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# About this issue,

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*Kim Hales, Editor in Chief  
Utah State University*

It is with great pride that we present the Fall 2019 issue of *The Journal on Empowering Teaching Excellence*. This issue has interesting articles, case studies, and a book review, all focused on cultivating excellence in education from a variety of strategies.

Mingzhen Bao, Adam L. Selhorst, Teresa Taylor Moore, and Andrea Dilworth (2019) from Ashford University present a case study titled “Enhanced teaching requirements: A case study of instructional growth on student academic performance and satisfaction in an online classroom.” In this study, Bao, et al. take a close look at the outcomes (GPA, course completion, and pass rate) for students when online instructors are presented with enhanced requirements. By focusing on increasing faculty communication, subject-matter expertise, mentoring, and more, researchers documented improved student outcomes. This is great news for students as well as for instructors who have long advocated for better support in their online teaching.

Jennifer Hunter and Brayden Ross (2019) from Southern Utah University spent over three years analyzing more than 1200 online courses and documented the results in their article, “Does increased online interaction between instructors and students positively affect a student’s perception of quality for an online course?” The overall linear relationship between interactions and perception of quality in the case studies are notable, suggesting that value of increasing student-to-instructor interaction in online learning. The article further engages in important dialogue about the importance of personalized education and the impact it has.

In the article “Assessing community-engaged learning impacts using ripple effects mapping,” Benjamin J. Muhlestein and Roslynn McCann from Utah State University studied the impact of an upper-level, undergraduate, service-learning course. This course was created to help students “gain critical skills in communicating and participating in local sustainability efforts”. The article documents powerful impacts on student learning, clear benefits for community partners, as well as other benefits. The discussion on how to apply ripple effects mapping has application for teaching excellence across delivery methods.

In the article “Reflective practice: The impact of self-identified learning gaps on professional development,” Joanna C. Weaver, Matthew Ryan Lavery, and Sarah Heineken of Bowling Green State University present the idea that “not every topic nor instructional scenario can be addressed in the program coursework”. They examine the usefulness of professional development as a means to offer pre-service teachers opportunities to self-select instructional content. Their findings are especially interesting, and suggest that self-selecting professional development activities based on self-reflection has potential to increase the value of the professional development and help pre-service candidates transition to teaching professionals.

Finally, Karin deJong-Kannan (2019) from Utah State University shares a review of Joshua Eyer’s book *How Humans Learn: The Science and Stories behind Effective College Teaching* (West Virginia University Press, 2018). In her review, she examines Eyer’s writing regarding student engagement and how it impacts the quantity and quality of student learning. Dr. deJong-Kannan describes Eyer’s synthesis of findings across a wide-range of fields, culminating in five factors that drive student engagement: curiosity, sociality, emotion, authenticity, and failure. Book reviews will continue to be a feature in future issues of the Journal on Empowering Teaching Excellence, providing an opportunity for educators to share insights into books informing the field of education and teaching excellence. We welcome other book review submissions.

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