or extrinsic reward such as monetary or consideration for advancement).

Linking the Data to the Proposition

In this study, the following research questions were addressed: (1) What were the experiences reported by professors and instructional designers in working with one

another during the online course development process, and (2) What meaning did they ascribe to their experiences? Yin (2009) stated that pattern matching is a form of triangulation for linking the data to the proposition. The proposition refers to what should be studied to answer the research question. The researcher observed and documented the work environment, the culture of the work place, and the participants' descriptions of the development process and their interactions with development partners. Thus pattern matching served to link the data to the proposition and strip away alternate explanations.

Communication is Essential

As noted previously, several themes emerged from the data as participants' responses presented a number of patterns. The most prominent pattern reflected the importance participants placed on communication.

D2 said that without effective communication and listening, conflict can arise. D4 noted that he tried to understand how professors communicated and what their beliefs were regarding course materials. In describing success factors, D4 said that a successful development experience depended on good communication, and D5 said that communication was absolutely essential. In reference to impediments to success, D4 said a lack of time resulted in less effective communication. When speaking of her experience in working with professors, D5 noted that it helped to have an open communication line.

As cited earlier, the pretext of this study was the researcher's own observation of the interactions between designers and professors. He observed difficulties resulting from a gap in communication, due in part to the differing backgrounds from which the designer and professor came as well as their differing expectations of the development

effort. The USU professors and designers clearly had a greater cohesiveness in both their communication and expectations. This was demonstrated to be a positive factor which contributed to their experiences and subsequently to the results of their course development efforts.

Respect is Essential

It was evident that the development teams held a mutual respect for one another's efforts. Several designers spoke well of the professors' efforts to submit work on time, to make suggested revisions to improve deliverability of content, and to learn new technologies and techniques for course development. D3 spoke of a professor who was considered a traditional professor with many years of experience, but through dedication and adaptability made a successful transformation to a very skilled online professor. This description was indicative of the general feelings the designers had toward those professors who were dedicated to improving the quality of the online content and their abilities to deliver.

In every case, the professor spoke favorably of his development partner. Each was grateful for the skill and professionalism of the instructional designer.

In general, each participant had respect for his or her partner's time, talent, and willingness to work collaboratively to accomplish a common goal. It was evident that such respect contributed positively to the overall experience of each participant and to the efficiency of the development process.

Commitment is Essential

The aggregated comments of the participants, particularly the instructional designers, gave the clear message that each person's commitment to excellence was necessary for desired outcomes. Several designers referred to the importance of the best practices they adhered to and how those guidelines directed their efforts. To their credit, the designers used the best practices as a framework for development without using them as a heavy-handed rule book for the professors. This demonstrated a level of professionalism and commitment to high quality outcomes while maintaining healthy relationships with their development partners.

For the professors' parts, they were equally committed to the quality of their online courses as their courses were a representation of their academic disciplines, defined standards, and personal teaching philosophies.

Enjoyment is Essential

One benefit to conducting qualitative research is that the researcher is allowed to become part of the phenomenon being studied and infer meaning from participants' responses and surroundings. None of the participants directly stated that enjoyment was a factor in their development efforts, but the researcher detected that such was the case. There was pride in the sense of accomplishment, the feeling that something valuable had been created. There seemed to be a genuine fondness for one another in some cases, the sense that friendship was part of the working relationship. D4 stated, "It's a good experience. I would say it's quite pleasant. The way I approach all of these is as if it's almost a relationship. Many times it's a friendship. It helps me enjoy my job more."

One professor spoke of how the instructional designers genuinely cared about the project, saying, “I don’t know any of them that I don’t feel comfortable going to” (P2). These statements reflected the enjoyment some participants derived from their interactions with development partners and in the process in general. They also related to a principle that motivated individuals are often driven by the need to achieve their goals, goals which they believe are important and will lead to success (Daft, 1991).

Ascribing Meaning to Experiences

As participants gave their responses to the interview questions, the researcher listened to the tone and unspoken messages in their answers. In many cases responses held deeper meaning than just the description of a task or process. The telling of a success story, the intimating of a personal observation and the mild joking about an absurdity all revealed what might be called the “personality” of the FACT. Instructional designers’ experiences typically centered on engaging professors in a process which designers felt was important, not just in terms of delivering a finished product, but also the greater purpose of serving students in the best way possible. Professors’ experiences were focused on doing something that was somewhat foreign to them, but important to them as a part of their dedication to their academic disciplines. Both professors and designers viewed their efforts as more than a series of tasks, but as creating something of value that served a need and accomplished a purpose.

Internalizing these experiences and allowing them to provide guidance and motivation had a positive effect on the development process and the individuals who engaged in it. The strength of their interpersonal associations served to bridge the gulf

among disciplines, personalities and educational backgrounds, providing a common foundation for the work that needed to be done.

Conclusion

This study examined professors and instructional designers who had participated in the online course development process. Each participant demonstrated a commitment to the quality of the student's learning experience, the integrity of the curriculum, and to other individuals involved in the process. Each participant reported his or her experiences and gave some description of how that experience affected the development process. The majority reported positive experiences and expressed satisfaction with their associations with their development partners as well as the creation of quality course materials for the benefit of students.

