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Faculty Perceptions of Instructional Strategies that Foster Student Engagement in Online Courses

Sharon M. Hope
Walden University

Walden University

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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Sharon Hope

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Chief Academic Officer

Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University
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Abstract

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MA, College of St. Rose, 2006

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Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Developing online instructional strategies for increasing student engagement and success is significant locally and nationally due to growth in the online field, advances in technology, and the need for colleges to maximize student success. This study stemmed from the desire of administrators at an upstate New York private college to discover additional ways to design and deliver effective online instruction. The purpose of this qualitative instrumental case study was to discover faculty perceptions of and experiences with instructional strategies that they used to foster student engagement in online learning. Kearsley and Shneiderman's engagement theory formed the study's conceptual framework. Ten faculty members, who had taught online for at least 3 years at the study site, completed an open-ended, anonymous online survey, provided documents for analysis, and participated in a semi-structured, one-on-one interview. Data analysis revealed five themes that add insight to the attributes of student engagement theory by discovering instructional strategies that foster interaction for online students: instructor presence, effective communication, course consistency, engaging content, and a humanizing learning environment. Using these findings, a position paper was written, which includes the recommendation that a new professional development initiative, a communities-of-practice e-learning site, be created to share study findings. Dissemination of study findings at conferences may increase online practitioners' knowledge of instructional strategies that engage online learners and improve student satisfaction and success, potentially resulting in positive social change.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate my dissertation to the memory of my mom, Lena, who encouraged me to pursue my dreams and passed on a love for education.

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I wish to thank my husband, Frank, whose words of encouragement and never-ending support made this doctoral journey possible. Thank for you for all the time you spent reading my work and providing assistance. I would not have been successful without your love and support. I am blessed to have you in my life.

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I wish to thank my committee members who have given their guidance, expertise, and time to better my work. I would like to express a special thanks to my committee chair, Dr. Kerry Burner, for her understanding, patience, and most of all her good-natured support and comments. Thank you, Dr. Laurie Bedford, for your assistance, your great feedback, and your quick responses.

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Section 1: The Problem

Researchers have concluded that colleges are in need of faculty who can design and deliver successful online instructional strategies that engage online learners and that lead to student satisfaction and success (Armellini & DeStefani, 2015; Chakraborty & Nafukho, 2015; McMurty, 2013). In addition, scholars have noted that no monolithic pathway currently exists to understand the combination of mechanisms that foster student engagement (Kasworm & Abdrahim, 2014; Lawson & Lawson, 2013) or the instructional strategies that engage online learners. Engaged students have, however, been found to exhibit a sense of satisfaction and ultimately are more successful in higher education (Freeman & Wash, 2013; Lumpkin, Achen, & Dodd, 2015; National Survey of Student Engagement, 2015, p. 1). Additional research may help scholars and stakeholders better understand student engagement and its effect on educational practice.

There are several reasons that support the need for continued research to discover ways for online faculty to design and deliver successful online instructional strategies to engage online learners. First, the demand for online learning continues to grow, and this growth has spurred higher education institutions to examine course content and quality (Allen & Seaman, 2015; Boton & Gregory, 2015; Hathaway & Norton, 2014; LaBarbera, 2013; Vivekananthamoorthy & Naganathan, 2015). Second, as technology advances, higher education institutions are finding it challenging to design and deliver online instruction that incorporates new technologies which engage students (Albert, Blanchard, Kier, Carrier, & Gardner, 2014; Shattuck & Anderson, 2013; Schmidt, Hodge, & Tschida, 2013). Finally, the online learning environment has exhibited lower success

rates than traditional learning, which has led many higher education institutions to continually pursue new ways to engage online learners and increase student satisfaction and success (Allen & Seaman, 2015; Betts & Heaston, 2014; Boston et al., 2014; Boton & Gregory, 2015; Khurana & Boling, 2014; Yuan & Kim, 2014). Continued research has the potential to lead to greater understanding of student engagement and guide practitioners to create more effective online instructional strategies.

For these reasons, many higher education institutions are attempting to discover successful online instructional strategies that their faculty can use to engage students. The local study site is also seeking insight about strategies that engage online learners and improve student satisfaction and success in online courses (vice president of academic affairs/dean, personal communication, January 14, 2016). Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative instrumental case study was to discover instructional strategies that faculty teaching online at the local site have designed and delivered that they perceive as having fostered student engagement in online learning. Accordingly, the significance of this study reflects the continued need for research into the dynamics of instructional strategies that engage online learners and lead to student satisfaction and success.

The findings from this study may assist the local site in enhancing the knowledge of present and future faculty who teach online about instructional strategies that engage online learners. Sharing of effective instructional strategies may enhance online student satisfaction and success at the local site and foster more collegiality among faculty members. A desired outcome of the study would be to bring about social change through the sharing of published or presented material at the local site as well as at regional

conferences. Sharing the collective knowledge gathered from the study may assist current and future online practitioners in creating better online learning environments for their students.

In Section 1, I provide a definition of the problem that prompted the study followed by the rationale. I present local and professional perspectives on issues related to online learning and student engagement as supporting evidence. Specific terms associated with the investigation are explained, followed by the significance of the study and the guiding research question that I sought to answer. I end Section1 with a review of the literature, possible implications for the study, and a summary of the section.

Definition of the Problem

How to engage students is not a new phenomenon facing colleges today. Researchers continue to study this concept. The catchphrase "student engagement" is widely investigated and discussed in the educational literature (Kahu, 2013) relative to both face-to-face and online instruction, relative to both face-to-face and online instruction. The descriptors *isolation*, *interaction*, *social presence*, and *connectedness* are key concepts associated with student engagement research, which has been found to be related to student satisfaction and success (National Survey of Student Engagement, 2015). While the term "student engagement" may seem straightforward, there is a need to understand its multidimensionality and its effect on educational practice.

Student engagement and the dynamics that lead to student success require that researchers continue to examine the design and delivery of instructional strategies that are used in online learning (McCormick, Gonyea, & Kinzie, 2013). Understanding how

instructional strategies can foster student engagement techniques through the lens of instructional strategies is especially meaningful in online learning environments because of such issues as a growing demand for online learning, technological advancements, and retention concerns (National Survey of Student Engagement, 2015).

More than four million students in the United States today participate in online classes, and enrollment continues to grow (Boston et al., 2014). Additionally, researchers with the U.S. Department of Education have reported that face-to-face learning is not as effective as online learning in terms of learning outcomes (Means, 2010). According to the National Survey of Student Engagement (2015), engaged college students are more apt to persevere, feel more satisfied with their education, and eventually graduate (p. 1).

However, researchers have found lower retention rates associated with online learning (Boston et al., 2014; Khurana & Boling, 2014; Yuan & Kim, 2014). One factor relating to lower retention rates and student dissatisfaction in the online classroom is a feeling of isolation or disconnectedness (Borup, West, & Graham, 2012; Boston et al., 2014; Croxton, 2014; Yuan & Kim, 2014; Wei & Chen, 2012). Other researchers studying this issue have reported that online students' feelings of isolation can negatively influence their persistence (Bigatel & Williams, 2015; Borup et al., 2012; Croxton, 2014; Wei & Chen, 2012). The schism between increased online enrollment and decreased retention rates presents a conundrum for those in higher education, especially given that many researchers have found online learning to be more effective in terms of knowledge outcomes than face-to-face learning. A key question to be answered is what can colleges do to increase student satisfaction online and ameliorate this lower retention rate?

Student engagement is associated with student satisfaction and retention in higher education (Bigatel & Williams, 2015; Boston et al., 2014; Boton & Gregory, 2015; Centner, 2014; Cho & Cho, 2014; Davidson & Wilson, 2013; LaBarbera, 2013; Lee, Choi, & Kim, 2013; McCormick et al., 2013; Oncu & Cakir, 2011). Engaged students in online classes tend to feel less isolated and exhibit greater persistence (Bigatel & Williams, 2015; Borup, West, Thomas, & Graham, 2014; Croxton, 2014; Wei & Chen, 2012). Researchers who have studied student engagement with regard to online learning have identified theories, models, and approaches that may improve instructional strategies. However, because there are constant changes in online learning due to advancements in technology, continual research is needed to discover instructional strategies that may lead to student engagement and to help enhance student satisfaction and success.

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

A better understanding of student engagement practices and its effects on student satisfaction and success is a goal at the local site (vice president of academic affairs/dean, personal communication, January 14, 2016). The college that served as the local site for this study is a 1950's chartered, upstate New York private, 2-year college that was recently chartered as a 4-year institution. The college is now positioning itself for growth by adding new programs and increasing enrollment. Current enrollment at the college approximates 900 students. Seventy-two percent of the students are part-time, and 44% of students participate in either fully online or blended online courses. Approximately 15 to

18 faculty have taught online each semester during the 2011-2015 school years. While course offerings for fully online classes have remained steady over the last 5 years (ranging from 15 to 18 classes), online class enrollment has risen approximately 9% with an average of 15 students in each class.

Even though online student success rates over the last 5 years have grown 6%, administrators at the college would like to see further increases in the student success rate in coming years (vice president of academic affairs/dean, personal communication, January 14, 2016). With the anticipation of new technological developments and online class enrollment continuing to rise, providing resources to the online faculty to help them design and deliver quality instructional strategies that foster student engagement may lead to enhanced student satisfaction and success.

One of the tenets of the local site's strategic plan is to develop a comprehensive retention strategy to enhance faculty members' understanding of student engagement practices (vice president of academic affairs/dean, personal communication, January 14, 2016). Toward this end, administrators have encouraged faculty to develop their knowledge of student engagement through increased professional development funding and in-house training initiatives. For example, one initiative provided to faculty has been access to monthly webinars provided by Magna Publications (2016), an online site that provides faculty professional development. Educational institutions should encourage and support faculty access to professional development initiatives in order to promote continued improvement in instructional practices, according to Nworie (2014).

The purpose of this qualitative instrumental case study was to discover instructional strategies that online faculty at the local site have designed and delivered that they perceived as having fostered student engagement in online learning. The findings from this study may assist the local site in enhancing the knowledge of present and future faculty who teach online regarding instructional strategies that engage online learners and fostering collegiality and the sharing of instructional strategies that engage online learners, while possibly improving online student satisfaction and success.

Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature

Researchers studying student engagement, specifically in online learning, have found evidence of a positive association between the use of varied online instructional strategies that foster student engagement and student satisfaction and retention (Freeman & Wash, 2013; Lumpkin et al., 2015; National Survey of Student Engagement, 2015, p. 1). However, other researchers have observed that continued research on the relationship on this topic is needed (Albert et al., 2014; Shattuck & Anderson, 2013; Schmidt et al., 2013). A growth in the online field (Allen & Seaman, 2015; Boton & Gregory, 2015; Hathaway & Norton, 2014; LaBarbera, 2013; Vivekananthamoorthy & Naganathan, 2015), technological advancements that focus on student engagement (Albert et al., 2014; Shattuck & Anderson, 2013; Schmidt et al., 2013), and the need for colleges to maximize student success (Allen & Seaman, 2015; Betts & Heaston, 2014; Boston et al., 2014; Boton & Gregory, 2015; Khurana & Boling, 2014; Yuan & Kim, 2014) are among the reasons that support continuous investigation.

Instructors who foster effective interactions in online classrooms better engage and retain their students (Abu, Adera, Kamsani, & Ametepee, 2012). Knowing how to promote interactions and keep current with new interactive tools is a continuous challenge for online instructors (Abu et al., 2012). For this reason, several interaction models and frameworks exist to guide instructors in how to foster interactions in the classroom. For example, based on Moore's interaction model (learner-content, learner-instructor, and learner-learner), Kuo, Walker, Belland, and Schroder (2013) found that Moore's interaction strategies are consistent with student satisfaction. DeWitt, Alias, Siraj, and Zakaria (2014) observed that use of Garrison, Anderson, and Archer's (2000) community of inquiry (CoI) framework helped instructors gain an understanding of how different types of interactions (specifically, cognitive, social, teaching, attitude, and noise) affect undergraduate students' perceptions of satisfaction with online discussions. CoI is a tool for instructors to use when creating interactive educational experiences that foster a sense of community (Garrison, et al., 2000). Wang, Chen, and Anderson (2013b) found that the CoI model guides instructors toward an instructional design that fosters connectedness. Promoting interactions in online courses may help practitioners develop practices that improve student learning.

Fostering interactions in any classroom setting may result in beneficial outcomes for learners. Researchers have found that fostering interactions within online classrooms can result in the transfer of social and motivational skills in the workplace (Rodriguez & Armellini, 2014; Tlhoaele et al., 2014). Rodriguez and Armellini (2014) explored the interaction equivalency theorem as it applies to online learning in the private sector. A

survey sent to more than 6,000 employees revealed positive employee perceptions of interaction resulting from three courses designed to measure satisfaction, learning, and a transfer of skills. Finally, Tlhoaele, Hofman, Winnips, and Beetsma (2014) found in their quantitative survey research that interactive engagement methods (specifically, course content pedagogies) have a positive relationship with interactive student engagement and intrinsic motivation.

According to Moore (2013), the key difference between online and traditional classroom learning is in the spatial distance between a student and an instructor. Spatial distance creates an instructional complexity, especially for creating social presence. At the same time, Boston et al. (2014), as well as Wei and Chen (2012), found that students' perception of social presence in an online course was a significant predictor of course satisfaction and retention. Furthermore, Dunlap and Lowenthal (2014) found that social presence in online courses contributed to student learning, course achievement, and professional development. In addition, Davidson and Wilson (2013) traced the development of Tinto's (2006) theory of student integration by defining and distinguishing between academic and social integration. Davidson and Wilson argued that clear distinctions between academic and social integration should be developed, especially given the lower retention rates being experienced at higher educational institutions. As Tinto and Cullen (1973) observed, the tendency for some students' to withdraw from social interaction in the learning environment increases their propensity to dropout.