While the comments were mostly positive, there may have been some benefit to the power of positive attitudes. Feeling positive about the experience translated to greater willingness to be flexible, to accept alternative solutions, and to consider the expertise of the development partner. The researcher observed that both professors and designers were more willing to work with greater diligence on behalf of the development effort when he or she knew that the development partner appreciated his or her efforts, and was willing to reciprocate. This helped build a culture of cooperation between designers and professors. It was evident that the participants enjoyed their associations with their development partners, which contributed to a professional atmosphere and a more pleasant culture within which to work. Their positive feelings made a difference in the

development process itself, which could be sustained over time by instructional designers' practice of documenting successful efforts and interactions and implementing them in all development partnerships.

Though most descriptions were positive, there was an indication that impediments such as limited time and uncooperative attitudes were detrimental to the process and could result in inferior courses and less-than-optimal learning experiences for students. This underpinned the importance of mutual respect for another's limited time.

As these participants demonstrated that a process and a workplace culture could be enhanced by positive interpersonal experiences, the implication to managers was that there was real value in putting forth efforts and resources to make a workplace more conducive to positive interactions. The FACT had a well-established foundation for building and maintaining positive associations among professors and designers. A further implication was that FACT administrators and others such as deans, department heads or faculty representatives may provide and consider information regarding developers' interests and strengths, when recommending pairings of designers and professors as development partners.

A positive contributor to both the FACT's workplace culture and efficacy of process was the Center's best practices guide for online development (see Appendix E, Best Practices for Online Courses). The best practices guide was not discussed in detail, but each designer referred to the guide as an important factor in successful development, either in terms of hard rules to be followed or softer principles to assist development. It was a bit of a paradox that the best practices guide that designers typically observed was

generally unknown to professors. It was evidence that the skills and training of the designers served to bridge any technological or philosophical gap that may have existed between designers and professors. Correspondingly, professors' willingness to adapt and reach beyond their current skill sets supplanted the need for best practices enforcement.

Implications for Further Research

The results of this study have added a single spoke to the wheel of knowledge relating to interpersonal associations and experiences of instructional designers and SMEs as they work together as development partners. There is room for many more spokes.

It is the hope of this researcher that an increased understanding will provide managers, instructional designers, and SMEs with useful tools to implement effective strategies for cultivating productive work environments through ongoing positive interactions.

This study surveyed ten participants, nine of whom were male and only one participant was not Caucasian. That level of homogeneity may have resulted in less diverse responses than what might have been observed in a more diverse sample. Further studies involving a more varied makeup of gender and ethnicity may provide additional perspectives on this research topic.

In contrast to the homogeneity of the participants' demographics, there existed a substantial difference in the participants' course development expertise. The years of online course development experience of the designers far exceeded those of the

professors. This disparity resulted in professors relying heavily on the expertise of the designers. A study of participants with more evenly match levels of expertise may yield findings that could be compared or contrasted to those in this study.

Where this study focused only on the development process (with the assumption that the finished course met intended objectives), further research might examine the evaluation of course outcomes in the context of development teams' interactions. This might be done without the assumption that the finished course meets its intended objectives. Three possibilities would be: (a) evaluation by members of the development team, (b) evaluation by the students taking the course, and (c) evaluation by an objective third party such as institutional research, an assessment team, or an accreditation body.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Interview Protocol

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Before the interviews begin, each participant will be informed that:

- The interview will be digitally recorded (audio only).
- The interview will be conducted in his or her place of work.
- His or her identity will remain confidential throughout the study and in the written report of the study.
- He or she may withdraw from the interview at any time without any negative impact.
- He or she will be asked to sign an informed consent form describing the conditions and risks of participating in the study.
- He or she will be provided a transcript of the interview to check for accuracy.

The following questions will be asked:

1. How long have you served in your present position?
2. What kind of training have you had in development or pedagogy?
3. How many courses have you developed (both online and face-to-face)?
4. How much experience have you had as an instructor in online learning?
5. Please describe any significant or meaningful interactions you have had with your development partner.
6. How did that interaction affect your development efforts?
7. What success factors contribute to the production of online content?
8. What factors of the development environment impede production of online content?

9. How would you characterize your experience with professors/production designers in developing online content?
10. How would you characterize the technical aspects (software and technical requirements) of your online development experience?
11. How would you characterize the human aspects (professors/production designers) of your online development experience?
12. What would you add that describes your experience in working with others on the production team?
13. Describe how your best practices for online development and delivery affect your experience.

Appendix B

Informed Consent

LETTER OF INFORMATION

***Introduction/ Purpose** Dr. Byron Burnham in the Department of Education at Utah State University is conducting a research study to learn more about the experiences had by professors and production designers during the online course development process, and how those experiences affect the development process. You have been asked to take part because you have been engaged in online course development, and you can offer cogent responses to questions regarding your experience. There will be approximately ten total participants in this research. Karl Stevens, a doctoral candidate in Curriculum and Instruction, will assist in this study.

***Procedures** If you agree to be in this research study, you will take part in a face-to-face interview to answer a series of questions related to your experience with other individuals as you develop online course materials. It is anticipated that just one interview session will be needed, though follow-up contact may be necessary. The interview session will likely be less than 90 minutes in length. The interview will be recorded for transcription.

***Risks** Participation in this research study may involve some added risks or discomforts. These include a small risk of loss of confidentiality but steps will be taken to reduce this risk. No personal information will be revealed. A participant's identity will not be revealed in the research findings, nor to other participants.

***Benefits** No direct benefit to the participants is expected. Information gained from this study may provide an indirect benefit to participants by way of a greater understanding of factors that contribute to or detract from an efficient and effective online course development process.

***Explanation & offer to answer questions** Karl Stevens has explained this research study to you and answered your questions. If you have other questions or research-related problems, you may reach (PI) Dr. Burnham at (435) 797-3531.