While social presence in an online class creates a sense of belonging and a trusting environment for meaningful communication and learning (Armellini & DeStefani, 2015), fostering social presence represents another challenge for the online instructor due to the distance factor. Yuan and Kim (2014) suggested that developing learning communities in online courses would help to facilitate social presence and contribute to increased retention rates. In support of instructional strategies that create a presence in the online classroom, Zimmerman et al., (2014) found that students experienced gains in self-efficacy, student engagement, and metacognition from an increase in instructor communication strategies, i.e. feedback, collaboration, and dialogs. Boling, Hough, Krinsky, Saleem, & Stevens (2012) and Khurana and Boling (2014) posited that specific methods of instruction, such as the use of communication tools that foster collaboration and interactions within the online classroom, can effectively generate student engagement. Khurana and Boling (2014) found that multimedia strategies support presence in the online classroom.

Khurana and Boling (2014) and Kanuka (2011) used the Community of Inquiry (CoI) Model as a criterion to evaluate student engagement concerning social presence and student satisfaction and found that there were particular instructional strategies that fostered higher levels of student engagement and satisfaction. Ma, Han, Yang, and Cheng (2014) revealed that there is an association between instructors' choice of engagement design and activities and student behavior within an online learning management system. Similarly, Murray, Pérez, Geist, Hedrick, and Steinbach (2012) explored online student access patterns in a learning management system to gain an understanding of interaction

and student engagement and argued that advancements in technology amplify the need for further investigations into ways to enrich and support best practices of teaching and learning in the online environment.

The preliminary review of the research lends support for the continued need to investigate instructional strategies that foster student engagement, primarily through interactions, creating a sense of presence, and through the promotion of prescribed best practices with regard to online learning to assist colleges to enhance student satisfaction and success.

Definition of Terms

I have provided the following definitions to present readers with a common knowledge base and a clarification of terms used in this study.

Instructional strategies: Methods used to teach students that lead to successful student engagement (Chakraborty & Nafukho, 2015).

Interaction: Communication, namely dialogs, between two individuals or a group (Moore, 2013).

Social presence: The ability to envision oneself socially and psychologically as a real person in an online learning environment (Armellini & DeStefani, 2015, p. 2).

Student engagement: A psychological investment and effort directed towards learning, which includes active involvement and a commitment to education through a concentrated effort with others (Newmann, 1992).

Student satisfaction: The perceived sense of achievement in terms of developing one's abilities and a feeling of fulfillment received from a learning experience (Horzum, 2015).

Student success: An academic commitment to graduate (Bigatel & Williams, 2015).

Significance of Study

This study was grounded in the belief that identifying successful instructional strategies that foster student engagement will assist present and future online instructors to enhance student satisfaction and success. Several scholars have stated that colleges are in need of faculty who can design and deliver meaningful and successful online instruction that engages the online student (Armellini & DeStefani, 2015; Chakraborty & Nafukho, 2014; McMurty, 2013). The need for accomplished faculty is increasing rapidly because the demand for online courses continues to grow (Hathaway & Norton, 2014; LaBarbera, 2013; Vivekananthamoorthy & Naganathan, 2015). Furthermore, engaged college students are more likely to persist, have greater feelings of satisfaction, and be successful (Bigatel & Williams, 2015; Borup et al., 2014; Croxton, 2014; Wei & Chen, 2012). However, researchers have reported that identifying ways to design and deliver successful instructional strategies to create and facilitate online learning is a continuing problem (Albert et al., 2014; Shattuck & Anderson, 2013; Schmidt et al., 2013). The benefits of this study's findings could also bring about social change through the sharing of published or presented material with the local site, as well as at regional conferences,

to assist online practitioners external to the institution in enhancing their knowledge of instructional strategies that engage online learners.

Online learning plays a pivotal role at the local site because it offers students an opportunity to take classes when geographic or time barriers prohibit them from taking traditional on-campus face-to-face classes. Faculty must be knowledgeable in the use of instructional strategies that engage online learners in order to maintain high academic standards in online courses (Bigatel & Williams, 2015; Al-Salman, 2011). In addition, because online instruction revolves around constantly evolving technologies, continuous technological and pedagogical transformation should be encouraged for faculty (Al-Salman, 2011). A faculty well-versed in online pedagogical practices may contribute to student satisfaction and success.

Research Question

Colleges today are charged with the challenge to offer more online courses and, at the same time, provide meaningful, appropriate, and quality instructional experiences that successfully engage and retain students (Richardson, et al., 2015). Researchers have concluded that student engagement is one of the tenets of effective online instruction that leads to student success (Freeman & Wash, 2013; Lumpkin et al., 2015; National Survey of Student Engagement, 2015, p. 1). Institutions today are looking for ways to better use existing resources to support and assist faculty in developing innovative instructional strategies to engage online learners. Sharing effective instructional strategies may strengthen the skills of online faculty, help to build a community of experts, and contribute to online student success. In alignment with the study problem and purpose,

the research question for this study was: What are faculty perceptions of and experiences with instructional strategies that they have used specifically to foster student engagement in the online learning environment?

Review of the Literature

A variety of electronic databases provided the references collected to support the literature review including Eric, Educational Research Complete, ED/IT Digital Library, Computers and Applied Sciences Complete, as well as PsycINFO and Google Scholar. In addition, open online educational sites directly associated with online learning included *American Journal of Distance Education, Online Learning Consortium*, and *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration*. Queries using keywords and phrases including *engagement*, *interaction*, *presence*, *online learning*, *instructional design*, *instructional strategies, connectivism*, *retention*, *community of learners*, *best practices,* and *online instruction*, generated over 5,700 peer-reviewed studies between the years 2011 and 2016. Furthermore, reference pages of the studies provided additional avenues to explore the literature.

This study was grounded in the phenomenon of online learning in higher education. With today's college students hailing from a generation immersed in technology, many colleges are responding to the growing demand for online learning (Allen & Seaman, 2015; Boston et al., 2014; Schmidt et al., 2013). Researchers have reported that colleges are in need of faculty who can design and deliver successful online instructional strategies that engage online learners and lead to student satisfaction and success (Armellini & DeStefani, 2015; Chakraborty & Nafukho, 2014; McMurty, 2013).

There is a continual need for quality online learning, namely instructional strategies that foster interaction and social presence between students and instructors (Armellini & DeStefani, 2015; Serdyukov, 2015). One reason for continued research is the added retention issue online learning has brought to higher education institutions. Researchers have reported incidents of lower retention rates with this method of instruction (Allen & Seaman, 2015; Betts & Heaston, 2014; Boston et al., 2014; Boton & Gregory, 2015; Khurana & Boling, 2014; Yuan & Kim, 2014). The issue of retaining students is, therefore, a critical component of both the growth and success of many colleges. Keeping students enrolled in higher education results in a benefit to the student, the institution, and society as a whole (Centner, 2014).

The retention issue begs answers to the following questions: What can be done to understand how best to retain the online student? How do we best increase student satisfaction in online courses and help improve retention? Most importantly, what online instructional strategies will engage students, thus leading to student satisfaction and success? The literature abounds with theories and practical ideas to help answer these questions. However, as technological advancements increase, there will be an ongoing need to seek new answers to the above questions. In other words, advancements in technology will compel colleges to stay abreast of new instructional strategies that engage online learners (Agyei & Keengwe, 2014; Al-Salman, 2011; Lackey, 2011) thus increasing student satisfaction and success.

Conceptual Framework

Imenda (2014) proposed that a conceptual or theoretical framework constitutes the soul of a research project; it provides direction, meaning, and a point of reference for understanding the impetus for the research (p. 185). The theory of student engagement formed the conceptual framework for this study. Kearsley and Shneiderman's (1998) theory of engagement offered, in terms of instructional best practices in the online environment, ". . . that students must be meaningfully engaged in learning activities through interaction with others and worthwhile tasks" (p. 1). In other words, instructional strategies that motivate students to collaborate with one another, with the teacher, and with the course materials will assist students to learn more deeply and to show continuous involvement in their learning that may lead to more satisfaction and success. Similarly, Gagne, Briggs, and Wagner (1992) postulated that if instructional strategies are to bring about effective learning, they must influence the internal processes of the learner (p. 11). For example, engagement may occur when technology is emphasized in an online course to encourage collaboration with peers in a shared learning environment, thus providing a variety of learning perspectives (Kearsley & Shneiderman, 1998). Building a positive learning environment where faculty and students engage may improve student learning (Gagne, et al., 1992). Furthermore, Chakraborty and Nafukho (2014) stated that constructing interpersonal and social relationships in the online classroom helps students connect with the subject matter, with one another and with the instructor.

Currently, student engagement is studied not only from a variety of teaching and learning theories but also through conceptual frameworks that scaffold the research and

provide a foundation for understanding the underpinnings of student engagement. The constructs of interaction, social presence, and best practices emerged from the literature as the foundation for student engagement. This qualitative study, therefore, sought to discover instructional strategies related to the three constructs that online faculty at the local site designed and delivered that they perceived fostered student engagement. A further description of the constructs follows.

Interactions

Effective online teaching necessitates a deep understanding of interaction and how instructors can facilitate that understanding (Moore & Kearsley, 2012). Interaction has been defined "as the process consisting of . . . at least two reciprocal actions . . . [that] takes place in response to others' actions . . ." (Vrasidas & McIssac, 1999, p. 25). In other words, communication and interpersonal connections are essential components in the learning process. The literature is replete with the idea that high levels of interaction can influence student engagement and student satisfaction in online courses (Della Noce, Scheffel, & Lowry, 2014; Kuo, Walker, Belland, Schroder, & Kuo, 2014; Murray et al., 2012; Rodriguez & Armellini, 2014; Tlhoaele et al., 2014). Therefore, understanding the various factors that contribute to fostering interactions may assist online practitioners when designing and developing instructional practices.

Social theorist Vygotsky (1978) proposed that learning occurs when one actively constructs knowledge while interacting with others. In other words, a social milieu helps to foster student knowledge by creating a collaborative community-of-learners' atmosphere to help foster engagement and alleviate student isolation that can occur in

online learning. In addition, Moore (1989) developed the first theoretical framework for instructors in the online learning environment; he suggested student engagement should emerge from instructional interactions such as learner-content, learner-instructor, and learner-learner. Anderson and Garrison (1998) extended Moore's interactions and proposed the importance of teacher interactions with students and content. Furthermore, Chakraborty and Nafukho (2014) suggested a fourth interaction: learner-technology that encourages students to engage with others while using technology—an interaction facilitated by advances in technological developments.

In concert with the present study, techniques documented from the research to guide instructors when designing instructional strategies to foster student interaction in the online class and, in some cases, increase student satisfaction are learner-content, learner-instructor, learner-learner, teacher, and learner-technology interactions.

Learner-content interaction. The growth of technology has not only changed the way content is provided to online students but has also raised the question of what is the best way to deliver content to ensure that interaction occurs within the classroom. One role of the instructor is to provide support and assistance to students as they interact with the instructional materials to transform course interaction into knowledge. According to Moore (1989), learning cannot transpire without the student experiencing a change in their understanding, perspective, or intellectual viewpoint. The value of course content, therefore, is dependent upon the degree to which students can engage and construct knowledge from the learning materials provided and delivered by the instructor

(Boling et al., 2014; Boton & Gregory, 2015; Davidson & Wilson, 2013; Kanuka, 2011). Hence, it is important for instructors to create engaging online content.

Murray et al. (2012) argued that student performance and outcome directly relate to students' access to content perceived to be relevant and useful. Thus, engaging content in the online course is the catalyst to student learning and persistence. Boton and Gregory (2015) and Kanuka (2011) pointed out that technology-based content not only motivates students but also increases student satisfaction and retention.

Learner-instructor interaction. Once course content is presented to the online student, the role of the instructor is to assist the student in interacting with the lesson's objectives, encourage student interaction through motivation, and organize the instructional materials. For example, the instructor could direct and participate in asynchronous or synchronous discussion boards, create interactive Internet-based lesson plans, and partake in webinars or live chats.

Cho and Cho (2014) concluded that instructors, through their use of positive motivation (feedback) and scaffolding (support), caused a substantial positive impact on student engagement and performance. In addition, Kuo et al. (2014) discovered that learner-instructor collaboration led to the greatest student satisfaction in an online class that utilized synchronous technology (p. 176). Furthermore, Kang and Im (2013) discovered that learner-instructor interaction indicated stronger student achievement than social interaction. Providing students with support in an online course can be important for continued student motivation and effort in the course.

Current literature abounds with the idea that learner-instructor interaction is germane to student satisfaction (Clarke & Bartholomew, 2014; LaBarbera, 2013), persistence in online classes (Al-Salman, 2011; Cho & Cho, 2014; Croxton, 2014), and higher levels of learning (Kanuka, 2011). In contrast, Tlhoaele et al. (2014) argued that interactive engagement methods utilized in online courses did not show a direct result of student academic achievement; though, the results did indicate an explicit relationship between teacher engagement and student satisfaction.

Learner-learner interaction. The third form of interaction proposed by Moore (1989) is the engagement of classmates with other classmates in an online course where the students share information and where their peers provide and receive feedback. In learner-learner interactions, students collaborate, construct knowledge, and develop a community of learners. In other words, students become active team participants, not isolated learners alone in cyberspace.