***Voluntary nature of participation and right to withdraw without consequence**
Participation in research is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without consequence or loss of benefits. You may be withdrawn from this study without your consent by the investigator.

***Confidentiality** Research records will be kept confidential, consistent with federal and state regulations. Only the investigator and Dr. Burnham will have access to the data which will be kept in a locked file cabinet or on a password protected computer in a

locked room. To protect your privacy, personal, identifiable information will be removed from study documents and replaced with a study identifier. Identifying information will be stored separately from data and will be kept only until the related dissertation has been successfully defended. Audio recordings and written transcripts will be destroyed upon the successful dissertation defense.

***IRB Approval Statement** The Institutional Review Board for the protection of human participants at Utah State University has approved this research study. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights or a research-related injury and would like to contact someone other than the research team, you may contact the IRB Administrator at (435) 797-0567 or email irb@usu.edu to obtain information or to offer input.

***Investigator Statement** "I certify that the research study has been explained to the individual, by me or my research staff, and that the individual understands the nature and purpose, the possible risks and benefits associated with taking part in this research study. Any questions that have been raised have been answered."

***Signature of Researcher(s)**

Byron Burnham	**Karl B. Stevens**
_____	_____
Enter Name of PI (or Co-PI)	*Enter Name of Student Researcher*
Principal Investigator	Student Researcher *(or Co-PI)*

Appendix C

Bracketing Interview

BRACKETING INTERVIEW

Conducted by Matthew Barton, Ph.D. April 7, 2011.

Matt: Here's the first question: How have your personal experiences with online education… I used the word colored, but sort of informed your views right now?

Karl: Well, I've not actually taught an online course in my time here at SUU. I did at one point in time, but it certainly wasn't anything comparable to what we do today; it was basically and extended syllabus online, so I don't really have a frame of reference from a teaching point of view, but from an observing point of view, I've watched a lot of professors struggle through the process of getting coursework prepared, I've observed some of the difficulty that's involved in some of the communication part of it, not so much the technology part of it, but the communication between the professor and the technology person who obviously have different backgrounds. You know, one's going to have a terminal degree in some specialized discipline, perhaps years of teaching experience, and then the other is a technology guy that may have a degree in graphic arts or marketing or who knows what, but with something very different from what the professor does, so you have two individuals with different backgrounds, but they're trying to achieve a common goal. So, from an observer's point of view, that's more of what has colored my perspective than actually being a participant in the process.

Matt: OK. So for me, that might be the reason that might be valuable is, does it make you more or less empathetic to faculty concerns about things like the worries about the loss of face-to-face, or creating an academy of super-star faculty who project well in this medium, right? Some of us have a face for radio, as it were, right? (*laughter*) Does that play into having those experiences in maybe having a difficult faculty member who doesn't see the big picture of like, institutional branding on a color scheme or something like that? Is that just being aware of your own thoughts about it?

Karl: Yes. That's an interesting question because my master's degree is actually in marketing, so I look at things more from a marketing point of view, than I would from an academic point of view. So, you know, in terms of the individual who may be interested in portraying himself as a super-star, as you put it, I guess I get that in terms of that individual trying to market himself or herself presumably either for some self-aggrandizement or perhaps for pure promotion of the course…

Matt: Right.

Karl: …you know, no professor wants an empty classroom, right?

Matt: Right.

Karl: And so, I think that the personality of the professor plays in heavily – probably I would guess more so than the personality of the technical adviser (and I'm referring to them as "production designers" in my study) and so the production designer might be more of a gatekeeper or maybe a "law enforcement official" to make sure that the proper protocols of the online format are observed, whereas the professor may be far more interested in the presentation – not concerned about the technical side of it, and so… I'm not sure if I'm answering your question…

Matt: No, I just… Yeah, I just think, and maybe I don't know what the question is… (*laughter*). I just think if there's – if you see it a particular way when a faculty member comes along and says, "You know what? Why does it have to be 14 point font, New York Times, I like Gothic, right? Or I like some[thing else]… so some of the minutia of stuff that faculty get lost in on committees and other thing like… if you see that and you have a particular angle toward that, in your interactions, it would seem to me possibly to set up the stage like, you know, a label maker that says, "Whiner," "Partial Whiner," right? (*laughter*), "Like This Person Cuz They Think Like I Do."

Karl: Well, OK. A couple things come to mind. First one is, uh, when you refer to minutia, there has been some push-back that I've observed regarding what I consider to be relatively insignificant issues…

Matt: Right.

Karl: …you know, a color scheme on a page. Or, I want my picture here instead of there.

Matt: Right.

Karl: And so, yeah, sometimes what might seem to be nothing but a preference can become an obstacle. Um, now I forgot what my other though was… Um... Oh, intellectual property is what I was going to talk about. There are professors that feel like if, and this is just my perspective…

Matt: Right.

Karl: …if someone is giving them direction on how something ought to be structured, even if it's in terms of Internet protocol, they may view that as a threat to their creativity on the shallow end, and on the deep end, a threat to their intellectual property.

Matt: Right.

Karl: You know, "You're not gonna to tell me how to teach my class" kind of an attitude.

Matt: Yeah.

Karl: And so, uh, and we've always tried to make it very clear that that is not our intent at all, and our job is to help deliver a product.

Matt: Right.

Karl: And the product is the result of the creativity, the intellect, the experience, the discipline, and so on, of the professor. And so, I think that's where we experience some of the communication gap, is that, uh, you are trying to achieve a common goal, but that might not be readily evident to everybody involved.