Huss, Sela, and Eastep (2015) professed that effective learner-learner interactions in an online course occur through discussion boards, group work, blogs, and peer assessments; they discovered that participants noted that communication with peers was essential to their success. In addition, Huss et al., (2015) contended that instructors indicated that learner-learner communication was vital to fostering interaction in online courses; however, students indicated that learner-learner interactions were less important to their success in the class than learner-instructor interactions. Furthermore, Kuo et al. (2014) found that learner-learner interactions, when instruction was technology based, were less important for student satisfaction. The type of instructional strategy that fosters

interaction among students plays a role in student perception of the depth of learner-learner interaction (Tlhoaele et al., 2014).

Teacher interaction. Anderson and Garrison (1998) extended Moore's interaction framework by proposing additional interactions that involve the teacher: teacher-teacher, teacher-content, and content-content. According to Frieson and Kuskis (2013), teacher interactions change as technological advancements alter the way content is presented. Specifically, pedagogical tools such as course management systems and software applications will continue to help improve and change the focus of instructional strategies, allowing for more innovative interactions. Furthermore, there will be a need for continued research and professional development by online teachers, necessitating the need for more collaboration through communities of practice (Frieson & Kuskis, 2013).

Learner-technology interaction. Interactions between students, instructors, and content in the course is crucial for learning; however, interaction with the technology in the course is paramount because learning will be limited if learners cannot manage the technological interface (Kožuh et al., 2015; Kuo et al., 2014; Wang, Shannon, & Ross, 2013a). Boling et al. (2014) revealed that technology not only allowed the participants in the course to interact and interface with a variety of mediums, such as learning management systems, webinars, chats, discussion boards, and social media, but also provided the opportunity for teachers to scaffold the student through the employment of innovative technology in the online class.

Anderson (2003) proclaimed that getting the right balance of interactions within an online course necessitates that instructors understand the epistemology and importance

that interaction holds for online student learning and retention issues. Several researchers concurred with Anderson's (2003) position that utilizing all three interactions (student-student, student-content, and student-teacher) in the online class may be the ideal method of engaging students; however, an emphasis on a single type of association has also been indicated to increase student perception of engagement (Frieson & Kuskis, 2013; Huss et al., 2015; Tlhoaele et al., 2014). Continued research into interaction to enhance student learning and address retention issues in the online class will be an ongoing process due to the changing nature of technology and the need to develop further comprehensive strategies to enhance online learning.

Teaching, Social, and Cognitive Presence

Successful online learning is dependent upon building a learning environment that is conducive to positive student outcomes. Short, Williams, and Christie (1976) proposed that it is imperative for instructors to close the physical gap in online learning by providing social presence or intimacy in the course. Communication can be perceived to be impersonal to students in an online course; therefore, developing instructional strategies that support, assist, and provide students with a sense of connectedness can contribute to student satisfaction and can lead to increased student persistence. Building a community of engagement and presence in an online class can provide the support needed to minimize student feelings of isolation when studying online (Boling et al., 2012; Bollinger & Inan, 2012; Borup et al., 2012; Chakraborty & Nafukho, 2014; Mayes, Ku, Akarasriworn, Luebeck, & Korkmaz, 2011; Richardson, et al. 2015; Yuan & Kim, 2014).

The Community of Inquiry (CoI) Model developed by Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2000), posited that meaningful community learning results when three overlapping presences occur in online learning: teaching, social, and cognitive. The CoI Model is well researched in the literature relative to understanding ways to foster student engagement, especially in the online environment. Armellini and DeStefani (2015) contended that both teaching and cognitive presences lead to social presence and constitute a central role in meaningful instruction. Similarly, Boston et al. (2014) discovered that 88% of participants in their study indicated social presence as a factor for persistence and re-enrollment in online learning. Ma et al., (2014) also concurred with Boston et al. (2014).

Dunlap and Lowenthal (2014) and Khurana and Boling (2014) both reported that the types of instructional strategies utilized in online learning have a direct effect on student perception of presence. For instance, teaching presence has been shown to be enhanced through the use of direct instruction and feedback (Khurana & Boling, 2014); and course introductions/orientations, instructor and student vitae, group activities and feedback were shown to foster student perception of teacher presence (Dunlap & Lowenthal, 2014)

In a survey study of 875 students, Rubin and Fernandes (2013) found that all three presences (teaching, cognitive, and social) in an online course created a synergy of trusting relationships that led to student success. Shea et al. (2014) discovered variances in the presences regarding student success due to the differences in instructional strategies and student attributes.

In support of the present study, the current review of the literature stressed the continued importance of incorporating and researching the three presences of the CoI Model (Anderson & Dron, 2012; Clarke & Bartholomew, 2014; DeWitt et al., 2014). The relative importance given each presence is evident throughout the literature in terms of assisting faculty to foster student engagement and help improve student satisfaction and success in the online course environment.

Teaching presence. Teaching presence can provide for quality instructional experiences for online students because instructors can provide not only the basic blueprint for the course but also provide guidance on how to navigate students through the course design (Ice, Gibson, Boston, & Becher, 2011; Khurana & Boling, 2014). Teaching presence can also foster a sense of community for online learners (Richardson et al., 2015; Yuan & Kim, 2014), hence eliminating the perception of isolation that sometimes occurs due to the distance factor. More succinctly, Richardson et al. (2015) stated that instructors who took an active role in scaffolding students, as well as demonstrated and communicated course processes, increased student satisfaction and developed a perception of an authentic learning community.

Ma et al. (2014) added that instructor leadership and assistance are paramount to increased student motivation and engagement in an online course. Pollard, Minor and Swanson (2014) and Armellini and DeStefani (2015) noted that societal aspects on the part of the instructor, namely behavioral constructs such as immediacy and a sense of caring, provided a greater sense of community in the online classroom than just teaching presence alone. Armellini and DeStefani (2015) further postulated that when instructors

create instruction, societal aspects are presupposed; however, the implementation may not always guarantee an increase in student participation.

Teaching presence is just one facet of fostering student engagement. As the CoI Model suggests, social presence and cognitive presence are two other facets that online instructors need to be mindful of when designing online courses to promote student engagement.

Social presence. The idea of social presence was first coined by Short et al., (1976) as "the degree of salience of the interpersonal relationships . . . specifying that it is the quality of the medium itself" (p. 65). Today, the underpinnings of social presence in online learning lay in fostering interpersonal communications and interactions identified as emotional expressions, amenable interactions, and collaborative efforts (Borup et al., 2012, p. 2). Social presence is colloquially professed as fostering a genuine, real-life person behind the text message in an online course (Dunlap & Lowenthal, 2014). While many studies have argued the importance of social presence with regard to student satisfaction (Armellini & DeStefani, 2015; Boston, et al., 2014; Dunlap & Lowenthal, 2014; Pollard et al., 2014; Taverna, Kishni, Berry, & Harrison, 2015; Wei & Chen, 2012;) and retention (Ice et al., 2011; Ngoyi, Mpanga, & Ngoyi, 2014; Yuan & Kim, 2014), some authors have questioned social presence as a significant concept to student success (Kožuh et al., 2015), especially in terms of satisfaction with student-student interactions (Taverna et al., 2015).

Cognitive presence. Cognitive presence relates to the level to which learners can construct and substantiate meaning while interacting (Garrison, et al., 2000). Boston et al.

(2014) suggested a four-stage process to understand cognitive presence: a triggering event that depicts an question or conundrum; an exploration of the issue through individual thought or collaboratively with others; an integration stage where meaning is constructed; and, finally, a transformation stage where new knowledge is applied (p. 69). Regarding cognitive presence, Garrison et al. (2000) stated that the importance of rigorous oral discourse with others to trigger deep critical thinking and reflection is a challenge for instructors to replicate in the online learning environment—but not an impossibility (p. 91).

Hoskins (2012) supported Garrison, Anderson and Archers' premise concurring that higher levels of difficulty built into instructional strategies, namely discussion boards, resulted in increased participation, satisfaction, and retention among online learners. Likewise, Kanuka (2011) and Rubin and Fernandes (2013) concluded that cognitive presence is more than just an internal individual phenomenon; it is a united relationship that occurs through a community of learners.

Kanuka (2011) and Maddix (2012) reported that instructional methods that were well structured, provided clear student expectations, and provoked critical student responses to classmates, resulted in the highest levels of student cognitive presence in an online course. In other words, instructors who encourage student cognitive presence through clear and concise communication have led to an increase in students' perception of online satisfaction and success (Kirwin & Roumell, 2015). Finally, instructional strategies that are engaging, stimulating, and challenging can provide a level of

interaction that determines the quality and sustainability of the experience for online learners (Kirwin & Roumell, 2015).

Instructional Best Practices

What instructional strategies or methods produce the most desirable results for student engagement in the online classroom? Research suggests that instructors could incorporate Moore's (1989) learner-content, learner-instructor, and learner-learner interaction strategy and Garrison et al.'s (2000) model of CoI that stipulates the importance of teaching, social, and cognitive presence to foster student engagement, encourage student satisfaction, and address success. Both of these strategies guide instructors in ways to help improve student engagement and enhance student learning; however, do they directly capture the specific instructional best practices for teaching and learning? Chickering and Gamson (1987) proposed seven principles for instructor behavior that not only foster good practice in the classroom and increase student engagement, but also encourage activity, cooperation, diversity, expectations, interaction, and responsibility. They are

1. encourage contact between students and faculty,
2. develop reciprocity and cooperation among students,
3. use active learning techniques,
4. give prompt feedback,
5. emphasize time on task,
6. communicate high expectations, and
7. respect diverse talents and ways of learning (pp. 2-3).

Creating the necessary conditions for student engagement is paramount to student success. Indeed, several authors have alleged that the achievement of student learning outcomes, as well as student satisfaction in an online class, is tied to a well-planned instructional design (Boston et al., 2014; Ma et al., 2014; Murray et al., 2012). Furthermore, Khurana and Boling (2014) affirmed in their study that while research is still in its infancy stage regarding the instructor's role in engaging students in the online course, appropriately designed contextual instruction has been shown to enhance student satisfaction. Likewise, González-Sanmamed, Muñoz-Carril, and Sangrà (2014) and Richardson et al., (2015) found that instructors should incorporate not only affective roles in their instructional design, such as advocacy, facilitation, and scaffolding, but also organizational structure, such as learning objectives, due dates, and expectations. In other words, instructional design should include a roadmap to effectively guide the learner through the course and foster a positive learning environment (Wei & Chen, 2012).

Two programs that support colleges and instructors in following best practices when creating online instruction include Quality Matters (2014) and the Online Learning Consortium (2015). While the Quality Matters Rubric assists in the design of online courses, the Online Learning Consortium Scorecard aids more in the administration of online courses (Warford, 2013, p. 11). Nevertheless, both serve as guidelines to help foster student engagement when instructors are designing effective online instruction.

Several of the studies I reviewed mentioned the importance of following the Quality Matters Rubric (Beaver, et al., 2016; Crews, Wilkinson, & Neill, 2015; Meyer & Murrell, 2014; Southard & Mooney, 2015). By way of example, Betts and Heaston

(2014) explained the importance of faculty following ideal models that exemplify the best practices offered by Quality Matters. Courses that follow exemplary models add credibility not only to internal stakeholders but also outside accreditors. Similarly, Hoey (2014) purported that faculty who follow programs such as Quality Matters have an opportunity to incorporate widely accepted standards into their courses. Murray et al. (2012) professed that a peer-review acceptance standard gives quality assurance to the course as well as the attainment of student satisfaction and success while Terantino and Agbehonou (2012) argued that Quality Matters is only useful if faculty have received professional development in the prescribed praxises advocated by the program.

Comparably, the Online Learning Consortium's (2015) Scorecard measures not only student engagement factors in an online course but social aspects as well. Colleges and instructors can use the scorecard as a formative or summative evaluation to help identify and measure key categories that represent best practices in online learning (Warford, 2013). For example, principles such as social constructivist learning, communication, content-centered activities, and interactivity resonate with the Online Learning Consortium's scorecard (Tomei, 2010) and are indicators of instructional best practices that lead to student engagement and success.

Significance of Student Engagement and Instructional Strategies

While the term *engagement* is widely researched in the academia sphere, it still has a degree of ambiguity due to its diverse understanding; yet, the academic world embraces this construct as a panacea for student success (Kasworm & Abdrahim, 2014). Student engagement is labeled in the literature as one of the tenets of effective online

instruction that leads to student success (Kasworm & Abdrahim, 2014). Notably, scholarly sources have provided a plethora of theories and conceptual frameworks to help us understand different approaches to fostering student engagement, such as a community of practice, interactions, social presence, and instructional best practices. Lawson and Lawson (2013) question whether there is a one-size fits all approach to fostering student engagement. What researchers have found is that engaged students tend to be more successful in their education (Bigatel & Williams, 2015; Boston et al., 2014; Boton & Gregory, 2015; Centner, 2014; Cho & Cho, 2014; Davidson & Wilson, 2013; LaBarbera, 2013; McCormick et al., 2013; Oncu & Cakir, 2011) and one way that student engagement can be improved upon is through effective instructional strategies (Freeman & Wash, 2013; Lumpkin et al., 2015). In other words, instructors have the ability to engage students by directing their emotional, cognitive, and behavioral attitudes and, to assisting them in developing an interest in their learning, cultivating their mental fortitude, and helping them meet their expectations (Kahu, 2013; Lawson & Lawson, 2013). However, there remains no monolithic pathway to student engagement (Kasworm & Abdrahim, 2014; Lawson & Lawson, 2013).