Matt: Alright. That's true. I just think that probably shows up as a potential, even if it's small, a potential point of like, you know, for me at least, I don't know if this an actual term, but you know, interaction irritation. You just kind of go, really, you can't see the forest through the trees, and I would think that that could maybe, you know, shade your views a little if you aren't careful.

So that's that one. The second one I thought about in just kind of reading through the questions you're going to ask is, does your experience with the lead designer or production designer impact the believability or credibility of what faculty say? So, for instance, in having to manage the relationship between the production designer and a faculty member, is there a potential path that you lean toward, for instance if you have a production designer that might get on your nerves or might be sort of hard to deal with, or that maybe doesn't have the aptitude to be kind of light on their conversational feet, so to speak (*laughter*), and we have some faculty members that plod pretty heavily as well, does that change how you view a point of view as to what you allow through and what you don't?

Karl: That's a really good question, and I think that that has evolved - my response to that has evolved over time. When I was first the director of Distance Education I was basically, um, my feeling was, "We've got rules and we need to enforce them, and we need to make sure that everybody is doing what we want them to do." I quickly found out that that didn't fly very well. And so, my position has softened a little bit, but yet I still supervise the individual whose job it is to make sure that those rules are observed, at least to some degree. Now, I think that we have over several years come to the point where we've kind of determined that, um, we'll do all we can, we'll do our due diligence, and we'll do what we think is best, but ultimately the professor is the one who has to answer to the student if there's a technical problem that isn't resolved, or if the learning experience isn't what it ought to be in the student's perspective.

Matt: Right.

Karl: So, but to answer your original question, I would say that most of the time I lean toward the side of the production designer because that's basically what my shop does. But on the other hand, we do facilitate the delivery of the product. So, the product does in

fact, have to be deliverable from a technical standpoint, but from a quality standpoint, it needs to be useable. So I think I'm doing a pretty good job of not committing to either side (*laughter*).
Matt: Well, that's probably a pretty good perspective because if you are like, sort of, I'm going to protect my own turf, this is our home court, I think you lean that direction.

Karl: And I have to say that I think that was my original position back when I was immature in this position, that I was really concerned about my home turf. And we had something that we had to protect. Well, we've gotten to the point now where we – I think we have a better understanding that we are all in this together, we do have a common goal, at least we should, and it's gonna require working together instead of pointing fingers and quoting guidelines.

Matt: OK. Good. The "B" question on that is pretty much the same thing, so I think you've hit on that pretty well. Next on out of this group of four: It's related off this question about success factor you talked about in one of your [research] questions; the question I had was, what is a success factor and here's why I think that kind of matters: is there an assumption here about a best practices that you might have in mind the faculty don't, right? There's sort of an over-arching scheme of Distance Ed and faculty go, "I don't think that's going to work," and it's kind of a casting-lots contest to see who's right.

Karl: And we may very well get into that. I don't have a specific question in my interview about best practices simply because I'm going to be interviewing people from Utah State University, and I don't know what their best practices are, but I can certainly ask for the professor's prospective on that as to how they observe those best practices, whether or not they consider them to be a help or a hindrance. Um, so I have to be very careful, I think, to not thrust too much of an SUU perspective into a USU environment, and I've had to make that very clear in my proposal, that this is a USU study even though I'm coming at it from my position at SUU and obviously our operation here is much smaller than USU's and so, yes, that will become very relevant I think, and as far as success factors, I'm not defining that either. I think that I'll leave that up to the production designer or the professor that I'm interviewing, to let them put in their input as to what they think success factors are.

Matt: OK. The reason I thought about that is I've been to two webinars – one from the fabulous Penn State World Campus, right?

Karl: I have one of their hats (*laughter*).

Matt: Yeah. So we're sitting there, and I didn't see anybody, like I saw some slides to people talking over, and we can text in, and I'm like, man, this is boring. And I went to the GRE one, which I have to tell you, GRE automatically is synonymous with boring for me, but I went to that one, and it was a lot better because there were actual people and

you could sort of, you know, log in even though it's more of a video performance but it kind of had that element to it. So I was thinking sometimes from a designer point of view, it might be more about the prettiness of the page, "Well, you need more videos," or, "You need more graphic icons," and I'm thinking, no I don't, what I need from a faculty point of view is, I need the student to read this article. That's where the learning's going to come, not from what it looks like. The actual reading and consuming the text; that's kind of what I was thinking about.

Karl: And certainly, aesthetics is a part of it, and that comes back to my marketing background, but yeah, the students are gonna want something that is pleasing to look at. There's a balance there to be struck, I think, between what looks nice and flashy and what works.

Matt: Right.

Karl: And, uh, I think we've done a pretty good job of that here in terms of our general template that we use; it's got a few key elements that are common to everything, and as we transition to this new Canvas, I think it's going to get even simpler. It's going to be pretty bare-bones in terms of flashiness.

Matt: Right.

Karl: It's structured to be a content delivery mechanism. So, um, that and my committee chair and the rest of my committee thought that that might actually be an interesting component to this study because I'm doing this right at the very moment when we are transitioning from one LMS to another. That in itself may provide a little bit of, I don't know, some skewed results, perhaps, if there's some anxiety right at this moment from production designers and professors because of the transition we're going through. The apple cart's being upset right now, and that alone may provide some different perspective during, you know, a six-month period of time.

Matt: OK. That's good. The last one that I thought about in this grouping was, is there any bias that you have about learning? For instance, you have a position in promoting and facilitating online growth at SUU which may set up a mindset for you about, "I really think Distance Education works, I think it's really valuable, it's underutilized." And that's partly because that's the row you're asked to hoe, right"

Karl: Um… Yes. I have a bias (*laughter*).

Matt: So does that encourage that thinking online is a better way to go, a better way to invest, than say, face-to-face seat time learning? Not saying that you would exclude one over the other, but…

Karl: The answer to that depends on a number of things. The first part of it is yes, I do

have a bias. And not that I think that online is better; I think that it's a viable alternative. And I've had this discussion with one of our professors here who was discouraged (that's a nice way of putting it) about the prospect of our UNIV 1010 class being delivered online, believing that if it's an orientation type class, and if it's supposed to be focusing on our experiential education emphasis here, then a detached online model is the worst way you could go about it. And my response to that was, the LMS is a tool – it's nothing but a mechanism. It doesn't determine the outcome of your learning objectives and your goals. The results of the effort aren't dependent on the tool so much as they are the creativity, the intellect, the dedication, and such of the professor. How much effort is that professor willing to put into making that best learning experience possible? So, I will never say that online education is better or even that it's equal. All I'm saying is that it can be equivalent. You might not get the exact same result but the question is, what result can you get, and are you satisfied with that? So, um, yeah that does… I do have a bit of a bias there but only insomuch that I'm defensive against the notion that an online education is necessarily inferior. I don't think that's true. I don't believe it's true.

Matt: OK. So, I was just thinking about that, so here's a more personal case in point. So take my Graduate Seminar in Health; I try to do collaborative learning groups that have an actual experience. So, as a case in point, we opened a new spine and pain center at the hospital. I have a former student who is the communications director. I called him and said I'm looking for a hands-on experience for some of my graduate students. Do you have any? So we got a couple. So for this spine and pain center, they dealt with it just like they would in that job, so to show them a viable job outcome, here's a communication degree or a master's program; go do this. So they set up the ribbon-cutting event, they dealt with coordinating the speeches, they ordered the menus, they did all the door prizes, they arranged the food, they wrote the press releases, they wrote the coverage, the contacted the newspaper, and they set everything up, which was a pretty good experience. So, what I hear you saying is, I don't know how in the world I could ever replicate that online. Maybe there's a similar marketing thing I could do for health, but for me, a hands-on thing would require me to be here. You're saying it's fine if that's what you choose to do, it's great, but if you're going to use this LMS as a tool for your class, you've got to come up with a different way to get to that same end of experience.

Karl: Yeah. And I think it should also be acknowledged that not every course is suitable for that type of learning environment. An example of that is a couple of years ago we were looking at the possibility of developing an engineering course, and the professor was insistent that a part of that course would require students to come to campus some hands-on experience of some kind. And I said, "Well, wait a minute. This is going to be an online course. In other words, anybody in the world could be taking it. You can't require a student to come to campus if they're in Afghanistan or on an aircraft carrier or whatever." And so we ended up not developing the course simply because we recognized that it wouldn't be suitable for on line delivery. So that's a part of the wisdom involved - you have to recognize what the limitations are and decide whether or not you can live with them.

Matt: OK. Good. OK, the other three that I wrote down were more related to the [research] questions, and they may be less about bias and more about clarification. I'll just throw them at you and see what you think. First one is in here, the question that talks about experience and human aspects. So, my question was, how are you characterizing experience and the human aspects differently? One [research] question is about one, and one question's about the other.

Karl: I may need to clarify to the interviewees that by experience, I'm referring to their interaction with their development counterpart. So the professor would be referring the experience he or she has had with the technologist. So, it's kind of a generalized term of the interpersonal experience. And then as far as the human aspect, that relates to the same thing; I put in there human aspects so that the respondent could differentiate between successes or anxieties that they have with a person as opposed to with a technology.

Matt: OK. OK.

Karl: And I've got in there a corresponding question regarding technology

Matt: OK. Next one kind of in this vein is, I wonder if you might be assuming something about faculty knowledge; you ask them about success, and I rattle off an answer, "Oh this was amazingly well," my biggest puffery that I can muster. And then I say, OK this is what works online. And I'm thinking in my head, OK even though I'm not necessarily… you know I come from a background of rhetoric and textual analysis, not stats, but I'm still thinking I probably will say, yeah this works; I haven tested it. So I wonder if they can really speak to that, you know, can I talk about success, even a compartmentalized variety of it, if that makes sense.

Karl: Uh, yeah. It is probably not realistic to believe that someone's going to claim failure…

Matt: Yeah!

Karl: …or own up to failure. So the question itself is a little bit biased, but I would characterize that not necessarily in term of success of the students coming out with, you know, A's and B's, but more in terms of a, I don't know, maybe more of a philosophical success that, yes it was worth the effort, we all felt like something good was accomplished, as opposed to the notion that it was a horrible experience and we ended up hating each other. So, maybe my question is a little too nebulous, I don't know, but I'm not talking about a statistical measure of success. I'm talking more of an emotional, I guess, or philosophical measure.

Matt: Yeah, or even I think a lot of people run on sort of a gut feeling of success like, you know after a while whether or not you've done a good job helping people, you know,

going into an exam you have a review day and you have a good feeling that you know the class is going to perform well because they're answering the questions, they've been participating.
Karl: It might be wise for me to clarify with the interviewees that my questions are not related to some measure of statistical success, but more of an interpersonal, feel-good kind of success. Maybe that's not a scientific term.