Serdyukov (2015) stated that there is a need for quality online learning—a special pedagogy that builds interaction and relationships. More importantly, online learning necessitates a comprehensive pedagogy that builds a shared learning environment to foster deep learning (Serdyukov, 2015) and student satisfaction and persistence (Armellini & DeStefani, 2015). If, as Lawson and Lawson (2013) stated, increasing the rate of student graduation is a priority for higher educational institutions and engagement

is a complex “dynamic, social, and synergistic process” (p. 441), then one way to best foster student engagement in the online class is through continued research.

Implications

The findings from this study may provide the local site with a deeper understanding of instructional strategies that lead to online student engagement. Likewise, the results may enhance the knowledge and skills of present and future faculty teaching online as well as enhance online student satisfaction and success. A better understanding of student engagement, can enact beneficial changes in both processes and practices at the local site.

Data gathered from this study will provide the local site with information depicted in a position paper to support the possible creation of a CoP e-learning site where faculty can access an inventory of instructional best practices found to engage online learners. Through the continuous sharing of successful instructional strategies, the faculty may strengthen their online pedagogical skills and student success may be enhanced (Boling et al., 2012, p. 4).

In addition to local implications, another potential outcome from this study may be to effect social change through the sharing of published or presented material at regional conferences. Sharing the collective knowledge gathered from the study may assist current online practitioners by enhancing their knowledge of instructional strategies to engage online learners and help future practitioners build a better online learning environment. In bringing new educational strategies to the greater online community, a

new awareness may ensue, instructional practice may improve, and new research may be stimulated.

With more than four million students in the United States today participating in online classes and with enrollment continuing to grow (Boston et al., 2014), there is a need for a special pedagogy that builds interaction, a community of learners to foster deep learning (Serdyukov, 2015), and enhances student satisfaction and persistence (Armellini & DeStefani, 2015). According to Allen and Seaman (2015), 70% of the 2,800 institutional leaders surveyed across the United States reported that online learning plays a vital role in college strategic planning. Achieving a viable future in online learning may require colleges to adopt sustainable practices, especially as online pedagogies continue to experience a paradigm shift relative to ever-changing technology.

Instructional approaches to fostering student engagement in the online classroom have become omnipresent constructs in the online world, embedding themselves as central roles in the scholarship of teaching and learning to create positive learning experiences for students (Armellini & DeStefani, 2015). However, offering engaging instruction can be a challenge for instructors. Effecting engaging instructional practices coupled with the notion that technology is constantly changing the nature of online learning, highlights the need for continuous research and sharing of information.

Summary

Online learning continues to grow and play a vital role in colleges' strategic plans for sustained growth and student success (Allen & Seaman, 2015). A study of the research has noted that colleges are in need of faculty who can design and deliver

successful online instructional strategies that engage online learners and lead to student satisfaction and success. In this section, I described the philosophy of student engagement and the importance it holds in the online education field.

A substantiated association has been reported in the literature between online instructional strategies, student engagement, and student satisfaction and success (Bigatel & Williams, 2015; Boston et al., 2014; Boton & Gregory, 2015; Centner, 2014; Cho & Cho, 2014; Davidson & Wilson, 2013; Freeman & Wash, 2013; LaBarbera, 2013; Lumpkin et al., 2015; McCormick et al., 2013; Oncu & Cakir, 2011). Furthermore, technological advancements are proliferating throughout the world and influencing the scholarship of teaching and learning in the online arena (Agyei & Keengwe, 2014; Al-Salman, 2011; Bigatel & Williams, 2015; Lackey, 2011). Choosing the instructional strategy that best resonates with today's online learner requires online instructors to stay current in the use of technology.

Growth in the online educational field, technological advancements, and the need for colleges to maximize graduation rates necessitates continuous research for ways to engage and retain the online student (Albert et al., 2014; Shattuck & Anderson, 2013; Schmidt et al., 2013). Higher education institutions are in need of faculty who can design and deliver successful online instruction that engages the online student (Armellini & DeStefani, 2015; Chakraborty & Nafukho, 2014) along with a way to disseminate online knowledge to the wider community. The issue facing the local site stems from its need to discover additional ways to design and deliver successful online instructional strategies that focus on student engagement (vice president of academic affairs/dean, personal

communication, January 14, 2016). The rationale for this study is to assist the local site in improving online student satisfaction and success rates by identifying instructional strategies that successfully engage students.

The research question, therefore, asked: What are faculty perceptions of and experiences with instructional strategies that they have used specifically to foster student engagement in the online learning environment? The findings from this study may assist the local site in enhancing the knowledge of present and future faculty who teach online about instructional strategies that engage online learners and may foster collegiality and sharing of instructional strategies that engage online learners while enhancing online student satisfaction and success. In addition, the findings may provide the local site with information to create a CoP e-learning site where faculty can access an inventory of instructional best practices found to engage the online student. Another potential outcome of this study may be to effect social change through the sharing of published or presented material at regional conferences.

In Section 2, I describe the methodology for the proposed study including the research design and a justification for the chosen approach. In addition, a description and justification for the selection of participants as well as the plan for the data collection process are explained. Finally, there is a discussion of the mechanics of how and when the data was analyzed. I end Section 2 with a summary and a brief insight into Section 3, where I delve into the details of the project.

Section 2: The Methodology

The issue facing the local site is similar to that of other higher education institutions. The desire for distance education continues to grow (Allen & Seaman, 2015; Boton & Gregory, 2015; Hathaway & Norton, 2014; LaBarbera, 2013; Vivekananthamoorthy & Naganathan, 2015). In addition, the use of technology along with new developments has generated a need for continual research to discover additional ways to design and deliver successful instructional strategies that foster student engagement in online learning (Albert et al., 2014; Shattuck & Anderson, 2013; Schmidt et al., 2013). Moreover, online students have exhibited lower success rates than students participating in traditional learning, which has led many higher education institutions to continually pursue new ways to engage online learners and increase student satisfaction and success (Allen & Seaman, 2015; Betts & Heaston, 2014; Boston et al., 2014; Boton & Gregory, 2015; Khurana & Boling, 2014; Yuan & Kim, 2014). College leaders are challenged with how to harness the methodological and technological changes that are shaping the delivery of instruction.

Researchers have shown that engaged online students tend to feel less isolated and exhibit greater persistence (Bigatel & Williams, 2015; Borup et al., 2014; Croxton, 2014; Wei & Chen, 2012). Without contact with others in an online class, it can be difficult for students to feel a sense of connectedness. Researchers have found enhanced student satisfaction and increased graduation rates when instructors use effective instructional strategies (Freeman & Wash, 2013; Lumpkin et al., 2015; National Survey of Student

Engagement, 2015). Therefore, eliminating feelings of isolation in online classes through engaging instructional strategies can aid in student success.

The purpose of this qualitative instrumental case study was to discover instructional strategies that online faculty at the local site have designed and delivered that they perceived to have fostered student engagement in online learning. In the next section, I provide a description of my research design approach, criteria for selecting participants, data collection sources, and procedures for data analysis.

Qualitative Research Design, Approach, and Justification

Design

I chose a qualitative case study approach to answer the research question: What are online faculty perceptions of and experiences with instructional strategies that they used specifically to foster student engagement in the online learning environment? The use of a case study design allows the researcher to explore better what is commonplace and what is particular to the case (Hyett, Kenny, & Dickson-Swift, 2014, p. 1). Creswell (2012), Merriam and Tisdell (2016), and Yin (2014), advocate for a case study approach when one wants to gain a rich and detailed account of phenomena through a study of real-life, in-depth activities of specific individuals within a limited system. My study was bounded by the limited number participants (specifically, 10) and by the single unit of study, (specifically, just online instructors).

Approach

I focused on a limited number of participants, specifically faculty teaching online at the local site who were willing to share their knowledge and understanding of

instructional strategies that engaged online learners. In case study research, according to Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtle (2010), the case must be bounded. For example, the number of participants who could partake in a study would be limited. In addition, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) specified that a bounded case constitutes one unit of study (in this study, faculty teaching online). Stake (1995) asserted that researchers might choose an instrumental case study approach when the interest or issue is to enhance a situation. I chose an instrumental case studies approach because it was important for me to discover not only what was happening in my particular case, which was to promote additional understandings of student engagement and instructional strategies, but I also wanted to better understand faculty perspectives in order to help enhance student satisfaction and success. In other words, the case was instrumental in trying to facilitate a situation.

Justification

I chose an instrumental case study approach over a phenomenology, grounded theory, or ethnography-type study for several reasons. A researcher may select a phenomenological-type approach to help delve more deeply into the philosophical understandings or feelings of a particular participant; a grounded theory-type approach may be selected to help the researcher investigate a case over a long period in order to build new theories; and, an ethnography-type approach may be selected to help the researcher better understand the culture and patterns of specific groups (Lodico et al., 2010; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I chose an instrumental-type approach because I did not want to explore individual participants' feelings, build new theory, or focus on understanding the culture of the participants. I wanted to more deeply understand online

faculty perspectives of engaging instructional strategies to assist in online students' satisfaction and success. With the issue identified and the research design clarified, I next describe with whom, where, and how the study commenced; my relationship with the participants; and, the actions I chose to protect the participants' confidentiality.

Research Site and Participants

Setting

The setting for the study was a small private college located in upstate New York that has been in existence for over 50 years as a 2-year institution. The college was chartered in 2015 by New York State as a 4-year institution. During the period of the study, there were approximately 900 students enrolled at the college. Seventy-two percent of the students were part-time, and student enrollment in either fully online or blended courses totaled 44%. Approximately 15-18 faculty taught online each semester during the 2011-2015 school years.

Criteria for Selecting Participants

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), purposeful sampling is appropriate when a researcher wants to discover, understand, and gain deep insight from the richest source of information (p. 96). In addition, setting certain participant attributes within the selection criterion assists in gathering specific information pertinent to the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). For this instrumental case study, I chose a homogeneous sampling strategy to select participants. Homogeneous sampling allows the researcher to select a specific identifiable group that has specific defining characteristics (Creswell, 2012). In this study, all faculty regardless of department, who had taught online at the

local site for at least three years were invited to participate in the research because they shared experience in both teaching and the institutional culture of the local site (Creswell, 2012; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In other words, the faculty were not new to teaching online, and they had time to experience developments in the online environment at the local site. The characteristics, namely online faculty who have taught for at least three years online at the local site, ensured that faculty perspectives were relevant to the study's purpose and the research question (Creswell, 2012; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The goal of asking specific online faculty about their perceptions of and experiences with instructional strategies that they used specifically to foster student engagement in the online learning environment was to assist the local site in possibly enhancing student satisfaction and success. In addition, a desired outcome from the study would be to bring about social change through the sharing of published or presented material with the greater higher education community. Sharing the collective knowledge gathered from the study may assist current online practitioners in enhancing their knowledge of instructional strategies to engage online learners and help future practitioners build a better online learning environment.

Justification for the Number of Participants

Thirteen faculty, who met the criterion of teaching online for at least three years at the local site, were invited to participate in the study. Ten faculty agreed to participate in the study. The 10 faculty who met the above-identified criterion shared their experiences teaching online within the environment of the local site's institutional culture.

While the participant pool was limited due to the small size of the college, Creswell (2012) stated that the importance rests not in the number of participants, but rather in the depth of mental involvement and the ability to reach saturation in the collection of data. In agreement with Creswell (2012), Merriam and Tisdell (2016) postulated that there is no definitive answer to the optimal number of participants; the sample size is determined by the informational understanding--when the data becomes superfluous, continuous data collection becomes unnecessary (p.101). Furthermore, Lackey (2011) and Malterud, Siersma, and Guassora (2015) posited that the greater the expertise of the participants on the topic of study, the lower the number of participants needed to reach saturation. In addition, the context of interest and willingness to participate in the study can limit or restrict the number of participants available at the study site (Lackey, 2011, p. 3). After utilizing multiple methods of data collection through data triangulation, data saturation in this case study was reached when no new rich and in-depth participant perspectives were discovered (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Procedures for Gaining Access to Participants

A vital ethical principle in research is protecting participants' rights. I completed the National Institutes of Health "Protecting Human Research Participants" (Certificate Number: 1639093). The first step I used to gain access to the participants was to obtain a letter of cooperation from the local site to ensure that acceptability and permissions were in place and that the site would grant consent (Appendix B). I explained in the letter of cooperation, the purpose of the study, who would participate, and how the findings would benefit the local site. Next, I requested approval from two Institutional Research Boards

(IRB). I was granted consent to collect data from the study site's IRB on July 18, 2016 (Protocol #006) and expires in one year (Appendix C). Walden University's IRB granted approval on August 10, 2016 (#08-10-16-0415792) and expires in one year (Appendix D).

I will next describe the steps I used to describe how the faculty were invited to participate in the study. A list of eligible faculty were identified by the assistant dean at the local site and forwarded to a faculty member (Faculty A) at the local site (assistant dean, personal communication, May 26, 2016) to ensure participants' confidentiality. Faculty A completed the human subject research training and agreed to assist with the study, not as a participant but as a person willing to assist in the administration of the study (specifically, forwarding the invitation to the participants) (Appendix E). I forwarded to Faculty A an e-mail from my Walden University e-mail account containing a memo to be sent to the identified faculty (Appendix F). The memo described the background of the study along with an invitation to participate in the research. The memo contained the following additional information: (a) the purpose of the study; (b) the procedures of the study: completion of an anonymous web-based survey and document submissions, and, if willing to reveal their identity, a one-on-one interview with the researcher; (c) sample survey and interview questions; (d) sample document submissions; (e) voluntary nature of the study, assurance of no risks and reassurance of privacy, and possible benefits from the study; (f) contacts and question information; and (g) a link to the anonymous, third-party-vendor web-based survey.