Matt: Yeah, or even self-defined, like, what components of your class have been successes? Or on the other hand, no one wants to admit failure, but I'm sure there are probably some things where you say, "You know what, that's got to be redone, or overhauled, or even demolished."

Karl: Yeah. Now I should clarify that I am not interested necessarily in the final product of a course that's ready to deliver. I'm more interested in the process of getting to that point, so when we talk about the experiences, I'm referring to the development process. My assumption is that the end product is going to be useable. Otherwise, it's a failure to be thrown in the trash. There are some assumptions I am making that the course is useable, it meets a minimal standard set forth by the academic department that it represents, and so on. So, I'm saying yes, I'm assuming that the fact that I'm talking to you means that you had a successful development effort, at least in terms of you ended up with a product to deliver to the student. If that were not true that person probably would not have been purposefully selected because I didn't select these respondents; they were chosen for me based on some criteria that we set forth. So my assumption is that the fact that they were chosen indicates that they have a class that they are teaching which in itself implies some measure of success.

Matt: Alright. The last one might just be for their own ideas, but I started thinking about in here you used the word "others." Who are the others you reference on the production team. Because I mean, if you're mainly touching the production designer you need like a…

Karl: Oh. OK. That was to indicate the possibility that there may be more than one person on the production team… Oh, I'm sorry, I understand what you're getting at now. When I say "other," I mean the other person. So if you were a professor, the other person would be the technologist, and if you were the technologist, the other person would be the professor.

Matt: OK. Good.

Karl: So it's a generic term for the other person.

Matt: And then also on there with others and the other side, it's kind of like, if there's in some cases there may be production designer singular, in other cases there may be a production team?

Karl: There may be.

Matt: We kind of have a team situation here.

Karl: Yeah, but my understanding is at Utah State that they are paired up and they basically work together indefinitely.

Matt: Til death do us part.

Karl: Yeah, so almost like married couples. In fact we jokingly referred to these matched pairs as married couples.

Matt: OK. Excellent.

Karl: And that was a part of my research design that we wanted to interview matched pairs, but they won't know necessarily (I'm not going to tell them that I'm interviewing their counterpart) until perhaps afterwards or they may find out on their own.

Matt: Or if they may read it in the dissertation abstract (*laughter*). Right?

Karl: But I'm not going to tell them that. So I want their answers to be spontaneous without knowing… none of the respondents will know who else I'm interviewing.

Matt: OK. Good. Well, those are the questions that I saw and see, and I think you have a pretty good handle on what you're, you know, maybe some tweaking and your own bias.

Karl: Perhaps I should disclose at this point in time, and I do indicate this in my proposal, that my inspiration for conducting this study is based on my observations here in the position I've had here for the past six years, so it has become very interesting to me the dynamic or lack of a dynamic that individuals have in this process. And so, obviously here we have a very small operation and it would not be appropriate for me to interview people here, so I'm basically replicating at USU what I've observed here. If that makes sense.

Matt: It does.

Karl: Well, OK. Do you have any immediate analysis, psycho-analysis of my… (*laughter*).

Matt: Psycho-analysis: I think you've got a good handle on your questions, I think you've got a good handle on why you ask your questions, I think you've got a good handle on a lot of the pitfalls based on responses as much as anything, like, "I probably ought to," or, "I did or I didn't recognize…," so I think that you can see that. I also think that you're on board with. "I have an investment in online education," so that's out in the open, you're

not pretending it's not there. However, I'm also not going to say, "You know, the bricks-and-mortar thing that we've been doing for a long time is an antiquated horse and we're gonna have to put it out to pasture." I don't think you're saying that. I just think that you're saying, "Let's look at these tools," right, because we have different learning styles, you know, sort of the Harvard school of multiple intelligence business, we have these different tools and styles, we've identified education literature, that we have different kinds of learners… well, let's use all the tools we've got to help all the learners learn, right, what helps them learn best. So I think it's good.

Karl: Well, thank you.

Matt: You're welcome. I hope that helps.

Appendix D

Letter of Verification

April 11, 2011

This letter is to confirm that Karl Stevens, a Doctoral Candidate at Utah State University, participated in a bracketing interview with me on Thursday, April 7, 2011 to ascertain/correct bias in planned questions related to his dissertation.

After working through the interview, I was very pleased, not only with Karl's responses, but the care taken to acknowledge and account for his biases. I think it is important for faculty to know that he isn't on some covert mission to destroy the "bricks and mortar" approach to education rather he is interested in providing viable outlets and options for universities to fulfill their mission without compromising their educational product. However, he is also wise enough to realize faculty need to have a supportive environment to make that conversion and then straddle the line of course delivery options in an age where educational dollars are highly scrutinized by state governments.

The other positive feature coming from this interview is his willingness to realize that there are some corrective features that need to take place in order for him to gain the depth and richness that can come from qualitative inquiry. He has already transcribed the interview and worked to make small, but necessary tweaking to his questions so that the participants receive the intellectual care they deserve.

I have confidence that these questions and Karl's approach will be both pleasant and revelatory as a process and an end result. He is invested in this project and his desire to make it as solid as possible, are evident.