Within the survey, I invited participants, willing to reveal their identity, to participate in a one-hour one-on-one interview. Agreeable participants forwarded their signed consent form to me through my Walden University e-mail account. I then responded to the consenting participants describing the procedures for the interview that included (a) the time and place agreed upon at the convenience of the interviewees and the researcher, (b) note taking and recording permissions, and (c) member checking procedures.

Researcher's Relationship with Participants

I hold three titles at the local site: faculty member, director of online learning, and instructional technical support. I have the opportunity to engage with many of the invited participants at the local site on a collegial level. My position as director of online learning at the study site serves as a part-time, one-person consultant to advise the administration and to assist faculty and students regarding online learning. As director of online learning, I provide technological and pedagogical training and support to faculty; however, I do not hire, supervise or evaluate online faculty (vice president of academic affairs/dean, personal communication, January 14, 2016), so I could maintain objectivity and reduce bias. My role in this study was to be one of researcher, not as consultant to faculty. While I may have direct or indirect contact with the invited participants for the study, my role in this research was separate and distinct from my titles at the local site.

As the researcher in this study, I alone hold the responsibility of collecting, sorting, and interpreting the qualitative data. Due to the nature of qualitative studies being more subjective than quantitative studies, it was important for me to assess and

acknowledge any partiality or preconceptions I may have had regarding my study to alleviate any questions or issues that may arise related to the trustworthiness of my study (Goldblatt & Band-Winterstein, 2016). Utilizing a reflexive practice, I considered my values and my connections with the participants and realized that I would ensure trustworthiness by choosing a data collection methodology that provided the opportunity for inclusive anonymity. Also, by reflecting on my own beliefs and ideals relating to student engagement and online learning instructional strategies, I would credibility.

To ensure confidentiality, invited participants could agree to participate in the first two data collection methods with complete anonymity: an online survey and document submission. In the third data collection method, participants could freely choose to disclose their identities and waive anonymity to participate in a one-on-one interview with me. As a reflexive practitioner, I identified with my colleagues' possible desire to remain anonymous and developed my study to offer them a choice.

As the director of online learning and an online practitioner, I analyzed my understandings of instructional strategies that engage online learners and recognized the need to transform my mindset to that of a non-judgmental researcher to appreciate the perspectives of the faculty. I was mindful of what Bogdan and Biklen (2007) recommended which is to allow the data to shape the research so that a neutral position unfolds as the data is interpreted (p. 38). As Leigh (2016) suggested, an effective reflexive practitioner needs to contemplate and address how their experiences and views affect and influence the feelings and perceptions of the participants, as well as the approach and methodology of the study.

The local site's administration continually encourages and supports continued faculty professional development to enhance faculty's knowledge and skills of student engagement. Therefore, asking online faculty their perceptions of instructional strategies they used to foster student engagement in the online class was an opportunity for a positive discussion of discovery and sharing of information among peers at the local site. As Nichols, Phipps, Gaetz, Fisher, and Tanguay (2014) suggested, organizations that create an atmosphere of positive collaboration among peers foster a community-engaged environment where colleagues might share the scholarship of teaching and learning. Since all 10 participants willingly disclosed their identities to participate in the one-on-one interview with me, the faculty's desire to share information among peers at the local site illustrated a sense of collegiality.

Measures for Protection of Participants

Ethical Safeguards. The statement of Nichols, et al., (2014) that "inter-organizational collaborations encourage inter-professional learning . . ." (p. 70) supported this study. This qualitative case study invited online faculty members, who had taught online for at least three years at a small 4-year college, to share their knowledge and experiences of instructional strategies that they perceived had fostered student engagement.

As the researcher and an employee of the local site, I kept a non-judgmental frame of reference to appreciate the perspectives of the faculty. I disclosed and reiterated protective protocols to reassure faculty that I respectfully took into account their privacy and permission (Stake, 1995). For example, I collected data from three sources, each of

which was designed to safeguard participants' confidentiality. As a first step, participants partook in an anonymous online survey through a third-party vendor. Second, as part of the survey, participants had the option of submitting documents, such as assignments or instructions illustrative of their survey responses, having removed any personally identifying references. Lastly, as part of the survey, participants had the option of volunteering to participate in a one-on-one interview with the researcher, guaranteeing that each participant's identity within the purview of the study would remain anonymous. The triangulation of three different data collection approaches and techniques allowed for a more in-depth understanding of the issue, offered colleagues at the local site the option of remaining anonymous, and added more validity to the findings (Creswell, 2012; Yin, 2014). Safeguarding the confidentiality of the participants in the study was paramount for faculty to share frankly their inter-professional knowledge and experience with me.

Consent and Confidentiality. Before conducting the educational research, I obtained all necessary permissions from those involved in the research study to protect individuals and research sites (Creswell, 2012). I completed applications to the local site's IRB and Walden University's IRB once the University Researcher approved the study proposal. The language in the applications ensured that the benefits of research outweighed the risks and that I would adhere to the ethical principles of respect, beneficence, and justice (Creswell, 2012; Martin, 2013; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Human Research Protections, 2014). Data collection commenced once permission from the local site's IRB and Walden University's IRB confirmed that the study was in accordance with all institutional and ethical guidelines.

Submitting paperwork is an IRB requirement; however, following one's values also supports the use of proper and just practices (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 53). I completed the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Protecting Human Research Participants Certification (Certificate Number 1639093). Faculty who participated only in the first two data collection approaches, namely the online survey with optional document submission, remained anonymous to me. The list of eligible faculty at the local site was forwarded to Faculty A by the assistant dean to ensure anonymity further. Then, Faculty A, who completed the human subject research training, forwarded an e-mail invitation to the eligible participants on my behalf. Since the web-based online survey was anonymous, the participants remained unidentified to me, unless they agreed to participate in the interview process. All faculty who participated in the anonymous survey and document collection submission agreed to participate in the one-on-one interview and willingly disclosed themselves. I informed all faculty participating in the interview that pseudonyms would be used for their contributions to ensure confidentiality and protect their anonymity. In addition, all electronic records, including the web-based survey information and audio recordings will be stored electronically on a hard drive that needs a password for access. I will keep all data for five years and then delete it all. Identifiable participant information will be not be used in the study or in future studies.

Data Collection Procedures, Processes, and Instruments

I collected data at the local site from three sources, each of which was designed to safeguard participants' confidentiality and anonymity. As a first step, participants were invited to partake in an anonymous online survey through a third-party vendor. Second,

as part of the survey, participants had the option of submitting documents, such as assignments or instructions illustrative of their survey responses, after removing any personally identifying references. Lastly, as part of the survey, participants had the option of volunteering to participate in a one-on-one interview with the researcher who agreed not to disclose the participant's identity within the purview of the study.

Utilizing three sources of data allowed me to analyze a comprehensive description of faculty's experiences with and perceptions of instructional strategies that faculty perceived to engage online learners. By examining multiple sources of data relating to the same phenomenon, I was able to counter a concern regarding possible bias with the findings and interpretations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2014). In addition, three data collection methods, namely the survey, the document collection, and the one-on-one interview, allowed for categorizing of any similarities, differences, and relationships in the data. Furthermore, it is important to develop a timeframe before the collection of data to ensure access to participants and to maximize needed resources (Creswell, 2012). My timeframe for the data collection from the three sources began September 28, 2016, and ended October 28, 2016.

Although the open-ended online survey, document collection, and one-on-one interview were three separate data collection methods, the link to attach documents and the option to participate in the one-on-one interview were located within the third-party online survey. Faculty willing to submit documents had the option of attaching their ready-made sources in the survey section. Seven faculty members submitted documents

that related to their survey answers; discussion board posts, assignment instructions, and announcements were among with types of documents submitted.

All participating faculty waived their anonymity and participated in a one-on-one interview with me by signing their name at the bottom of the survey and providing an e-mail address. I contacted the participants using the e-mail address they provided to set up a convenient time and place to meet. All but one faculty member agreed to meet me in my office at the local site. One faculty member met me at an outside location that was more convenient for the participant.

Open-Ended Online Survey

I used a third-party vendor (Survey Gizmo) to host the open-ended anonymous survey and document attachments. I designed the open-ended survey that contained seven questions that aligned with the research study question and the literature review (Appendix G). The goal of the survey questions, in relation to previous literature and the research question, was to discover instructional strategies that faculty teaching online at the local site designed and delivered that they perceived to have fostered student engagement in online learning.

Invited participants received an e-mail memo from Faculty A, a member at the local site, who forwarded the e-mail on my behalf to maintain the confidentiality of the invited participants from me. Participants were informed that the survey would take approximately 30 minutes to complete, and, if they were willing to attach documents, an additional 15 minutes of their time would be needed. Participants were politely asked if they would be willing to complete the online survey and document submission within a

week of receiving the invitation. Three faculty members completed the survey within the first two weeks. Faculty A forwarded the e-mail memo once again to faculty in the third week.

Once participants consented to participate in the survey, they clicked on a web-based link that connected them to the survey. The landing page of the link explained the policies (confidentiality, anonymity, and withdrawal), procedures (providing answers, adding documents, and the identification process to participate in the one-on-one interview), and directions for completing the survey. Willing faculty had access to seven open-ended questions that focused on instructional strategies they felt they used to successfully to engage online learners, namely questions relating to interactions, social presence, and instructional best practices. Upon completion of the seven-question survey, faculty were given the option to attach two to three documents/assignments that they felt captured online learning instructional strategies they perceived to have fostered student engagement in their classes. Seven out of the 10 faculty submitted documents. The anonymous open-ended survey allowed faculty to articulate more detailed responses regarding their experiences and perceptions of instructional strategies they perceived to have engaged online learners (Handy & Ross, 2005). As Flint, et al., (2016) assert written responses can allow participants to maintain their anonymity; interviews do not always afford the opportunity for participants to remain unidentifiable. All participating faculty willingly waived anonymity and participated in the one-on-one interview. I contacted consenting faculty and reiterated the options to withdraw from or limit their participation in the study.

Document Collection

Seven out of the 10 faculty participating in the anonymous online survey attached one or more documents through the survey software that illustrated online learning instructional strategies that the faculty perceived to have fostered student engagement such as assignments that they posted in the learning management system. The documents that supported participants' responses in the online survey provided additional credence to the study (Creswell, 2012), corroborated the findings, and assisted me to more fully understand the instructional strategies described by the faculty in the open-ended survey (Yin, 2014). See Figure 1.

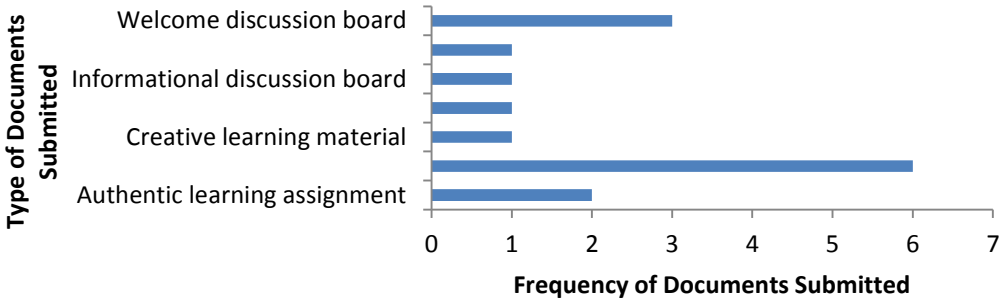

Figure 1. Type of documents that faculty submitted to represent their perception of student engagement.

The main benefit of collecting examples of instructional strategies was to help me gain a complete understanding of the exact thoughts and words of the participants—a rich source of content data assisted me to analyze, synthesize, and categorize the data into themes (Creswell, 2012; Yin, 2014). In addition, the collection of illustrative examples of instructional strategies allowed me to analyze the differences and similarities of

instructional strategies that faculty perceived to have engaged online learners. Faculty were asked to deidentify the documents they submitted to ensure continued anonymity. By asking faculty to remove all identifiable information from the documents such as course name and specific course information that may have divulged the identity of the faculty member, I maintained anonymity and confidentiality.

Semi-Structured One-on-One Interview

All of the participants were willing to waive their anonymity and invited to an individual one-hour semi-structured open-ended question interview process with me to collect additional in-depth information. My expectation was to expand upon the information gathered from the anonymous online survey. To waive their anonymity and agree to participate in the one-on-one interview with me, faculty identified themselves by signing their name at the bottom of the survey questions. I contacted willing participants by using the e-mail information they provided. I asked each participant seven open-ended questions created by me that aligned with the research study question and the literature review.

According to Jacob and Furgerson (2012), creating a script or procedure for the interview is just as important as asking participants questions that link to the research study because the script helps the researcher to keep focused. My interview script began with thanking faculty members for participating in the interview with the intention of putting the interviewee at ease. By using an interview script, I was able to ensure that all of my primary questions were framed in the same way for each participant.

I verified consent forms, assured the faculty that our discussions would remain confidential, and informed the faculty that pseudonyms would protect their anonymity. Faculty were also assured that they could withdraw from the interview at any time. I explained that learning about instructional strategies they perceived to engage online learners may help assist present and future online instructors to enhance student satisfaction and success and that my findings would be shared with the college to possibly create a CoP e-learning site that may be accessible to all faculty teaching online.

I began the interview with some warm-up questions, such as asking faculty to tell me a little bit about themselves. I maintained a flexible, open, conversational tone to set the participants at ease and to foster a collegial atmosphere for the sharing of professional knowledge and experience. Faculty were asked open-ended questions relating to interactions, social presence, and instructional best practices as they related to student engagement in the online classroom.

All, but one, of the one-hour one-on-one interviews, were conducted in my office at the local site. One interview was conducted outside of the local site to accommodate a faculty member's schedule. I captured the interview using note taking, and upon permission from the participants, I used Super Note, a program on my I-Pad to record the session.

Faculty were asked if they would be willing to review and verify the notes that I transcribed and return the notes within a week of receiving them. All faculty returned and verified the accuracy of the transcribed notes within the requested timeframe. To ensure that the information generated from the interview held validity and credibility, I used

member checking or respondent validation (Castillo-Montoya, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Finally, faculty were asked if they would be agreeable to be contacted for follow-up questions, if needed.

Castillo-Montoya (2016) and Merriam and Tisdell (2016) claimed that semi-structured interviews, containing a mix of structured and unstructured questions, allow additional information to unfold as the conversations develop between the participant and the researcher. Participants can provide deep and rich explanations when thought-provoking questions are asked and when the researcher possesses good interview skills, such as being respectful, open-minded, and non-threatening during questioning (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The semi-structured interview approach allowed me to ask follow-up questions of participants' responses to better understand their perceptions.

Data Safekeeping

I strictly followed ethical and etiquette protocols. A disinterested member at the College, who completed the human subject research training, forwarded an e-mail invitation to the local site participants on my behalf to ensure initial participant anonymity from me and to safeguard participant confidentiality. The e-mail contained a letter to the target population detailing the study as well as depicting the protocols for safeguarding the faculty who agreed to partake in the study. The letter described who I was, the purpose and purview of the study, each participant's expected contribution, the procedures taken to protect confidentiality and anonymity, possible benefits of the study, and a signature line for participants willing to identify themselves to me and participate in the interview. In addition, the letter delineated roles, procedures, survey and interview

questions, directions for document submissions, prospective meeting times and locations for the optional interview, as well as methods for gathering data during the interview (notetaking and audio recording). Additionally, the letter ensured faculty of confidentiality, anonymity, and the opportunity to terminate their participation in the study at any point.

I collected three sources of data at the local site, each of which allowed for the participants' choice of anonymity or disclosure to safeguard participants' confidentiality. To acquire the first two sources of data, I invited participants to partake in an anonymous online survey and to submit documents. The third source invited faculty to identify themselves to me if they chose to participate in the one-on-one interview. Each participant partaking in the interview received a pseudonym to ensure anonymity with respect to colleagues at the local site as well as the public.

I coded and categorized the data from the three sources into a narrative format and developed themes. All of the data is stored electronically using passwords and two means of backup for data security. I will electronically retain the research study information for five years and then erase the material from the system to protect all participants' confidentiality.

Role of the Researcher

While I hold three titles at the local site—faculty member, director of online learning, and instructional technical support—objectivity was maintained through identification and constant monitoring of possible biases (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As director of online learning, I provide technological and pedagogical training and support

to faculty; however, I do not hire, supervise, or evaluate online faculty so objectivity could be maintained and bias reduced. My role in this study, therefore, was to be one of a researcher and not one of a consultant at the college. As Creswell (2012) stated, it is impossible for a researcher to eliminate all perceptions from the investigation. However, researchers who can set aside ego and emotion can focus on intellect and practice skills and attributes that foster engaging interactions with participants, which can promote good qualitative research (Yin, 2014). Reflexive practitioners anticipate and evaluate how their own knowledge and principles may influence different aspects of the study (Leigh, 2016). Therefore, keeping an open mind and a non-judgmental attitude helped me to reduce bias and facilitate the study in a professional manner. As the study related to an optimistic exploration and discovery of successful strategies that faculty perceived to foster student engagement within the online learning environment, the findings may provide benefits to all stakeholders at the local site, such as the enhancement of online instructional strategies.

Data Analysis

Procedures for Data Analysis

During the month-long data collection period from August 17, 2016, to September 28, 2016, I used an analytic strategy, as Creswell (2012) posited, to segment, label, describe, and develop themes from the participants' responses. I followed both deductive and inductive analytical approaches, keeping in mind the literature reviewed, the research question, questions from the survey and interview, and the documents submitted (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I continually organized the data received using an

ongoing, cyclical process. For example, as the surveys and documents were coming in, I scheduled interviews, completed transcripts, took notes, and developed preliminary codes. These cyclical processes helped me to understand participants' responses in terms of the literature reviewed and the research question.

A few researchers state that analyzing case study evidence is an eclectic approach that requires flexibility, adaptability, creativity, and a recursive-type process during the interpretive and constructive stages of data analysis (Saldana, 2009; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). Data analysis from this study was a recurrent process that required critical thinking skills as I categorized statements into codes and themes, and ultimately evaluated the data for meaning. The following protocol outlines the procedures that I followed during the exploratory analysis of this study's data.

I used two cycles of coding processes as suggested by Saldana (2009). In the first cycle, I began with an exploratory methodology, namely a provisional-type coding wherein some codes were initially generated and referenced from the literature review as the data was continually investigated (Saldana, 2009). For example, I examined the surveys, documents, and interviews to discover any inclinations toward student engagement within the constructs of interaction, social presence, and best practices. My note taking and summary writing on the downloaded survey and interview transcripts helped me to shape interpretations and ensure that the data was properly captured, authenticated, and worthwhile (Creswell, 2012; Yin, 2014).

From these notes and summaries, I identified codes and used an Excel spreadsheet to organize, analyze, and maintain the data. During this phase, I utilized pattern matching

to reveal a congruence, or consistency, among the three sources of data to help strengthen the internal validity of the study (Yin, 2014). In addition, I exercised In Vivo coding, a method used to encapsulate exact words from the participants that provided the basis of support for the possible themes and which provided me with thick descriptions of participants' perceptions (Creswell, 2012; Stake, 1995).

The second cycle delved into reorganizing and reanalyzing the data that I analyzed through the first cycle. The purpose of the second cycle, according to Saldana (2009), is "to develop a [clear] sense of categorical, thematic, conceptual, and/or theoretical organization . . ." (p. 149). I used axial-type coding to help extend the provisional-type coding used in the first cycle. During the axial coding process, I returned to the initial coding to better group, sort, and relabel the codes and categories (see Saldana, 2009; see Table 1).

An Excel spreadsheet helped me to visualize the data through color-coding, categorizing, and summarizing the data on the spreadsheet (see Appendices H and J). From the spreadsheet data, I created mind-map graphics using Tagul, a free software program to create graphics to help me recognize repeated words and phrases that faculty stated to reveal similarities among the data (see Appendices I, K, and L). According to Dietz (2016), using mind-mapping tools helps the researcher visually display data more clearly to accentuate main points and facilitate better understanding. Finally, I created the figures and tables dispersed throughout this study from the spreadsheet and mind-

Table 1

Data Analysis Strategy: Two-Cycle Process

Type of analysis	Steps
First Cycle	
Exploratory, Provisional-Type Coding	Codes generated from the literature review and research question
In Vivo Coding	Exact words captured from the participants
Second Cycle	
Axial-Type Coding	Return to initial coding and re-labeled codes and categories
Created tables, figures, and mind-map graphics	Assisted in deeper understanding of the evidence presented

Note. The framework for exploratory, provisional-type coding, In Vivo coding, and axial-type coding was suggested by Saldana (2009) to help researchers develop a flexible, adaptable, creative, and recursive-type process during the data analysis stage.

mapping graphics to provide an empathetic understanding of the 10 participants' perceptions, to display rich sources of data, and to help the reader better understand the evidence.

Assurance of Accuracy and Credibility

It is imperative to ensure throughout the process of data collection and analysis that the findings and interpretations can be trusted (Creswell, 2012). In other words, how is the worth of qualitative findings assessed? According to Lodico et al. (2010) and Creswell (2012), a researcher can uphold trustworthiness in a qualitative research study by spending time and engagement in repetitive, continued, and extensive immersion in

the data analysis. Spending time with the data helps the researcher to compare responses from various sources to identify possible patterns or relationships (Lodico, et al., 2010; Creswell, 2012). Amankwaa (2016) stated that a worthy or reliable qualitative research study establishes truth, applicability, consistency, and neutrality. In other words, the researcher adds strength and quality to the research—better known in qualitative circles as rigor (Kornbluh, 2015).

Establishing trustworthiness in this case study may be assured through the methods and procedures that I rigorously followed to carefully and precisely segment, label, describe, and develop themes from the data and through data triangulation. In data triangulation, three separate and distinct methods of data collection and analysis—open-ended online survey, document collection, and a one-on-one interview—allowed participant responses to be compared, verified, and examined for interrelationships (Creswell, 2012; Lodico et al., 2010). An additional safety measure, namely member checking, provided a safeguard against possible bias by asking participants to review and verify their transcripts from the interview for accuracy (Creswell, 2012; Kornbluh, 2015; Lodico et al., 2010). All participants reviewed and verified their transcripts, thus assessing the information for trustworthiness. Since qualitative research is interpretive by nature, I acknowledged and reflected on any imperfections in thoughts, beliefs, and opinions throughout the study to ensure integrity through reflective practice. As Stake (1995) posited, by realizing my consciousness about online learning, I was able to exercise a subjective judgment or bracketing process when seeing patterns of unanticipated and expected relationships.

Analytic Generalization

Can lessons be learned beyond this current case study—a specific, unique, and bounded phenomenon? Yin (2014) suggested that case studies help to conceptualize better the underlying theoretical propositions that go beyond the setting of the case, a concept known as analytic generalization in the qualitative research realm. In other words, a qualitative researcher may use theories or concepts from a case study to help show possible applicability or transferability in a different situation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Analytic generalization draws inferences based on an interpretive analysis of the elements that shaped the results for meanings and understandings (Yin, 2014). Unlike statistical generalization, which draws inferences made from a specific population that may be later applied to a larger population, analytic generalization helps a researcher to use the conceptual lessons learned to guide future settings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

One of my goals for this study was to compare the theories and concepts from the reviewed literature with the study findings to enhance the knowledge of present and future online practitioners. Furthermore, I wanted to assist in building a better online learning environment that engages online students and increases the likelihood of student satisfaction and success.

Discrepant Cases

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) argued that qualitative research is a process of exploring for a preponderance of the evidence or the "best fit," not a definitive "yes" or "no" answer that begs for a counterargument (p. 249). As I previously mentioned, there is no monolithic pathway to understanding the combination of mechanisms that fosters

student engagement (Kasworm & Abdrahim, 2014; Lawson & Lawson, 2013), or the instructional strategies that engage online learners that lead to student satisfaction. What researchers have found is that engaged students tend to exhibit a sense of satisfaction and ultimately are more successful in higher education (Freeman & Wash, 2013; Lumpkin et al., 2015; National Survey of Student Engagement, 2015, p. 1). I did not find any discrepant data to counter the evidence of student engagement during the gathering or analysis of the data.

Data Analysis Results

The purpose of this qualitative instrumental case study was to discover instructional strategies that online faculty at the local site have designed and delivered that they perceived to have fostered student engagement in online learning. In this section, I begin with a review of the process by which the data was gathered, analyzed, and recorded using the structure of the research questions in relation to the problem. I discuss how a synergetic relationship of the data formed and how a holistic view emerged as the data developed into themes—all in relation to and in alignment with the research question and literature reviewed. To give credence and trust to the study, I discuss the rigor in which the study was conducted, specifically through triangulation and member checking. Finally, I present a chapter conclusion to summarize the outcomes of the study in relation to the conceptual framework of engagement and discuss how the findings will benefit the local site and the greater community through the presentation of a position paper.

Summary of Data Generation

Ten faculty members, who taught online for at least three years at the study site, provided the data. Figure 2 shows the number of years graphically that each faculty member taught online at the local site. Figure 2 also depicts the assigned pseudonyms used to protect faculty identities.

The research question focused on exploring faculty perceptions of and experiences with instructional strategies that they used specifically to foster student engagement in the online learning environment. Three methods of data collection ensued to answer the research question: (a) an open-ended, anonymous online survey; (b) document collection; and (c) an optional semi-structured one-on-one interview. Each method required several steps to collect, analyze and interpret the data, including organizing the survey and document data as it was collected and conducting and transcribing the interviews. Faculty were requested to answer seven questions in the open-ended, anonymous survey and six questions in the semi-structured one-on-one interview (Appendices D and E).

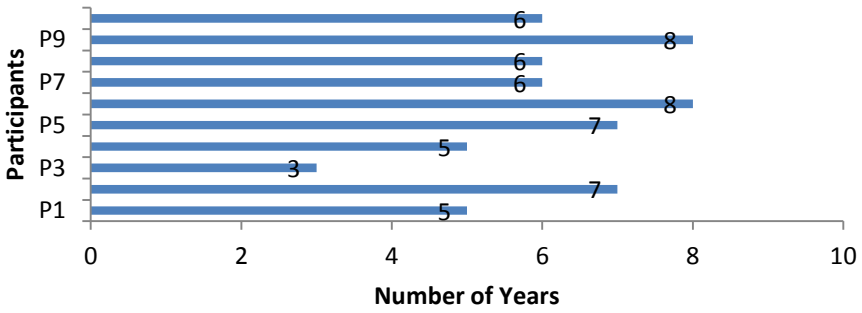

*Figure 2.*Years of online faculty teaching at the local site.