Matthew H. Barton, Ph.D.
Communication Department
Associate Professor/Director of Graduate Study
Southern Utah University

Appendix E

Best Practices for Online Courses

BEST PRACTICES FOR ONLINE COURSES

PLANNING

- Different content, different levels, different populations demand different Instructional Design parameters.
- Provide a statement of course structure and organization or a map of course content to facilitate navigation of course material.
    - Should include discussion of which BlackBoard tools are enabled and how they are to be used in the course (e.g. Calendar, Tasks, My Grades, Mail).
- Establish policy for degree of instructor feedback and participation in online component of class.
    - May include discussion board participation and use of grade book or other features of the course.
    - May include type and frequency of instructor emails or messages and preferred method of communication from students (e.g. email or internal Mail).
    - May include virtual office hours, copies of syllabi and assignments posted in Blackboard, discussion folders for general questions and comments, prompt posting of scores in grade book, digital receipts for assignments, etc.
- Keep it simple. Simple always beats complex.
- Test Drive your plan.

BUILDING

- Provide a statement in the syllabus explaining student expectations in relationship to use of BlackBoard.
    - Should include instructions for accessing BlackBoard and minimum requirements for use of BlackBoard.
- Build content in proper format: HTML for online viewing, PDF for downloading and printing, Rich Text for editable documents.
- Keep future duplication in mind when building and adding content.
- Don't bury content. Keep things on the top level.
- Don't modify the course menu unless you have to.
- Triple check all links and settings by using "Student View."
- Use Course Links to help students navigate

COMMUNICATING

- Belt AND suspenders: email, discussion board, announcements.
- Use either email or internal mail tool, but never both.
- Actively manage discussion area. Close bloated or old forums, move relevant forums up.

- Establish clear participation expectations.
- Use Groups to "shrink" the class.
- Use a clearly written policy for dealing with inevitable interruptions students may have with their access to the Internet and BlackBoard.
    - May include grace periods, pools for resetting quizzes, repeatable quizzes, alternative means of submitting assignments, etc.

ASSESSMENT

- Beware the lure of objective assessments…
- Use assignment manager whenever possible to streamline and enable comments.
- Should students see the grade book?
    - Students value the feedback on progress.
    - Students may demand instant grade updates.
- Retain flexibility in grading: resist the urge to sharply quantify everything.
- Take the time to build extensive test pools

ADDITIONAL BEST PRACTICES

- Open your classroom to your peers.
- Don't use tools you can't teach your students to use.
- Email the Instructional Designers for advice.
- Ask students about your course

Appendix F

Response Coding

RESPONSE CODING

Please describe any significant or meaningful interactions you have had with your development partner.	
Designers	Themes
Some pretty good experiences. I think it has to do with their level of motivation, maybe their commitment to their course. Communication is important. Cooperation and collaboration in helping each other. I've had some very meaningful interactions. It always starts with the initial consultation where I listen and try to understand their pedagogical beliefs, what's important to them. I've had the opportunity to build a lot of good personal experiences.	Motivation Commitment Communication Cooperation
Professors	Themes
It went beyond nuts and bolts; he knew what could be done in an online environment, and he gave me some options. It was helpful. The willingness to take the time to teach me how to do it. Met with instructional designer and mapped out what needed to be done. We've worked together. We met on a weekly basis when I first started. My instructional designer and I are tight. We work well together. D5 is easy to work with. She doesn't try to impose her thinking.	Cooperation

How did that interaction affect your development efforts?	
Designers	Themes
I give all sorts of time and attention to courses that I know professors are really engaged with. If we think we can drive the instructor's teaching skill, that's wrong. We have to try to compromise with how they teach. I believe the most important resources are the soft ones: attitudes and beliefs about the technology. By doing that, there's a trust. I think any time you develop a relationship with someone, and they know that you're going to come through for them, they're more likely to get you what you need when you need it.	Relationships
Professors	Themes
He helped me streamline what I wanted in the absence of face-to-face interaction. It helped really well. It's worked pretty good. Unbelievable. I couldn't have done it without him. She is a quality person and highly organized which helps me to be the same.	Working relationships

What success factors contribute to the production of online content?	
Designers	Themes
A good understanding of the instruction goals and intended outcomes. Objectives and learning goals. Understanding the big picture of technology. We have to understand our institution's history and our faculty's culture. To understand what your beliefs, skills, and practices are. Clear communication. Good communication is absolutely essential.	Understanding Communication
Professors	Themes
Connecting with them early. They are a resource. Readiness and availability. Their willingness to seek out answers to problems. The fact that they really demonstrate care, a genuine care. Technician's being flexible with immediate needs. Organization. Honesty.	Cooperation

What factors of the development environment impede production of online content?	
Designers	Themes
Limited time probably is the biggest. Pride and ego. People just don't have the time to do it. Not having enough time. Other projects and just busy-ness on either person's part.	Lack of time
Professors	Themes
The standard 9-5 thing, Monday through Friday. It may be the space. How much [physical] space there is for us to work together. My inability to use all the technology. Coding. Workload.	Lack of time Technical barriers

How would you characterize your experience with professors/production designers in developing online content?	
Designers	Themes
It's been positive. Most profs who come in here are willing to work with their designer. I've had a few bad eggs (maybe one or two) where they just work with me at all, they would just be very, very difficult. Very much service oriented. I characterize myself as a listener. Our interactions have been largely positive. Very good. It's a good experience. I would say it's quite pleasant. It's been really good; it's a good process.	Positive interactions
Professors	Themes
Very positive. Excellent. Great. It's been great. It's been excellent. Very rewarding and educational.	Positive interactions