I utilized two cycles of coding processes as suggested by Saldana (2009). In the first cycle, I used an exploratory methodology, namely a provisional-type coding, wherein some codes were initially generated and referenced from the literature review and research question (Saldana, 2009). In addition, I kept in mind the constructs of interaction, social presence, and best practices throughout my coding process. Once participants responded to the survey, I consolidated the data, reduced it to codes, and attempted to interpret the data. This same process was replicated following the transcription of the recorded one-on-one interviews.

In the second cycle, I delved into reorganizing and reanalyzing the data that I coded in the first cycle. I used axial-type coding to help extend the provisional-type coding used in the first cycle and to better group, sort, and re-label the codes and categories (Saldana, 2009). For example, Excel and Tagul software helped to visualize the data through color-coding, categorizing, and summarizing the data (Appendices H-K). From the spreadsheet and mind-mapping data, figures and tables provided an empathetic understanding of the 10 participants' perceptions to help me formulate the final reporting of the study.

Five themes emerged from the amalgamation of the data taken from the survey, the documents submitted, and the one-on-one interviews. Table 2 depicts the central themes that developed from repetitious words, rich narratives, and my own linguistic analysis of the data. The themes represented the elements of meaning from the data that related to my research question.

Table 2

Development of Themes, Categories, and Instructional Strategies

Themes	General categories	Instructional strategies
Provide instructor presence	Be there Foster interactions Comfortable environment Sense of personalization	Discussion boards Technologies/Multimedia Announcements Opening video of instructor Weekly summaries/E-mail Course design
Establish effective communication	Clear, concise directions and expectations Relevant, timely, and constructive feedback Reminders Repetition	Announcements Feedback Discussion boards Narrated power points Videos-instructor created
Maintain a consistent course design	Ease of navigation Consistent content, summaries, and feedback	Clear structure – learning Learning materials, assignments, and discussion boards Weekly lesson or modules Weekly announcements Weekly summaries
Create engaging content	Current, Relevant, and Autonomous	Discussion boards Links YouTubes PowToons
Build a humanizing learning environment	Sense of personalization Supportive and kind language Respect Value students	Respond by name Personal videos Provide assistance – e-mail, webinars, office hours, phone calls

Note. Development of themes as they emerged from the research question and data collected from the participants through three sources (survey, document submission, and one-on-one interview).

Themes and Supporting Evidence

The five themes encapsulated the corresponding perspectives of the 10 participants regarding their responses to the research question: What are faculty perceptions of and experiences with instructional strategies that they have used

specifically to foster student engagement in the online learning environment. The themes were (a) provide instructor presence; (b) establish effective communications; (c) maintain a consistent course design; (d) create engaging content; and (e) build a humanizing learning environment. Each theme contained multiple components that participants believed fostered student engagement that led to student satisfaction and success. A discussion of each theme along with evidence to support this study's research question follows.

Theme One: Provide Instructor Presence

The theme of instructor presence emerged from participants' responses to Survey Question 3 and Interview Question 5 and supported the research question by asking in what ways did faculty believe they provided opportunities for interaction in their online courses that they perceived led to student satisfaction and success. The question and resulting responses aligned with several theories of student engagement. For example, Kearsley and Shneiderman's (1998) theory of engagement and Anderson and Garrison's (1998) theory of interactions suggested that instructor presence, or involvement, are key to student satisfaction and success. Furthermore, seminal authors Short et al., (1976) proposed that instructors who can close the physical gap in an online class might contribute to student success.

Persistent responses from the participants emphasized being present, fostering interactions, providing a comfortable environment, and nurturing a sense of personalization (Appendices H & J). Most of the participants in the survey believed that the discussion board is key to fostering interaction between the instructor and the

students. While faculty expressed several methods used to engage online learners, several faculty felt that the use of multimedia (websites, YouTube, PowToon, etc.) provided students with the most opportunities to interact within the online course (see Table 3). Furthermore, all participants in the interview commented that they felt their presence through announcements, feedback, e-mail and course design most led to student satisfaction and success in the online course. Participant 10 claimed:

> I try to be present. I think that I am there and I am present. I firmly believe that really almost anybody can teach a class. The content is the content, and if you can deliver the class in a way that keeps the students awake and alert, and kind of excited about the class, the student will stay in the class.

Several researchers have found that methods such as instructor-created videos, discussion boards, narrated PowerPoints and announcements foster a sense of instructor presence in an online course (Chakraborty & Nafukho, 2015; Clarke & Bartholomew, 2014; Croxton, 2014; Draus, Curran, & Trempus, 2014; Huss et al., 2015; Zimmerman et al., 2014). Participant 9 believed that it is very important for an instructor to "be there" and that the method of instruction mattered.

> [My voice] lets you know there is a person there. I make my own PowerPoints because of the way I want things to be directed . . . . But, like I said, I really believe there needs to be voice in everything. And, I wouldn't want a different voice [YouTube videos]—so I would put my own in. I have a rather distinctive voice . . . and, it's my PowerPoint, it's my voice.

Table *3*

Theme 1: Summary of Responses for Theme 1 (Provide Instructor Presence)

Instructional strategies	Example responses
Discussion board	P2: [Most important . . . the instructor's social presence, I think, is when you interact, how you interact, and how they visually portray themselves.
	P4: From the students . . . I've talked to, they feel my presence [voice is important] because it lets them know there is a person there. It's me. Yes, it's me . . . . Students receive continual feedback from me . . ..I am quick to compliment a student for sharing information that we need in my course.
	P6: I definitely feel the instructor's participation and the one-on-one with the student—that's the big thing. That's what gets them [engaged], because otherwise, it's just this detached body . . . . You have to be there
Technologies/ Multimedia	P1: Student's sense of belonging is key . . . they need to feel comfortable interacting with the instructor . . . . I do not want the students to feel disconnected from the instructor. I want them to always feel like they know I can support them . . . with the content, or struggling with technology.
	P1: I found animations . . . . YouTube videos for them to watch . . . . I am giving them that sense of belonging through these technologies.
	P7: I think maybe that my presence [voice] is probably most significant. [Students] know that they have an instructor that is invested and committed to their education . . . to their success. Knowing that it's not just a computer that they are submitting stuff to—it's a person . . . and connecting with that person.
Announcements	P3: I showed up—at least four/five times a week. [I wanted them to think]…that the teacher was connected to them. On a deeper level than it's my job to do this--that I was engaged as much in the material as they were.
Instructor contact	P8: [I give] timely, personalized feedback on assignments and discussion boards. I have a "contact your instructor" section, including photo--also have personalized my discussion boards with my photo and invite students to do the same if they feel comfortable with that.
E-mail	P2: I provide a formal and graded discussion forum, [and] an informal class "chat" forum. I uphold a 24-hour email response commitment and try . . . to provide positive feedback in public forums.
	P8: Reassure them that I am available through e-mail and that I…will get back to them promptly…within 24 hours. So, they have a sense that they are not out there alone . . . . I am there for them and accessible.
Course design	P3: I used graphics, fun facts, lively announcements, positive reinforcement, engaging in discussion board to be helpful.
	P7: I always include a photo that will gain student's attention. I incorporate voice and include my photo in order to create a visual and auditory connection with students.

Note. Instructor presence theme depicting instructional strategies that faculty perceived to engage the online learner.

Theme Two: Establish Effective Communication

The theme of establishing effective communication emerged from participants' responses to Survey Question 1 and Interview Question 2 and supported the research question by asking the participants to describe the types of activities and communications they used that they perceived to have led to student engagement and student satisfaction. Responses to these questions illustrated the importance that faculty placed on how effective communication plays a role in student engagement. Several researchers have concluded that students experience greater gains in student engagement when instructors use clear and effective communication strategies in their online courses (Boston et al., 2014; Chakraborty & Nafukho, 2015; Horzum, 2015; Khurana & Boling, 2014; Meyer & Murrell, 2014a; Serdyukov, 2015). For example, Zimmerman et al. (2014) found that students experienced gains in self-efficacy, student engagement, and metacognition from an increase in instructor communication strategies, i.e. feedback, collaboration, and dialogs. In addition, seminal theorist Moore (1989) believed that there is a transactional distance or cyberspace divide that can cause miscommunications in online learning; and, that the style of communication is as important as the delivery because dialog and structure form the reciprocal interaction between the instructor and the student. As depicted in Table 4, participants consistently reported that they perceived that effective communication was a necessary component for student engagement. Statements from the participants included the use of clear and concise directions and expectations; relevant, timely, and constructive feedback; reminders; and repetition of important course information.

Table 4

Theme 2: Summary of Responses for Theme 2 (Establish Effective Communication)

Instructional strategies	Example responses
Announcements	P1: A weekly announcement, keeps them engaged . . . and not searching for what they have to do each week . . . . I think that is key for student engagement.
	P7: Monday morning . . . new resources, discussion board and assignments are posted, but there is also that new announcement they can look forward to.
	P8: I send out a weekly announcement—just give them a reminder as far as what is due, what assignment, what discussion board.
	P9: I use an announcement every single week, usually in video form followed up with a written form.
	P10: I also send the students weekly announcements about what they should be doing, upcoming assignments or changes that I am making to the course.
Discussion board	P1: I have a discussion board that is titled "coffee talk" or "questions and answers"…students can talk to the instructor in a public format . . . that the whole class can see.
	P4: Best engage . . . the students with each other, with me, and with the course materials by far hands down is the discussion board. I love discussion boards.
	P5: My first discussion board was to say . . . hey, tell us a story—did you ever have a miscomputeroccasion . . . that was our break the ice.
	P6: I . . . create a dialogue on that welcome page. So, you may write, "hi my name is . . . I'm taking this course because I am looking to get a promotion at work . . . . " Then, I might write back and say ". . . , welcome to the class, it's nice having you on board. Tell me more . . . .´ So, now I have engaged them.
Feedback	P1: I give feedback on everything and anything they do. And, that is usually in the form of a comment—along with the grade.
	P2: I always gave them feedback . . . . I would always make . . . feedback was always positive.
	P5: And, once I got my hands[on] a microphone . . . I actually gave feedback [using my actual voice].
	P7: I try to make a comment on every single person's paper.
	P8: I want to provide feedback right away . . . when it is something in general that they will need for the next assignment. I try to get back to them within 2-3 days.
	P9: [I used] lots and lots of feedback.

Table continues

Instructional strategies	Example responses
Multimedia/ Narrated power points and instructor created videos	P1: I have also used . . . to help students learn the material . . . PowerPoints, narrated PowerPoints. P9: I also take videos of myself. The PowToon—and I truly believe in the voicing over of PowerPoints. I have never used a quiet PowerPoint. P4: it's pretty much consistent that when they go into learning materials, they are always going to have a PowerPoint, they are always going to have at least two videos for every topic, and the videos are as entertaining and educational as possible—so it's just not a talking head.

Note: Establish effective communication and instructional strategies that faculty perceived to engage online learners

Faculty in both the survey and the interview perceived that the use of announcements is a key factor to effective communicative strategies to maintain student engagement. In the survey, most of the faculty felt that the discussion board served as the primary means of effective communication in the online course. In addition, several faculty in the interview thought that prompt and consistent feedback contributed to student engagement and satisfaction. Participant 7 deemed that effective communication is so important in an online course.

> The discussion board is very important because it elaborates . . . it gives students an opportunity to elaborate on the topics for that week, and it gives me an opportunity to see if they understand. Very often . . . not very often . . . but, sometimes, by the way a student responds, I'll realize that they don't get it . . . I will [then] clarify for them that they missed the whole point. Then [I will] go on to educate them [privately] in the comment [section] as I am grading.

Finally, many of the faculty felt that using narrated PowerPoints and instructor-created videos were important for not only assisting students to acquire course content knowledge but also for providing a manifestation of instructor presence in the course.

Theme Three: Maintain a Consistent Course Design

The theme of consistency in course design emerged from participants' responses to Survey Question 5 and Interview Question 3, and supported the research question by asking the participants to describe the types of course designs or frameworks they used that they perceived to have led to student engagement and student satisfaction. Responses to these questions illustrated the importance that faculty placed on the particular course structure that they designed to foster student satisfaction and success in their online courses. Most faculty reported in the survey and all stated during the interview that they claimed a consistent format for online courses enables students to effectively navigate through the course and have the opportunity to understand clearly the course content. It is important for instructors to provide a quality instructional experience for the online student by creating a structural blueprint or clear navigation path through the course (Ice et al., 2011; Khurana & Boling, 2014). Furthermore, an organizational structure, such as following clear learning objectives, providing due dates, and setting appropriate expectations, also provides a roadmap to effectively guide the learner through the course and foster a positive learning environment (González-Sanmamed et al., 2014; Richardson et al., 2015; Wei & Chen, 2012).

Several researchers have expressed the importance of following the Quality Matters Rubric to add acceptability to the course and to ensure best practices in online

design (Beaver, et al., 2016; Crews, Wilkinson, & Neill, 2015; Meyer & Murrell, 2014; Southard & Mooney, 2015). For example, Betts and Heaston (2014) and Hoey (2014) suggested that instructors who follow best practice models add credibility to the course for internal stakeholders and outside accreditors. As depicted in Table 5, participants in this study repeatedly stated that in using a consistent format in their online courses, whether week-to-week or module-by-module, the consistency led students through the course almost seamlessly. As Participant 9 mentioned, "This is just what [the students] have said anecdotally—'oh, all right – that's easy—I can do that.' So, once they know [the structure], you know they know the structure—it's always there [consistently]." The structure that participants mentioned included the tabs in the learning management system used at the local site: weekly folders, modules, and tabs within the learning management system. Participant 2 felt that including weekly due dates for coursework in an online course [weekly folders] helped students to balance their time more effectively.