How would you characterize the technical aspects (software, technical requirements) of your online development experience?	
Designers	Themes
It plays a big role. We try not to make the technology a limiter, but in some cases it is. You have to understand how to technology has been developed and designed. Because we've had some success with people adopting some of our ideas, it has lead to them having better experiences. It has a tremendous amount of effect. The technical experience can be different depending on who it is that's doing the development.	Technology is key to success
Professors	Themes
It's good. I don't see it as too restrictive. Very good. Good. It's been a great experience. Patience! D5 has been very helpful and patient.	Positive outlook

How would you characterize the human aspects (professors/production designers.) of your online development experience?	
Designers	Themes
I'd say the human element has more to do with the outcome than does the technology element in the end. I think it's really important to build rapport and trust. I think the most important thing I can do is helping an instructor understand what their teaching style is. Communication and trust. I've had really positive experiences.	Positive relationships
Professors	Themes
That is the highlight. Very genuine and empathic. Really good. Been a lot of fun. It's very rewarding.	Positive relationships

What would you add that describes your experience in working with others on the production team?	
Designers	Themes
It's always a very fluid process, but it helps to start out with a good design process. As a designer, you have to first contribute your knowledge about instructional design. It all comes down to communication. The positive feedback when the process is done is really telling of our experience and process together.	Positive interactions
Professors	Themes
It's been a challenge to teach online, but that's because there's a limit to what you can do in an online format. But instructional designers have set the ship straight beforehand, and convincing me that this would be a good idea. There are so few of them. They do an excellent job. I am really looking forward to this first class ending and getting course evaluations back. I want to keep doing this, make it better, refine it. It was a huge undertaking when I was first asked to develop a class. Now I'm actually looking forward to doing some others.	Positive attitude

Describe how your best practices for online development and delivery affect your experience.	
Designers	Themes
Best practices are very much seen as important and we see them as very useful guidelines. You have to have a really flexible model. If you don't have an organized structure, it's very obvious to the students. Most of those technical aspects are not as important as looking at the big picture. Not really any issues. People don't really think of them as a rule book, rather, this is what I know works.	Best practices are important
Professors	Themes
I am familiar with the concept of best practices, but I haven't heard about them here. [Not familiar with best practices] It didn't factor in because I wasn't involved. If you don't have a system in place you'll go right or left, so it has to be programmed really well. I haven't ever seen a best practices guide. But I can tell you that if someone had handed me a book of rules, I'd have said skip it.	Unfamiliar with best practices

CURRICULUM VITAE

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EDUCATION

Doctor of Philosophy 2012	Utah State University, Logan, Utah Curriculum and Instruction
Master of Business Administration 1999	Utah State University, Logan, Utah Marketing
Bachelor of Art 1997	Southern Utah University, Cedar City, Utah Business Administration, Marketing Honors: Graduated Magna Cum Laude

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

1998 – Present	Southern Utah University, Cedar City, Utah Adjunct Professor, School of Business Principles of Marketing International Marketing Personal Finance First Year Seminar
Summer 2011	Utah State University, Logan, Utah Guest Lecturer TEAL 7325 *Instructional Leadership*

PRESENTATIONS

Stevens, K. B., & Campbell, L. (2000). *The Utah collaborative criminal justice associate degree program.* University Professional Continuing Education Association (UPCEA) Region West Conference. Coeur d'Alene, ID.

Stevens, K. B. (2001). *Marketing distance education.* Association for Continuing Higher Education (ACHE) Tri-Regional Conference. Sacramento, CA.

Stevens, K. B. (2002). *The Utah collaborative criminal justice associate degree program.* ACHE Tri-Regional Conference. Sacramento, CA.

Stevens, K. B., et al. (2002). *Distance education marketing outline* (panel discussion). UPCEA Region West Conference. Anchorage, AK.

Stevens, K. B., McCaughan, W., & Rosenwald, J. (2003). *Distance education marketing and operations panel discussion.* UPCEA Region West Conference. Las Vegas, NV.

Stevens, K. B. (2004). *Lick or click: An e-mail direct marketing plan.* ACHE Tri-Regional Conference. Eugene, OR.

Stevens, K. B. (2006). *Best practices for online course development.* ACHE Tri-Regional Conference. Sacramento, CA.

Stevens, K. B., & Ellis, C. O. (2006). *Best practices for online course development.* UPCEA Region West Conference. Salt Lake City, UT.

Stevens, K. B. (2007). *Concurrent enrollment as a collaborative partnership.* ACHE Tri-Regional Conference. Portland, OR.

Stevens, K. B. (2008). *A distance doctorate degree program (from a student's perspective).* UPCEA Region West Conference. Missoula, MT.

Stevens, K. B. (2011). *Strengths, differences in distance education vs. face-to-face concurrent enrollment.* Utah Alliance for Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships. Ogden, UT.

Stevens, K. B. (2011). *When worlds collide: A tale of online course development.* UPCEA Region West Conference. San Diego, CA.

Stevens, K. B. (2012). Student commencement speaker, USU Southwest Region. Ephraim, UT.

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Member: University Professional & Continuing Education Association
Association for Continuing Higher Education
Utah Alliance for Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships
Utah Campus Compact

Chair: ACHE Region 10, 2005-2006
UPCEA Region West Awards Committee 2002-2006

LEADERSHIP

Committee Service: Southern Utah University
- Academic Computer Users Committee
- University Strategic Planning Committee
- Marketing and Public Relations Committee
- University Curriculum Committee
- Distance Education Advisory Committee
- Service-Learning Committee

Regional
- ACHE Regional Conference Planning Committee, 2006
- Moderator for ACHE Regional Online Conference, 2008
- ACHE Regional Board Member, 2006-2012