> If you are trying to balance face-to-face courses [along with an online course] where the . . . test tomorrow . . . test next week . . . paper is due . . . the online course work is what gets pushed aside. So, I kind of felt that by forcing them to treat it just like a face-to-face course, [specific due dates] it kept everyone kind of on task.

Theme Four: Create Engaging Content

The theme of creating engaging content emerged from participants' responses to Survey Question 2 and Interview Question 4 and supported the research question by

Table 5

Theme 3: Summary of Responses for Theme 3 (Maintain a Consistent Course Design)

Instructional strategies	Example responses
Learning management system consistent structure Weekly lessons or modules	P1: The content can take two or three weeks to cover, and I don't want them to feel overwhelmed by thinking . . . . I have to learn all of this now. So, breaking it down in a weekly format it's a best practice. The student knows exactly the expectations for that week. P2: [I feel] if the course design is not engaging, it makes them harder for them to succeed . . . . I would put defaults in Bb in chronological order for what they needed. P3: I had a weekly rhythm. I used videos, quizzes, discussion board, projects, and a final exam. I always had an opening project where I wanted a writing sample. P5: The repetitive process is so important . . . week after week, it becomes almost second nature. It's like you drive . . . the first time you go somewhere in the car; somebody gave you the directions—you are looking at them very carefully . . . you try to remember what did they say…and that second time you go, you start recognizing things. The third time you're having a conversation with the person next to you . . . because by now you just know what to do. Give the students that consistency—and repetition, repetition, repetition. P6: The [continuity] in the structure . . . is very beneficial because (a) it works very well, and (b) the students are used to seeing the same structure in all of my classes. P7: It's very predictable the way it folds out week to week. There is always one assignment that is due every single week. There is the discussion board that is very, very clear. P8: I inform them how to best use the menu—go into the course, read the announcements, go to the learning materials for the week first, and then complete the readings or review the different websites, and then sign on to the discussion board early. P9: [My course has] that feeling of home…but also a consistent, systematic structure every week. I think that . . . gives them a sense of familiarity and comfort. The course calendar helps me to map out everything in a semester. P10: I have it <structured> by each unit or each chapter. Every week looks consistently the same. [The structure] is kind of a roadmap. You have taken that road 5 times; you know where to turn now. So every time they go in they see the same thing.

Note. Maintain a consistent course design theme depicting instructional strategies that faculty perceived to engage online learners.

asking the participants to describe some course activities they created and technological tools they utilized that they perceived to have led to student engagement and student satisfaction. Responses to these questions illustrated the importance that faculty placed on the particular activities they designed to foster student satisfaction and success in their online courses. Persistent responses from the participants emphasized content such as the use of discussion boards, real-life and current content, narrated PowerPoints, and the use of multi-media. Creating the ideal circumstances for student engagement is paramount to student success. Several researchers have concluded that the instructor's role in engaging students in the online course, namely through appropriately designed contextual instruction, has been shown to enhance student satisfaction (Acosta-Tello, 2014; Al-Salman, 2011; Boton & Gregory, 2015; Khurana & Boling, 2014; Kirwin & Roumell, 2015; Panizo, Hollander, Pappas, & Pierrakos, 2014). Likewise, González-Sanmamed et al., (2014) and Richardson et al., (2015) found that instructors should provide engaging content but also clear learning objectives, due dates, and expectations to enhance student participation. Furthermore, Chickering and Gamson (1987) proposed seven principles for faculty to consider when designing course activities to engage online learners; two of those activities include using active learning techniques and respecting diverse talents and ways of learning (pp. 2-3).

When designing and delivering online content, it is important for faculty to construct pedagogical content that bests helps students to learn. According to Shulman's (1986) philosophy of pedagogical content knowledge, having subject matter knowledge

is not enough; faculty need to know how to transform their knowledge into practice for the students. In other words, faculty need to present the topic in a manner that instills motivation in the online student.

In the survey, many of the faculty felt that relevant assignments, such as group work, autonomous projects, and current topics for discussion most engaged students. In addition, most of the faculty felt that the use of narrated PowerPoint presentations engaged the online students; and several faculty felt that the use of web links enabled them to keep the content current and, therefore, kept the students interested in the course content. As depicted in Table 6, many of the participants believed providing students with engaging, real-life, and current content improved students' participation in the course. Participant 3 summed up the importance of using engaging content in today's online classes:

> This is the social media age and brains have changed with the current generation. We need to take advantage of that in learning environments. There have been pneumatic changes. So, again, we take advantage of that, so that [students] connect with one another in the way they are used to connecting with one another—learning at the same time—researching—communicating—and leadership development.

Theme Five: Build a Humanizing Environment

The theme of building a humanizing environment emerged from participants' responses to Survey Question 4 and Interview Question 1 and supported the research question by asking the participants to describe ways that they tried to foster student

Table 6

Theme 4: Summary of Responses for Theme 4 (Create Engaging Content)

Instructional strategies	Example responses
Technology	P1: One tool that I have used is PowerPoint . . . and I narrate it. I explain the content for them. And, I have gotten a lot of positive feedback about that . . . there is something about knowing . . . ok my professor is explaining it to us--this must be important.
	P9: Nobody wants to learn something for no reason . . . they want relevance . . . nobody wants to write a paper on the comma—you know. I just discovered this thing called PowerPoint mix.
	P7: I post a lot of different articles that I see on Twitter . . . . Very hot topics such as palliative care and end-of-life decision making
Collaborative relevant pedagogy	P2: Thought provoking discussions related to the perception of . . . in society today. One discussion, in particular, focuses on two poems that have been written about . . . and the discussion allows those with more experience to educate those who are new to the field of . . . .
	P5: An online group project had students making decisions together on the area they wanted to investigate, decisions on who would take on what subtopic in the topic area, sharing files through Blackboard, to ultimately create an end product that synthesized their learning.
	P10: I try to pick topics . . . like Zika or something . . . . I try to pick a topic that is current in the news . . . so, they become so engaged.
Relevant pedagogy, links	P3: I did service learning in my group project . . . . I did the group project at least six times and they were fun—they were creative and fun to correct. Very high student engagement.
	P4: So, it's pretty much consistent that when they go into learning materials, they are always going to have a PowerPoint, they are always going to have at least two videos for every topic, and the videos are as entertaining and educational as possible—so it's just not a talking head.
	P6: I am big fan of the Pearson products and Cengage products . . . the McGraw Hill products have an online learning component. Usually, they bridge right into Blackboard.
	P8: I try to offer a variety of learning materials to appeal to all types of learners . . . discussion board to view a YouTube video . . . written assignment . . . link to the textbook.

Note. Create engaging content theme that depicts instructional strategies that faculty perceived to engage online learners

belongingness, or intimacy, in their online courses that they perceived led to student engagement and student satisfaction. Responses to these questions illustrated the

importance that participants placed on cultivating a sense of personalization in their online courses. Glazier (2016) found that online instructors who cultivated rapport-building strategies and personified themselves in the course reported improvements in student success. In addition, Bentz and Lazarevic (2015) suggested that the development of emotional learning is needed to foster a sense of connectedness in the online course.

Persistent responses from the participants emphasized actions such as be present, create a sense of personalization, foster interactions, and create a comfortable environment. Participant 5 commented anecdotally that a student was pleased with the use of voice comments. The faculty member reiterated what the student wrote, "it was nice to hear your voice—now I understand the comment that you wrote--from what you said and the inflections of your voice." Participant 5 went on further to state that "you can always make a person feel good when we can talk to them." Participant 3 stated:

> I kept the discussion board positive—I wanted a positive environment. They did what I asked them to do and they were good—they were really good. It was a place to affirm them, I felt—in their thinking and in their examples. And, I always used their names.

Finally, Participant 2 echoed the importance of creating a humanizing environment when she stated, "It's important to make them [students] feel like I have a vested interest in them doing well."

In addition, many of the faculty stated in the survey the importance of using supportive language to imbue a sense of belonging, and felt that their presence created a sense of caring in the course. Furthermore, during the interview, most faculty felt that the

infusion of their personality in the online course created a humanizing environment. Participant 9 stated, "By using graphics and pictures of myself, I felt I created a sense of home." Lastly, almost all of the faculty felt that not only is feedback necessary for students to feel connected in the online course, it is also imperative that the feedback be timely, positive, and supportive. Table 7 depicts further responses from faculty that were extracted from the survey and the interview that support the research question.

Conclusion

This study originated from an upstate New York private college's desire to discover additional ways to design and deliver online instructional strategies that focused on student engagement to improve student success. The issue is significant locally and nationally due to growth in the online field, technological advancements, and the need for colleges to maximize student success. The purpose of this qualitative instrumental case study was to discover instructional strategies that online faculty at the local site have designed and delivered that they perceived to have fostered student engagement in online learning. The participants included 10 faculty members who participated in three data collection methods: an anonymous online survey, document submissions, and if participants were willing to disclose their identities, a one-on-one interview.

Using a constructivist approach, I combined the theories of engagement from the literature, the perceptions of the participants, along with my interpretation of the data to develop themes to build an understanding of the case for the reader. The five themes

Table 7

Theme 5: Summary of Responses for Theme 4 (Build a Humanizing Environment)

Instructional method	Example responses
Technology presence	P1: Animations—publisher-produced, YouTube videos . . . that technology piece is used so that they can see the material presented in different ways. I am giving them that sense of belonging through these technologies.
	P9: I . . . [create] that feeling of home. A banner—critical, and I do not change it. And, it has our little mascot in it.
	P3: Graphics often related to the course content, but they made the course fun . . . [For example] a theme of the week.
Supportive language	P3: Any public message I gave was always positive and instructive. I was very careful that the words I used—I was attentive to the words I used—that they were hospitable and pedagogical at the same time—in the announcement, the discussion boards, and the assignments.
	P1: I think that interaction is something an instructor should consider important . . . that students can talk to the instructor in a public format through the use of public discussion boards . . . that the whole class can see . . . but they also know how to reach out to the instructor privately when they are struggling.
	P9: If they e-mail me, I e-mail them back by name. I put my name at the end of almost anything I put like in announcement. I always put my name at the end of an e-mail. My first name—I am on a first name basis . . . to make them feel at ease, I say to them I'm glad that you e-mailed.
Sense of presence	P8: So, [give them] a sense that they are not out there alone. You give them the message you are there for them and the other students are also there for them. I also put my own picture up there in several places of the course.
	P7: Saying I realized that you missed the last two assignments, or I didn't see you participating in the discussion board…is a concern. I think that all fosters that sense of belonging that I've missed them—they are not there. And, from the students that I said I've talked to, they feel my presence
	P10: It is important . . . I think to have that sense that they belong in class—that they are not just the only person that's learning this material.

Note. A humanizing environment theme that depicts instructional strategies that faculty perceived to engage online learners.

that emerged from the study aligned with the research question and the conceptual framework of Kearsley and Shneiderman's (1998) theory of engagement. Kearsley and Shneiderman proffered that regarding instructional best practices in the online environment students, ". . . must be meaningfully engaged in learning activities through interaction with others and worthwhile tasks" (p. 1). In other words, instructional strategies that encourage students to engage with one another, with the teacher, and with the course materials will assist students to learn more deeply and to demonstrate sustained involvement in their learning that may lead to more satisfaction and success.

This study's findings revealed a myriad of instructional strategies that the participants designed and delivered to foster student engagement in online courses. I concur with Kasworm and Abdrahim (2014) and Lawson & Lawson (2013) that there is no monolithic approach to understanding student engagement. Various theorists have suggested that the key to understanding student engagement in the online classroom centers around three distinct constructs: a sense of presence, interaction, and the inclusion of best practices in online teaching. However, Lawson and Lawson (2013) asserted that engagement is a complex "dynamic, social, and synergistic process" (p. 441). (Table 8) A majority of the faculty in the study repeatedly indicated throughout the survey, the documents submissions, and in the one-on-one interview dialectical perceptions that aligned with the themes of providing instructor presence, establishing effective communication, creating engaging content, building a humanizing environment, and maintaining a consistent course design. When I asked faculty during the interview which engagement practice they perceived had best engaged the online student and led to

student satisfaction and success, all of faculty mentioned instructor presence. Participant 10 emphatically stated, "If I had to rank them….instructor presence [would be the most

Table 8

Theories of Online Student Engagement Themes

Constructs	Theory	Theorists	Themes
Social presence	Teaching Social Cognitive Community of inquiry	Short, Williams & Christie (1976) Garrison, Anderson & Archer (2000)	Provide instructor presence
Interactions	Learner-content Learner-instructor Learner-learner Learner-technology Teacher	Vygotsky (1978) Moore (1989) Anderson & Garrison (1998)	Establish effective communication Maintain a consistent course design
Best practices	Seven principles of good classroom practice Online course design Scorecard for best practices	Chickering and Gamson (1987) Quality Matters, (2014) Online Learning Consortium (2015)	Create engaging content Build a humanizing environment

Note. Seminal and current theories in support of research question.

important aspect of effective online teaching]." Participant 9 affirmed the sentiment: "I know they like working with others—having other people around—but I think they are looking for . . . . I want to learn . . . teach me. And, it's my job to guide them to learning and teaching." A conclusion that may be surmised from the data in this study is that, while instructor presence is important, a combination of strategies leads to student satisfaction and success. This study's findings revealed that many theories/models that

revolve around engagement intertwine, and it is hard to separate the themes from each other (see Figure 3).

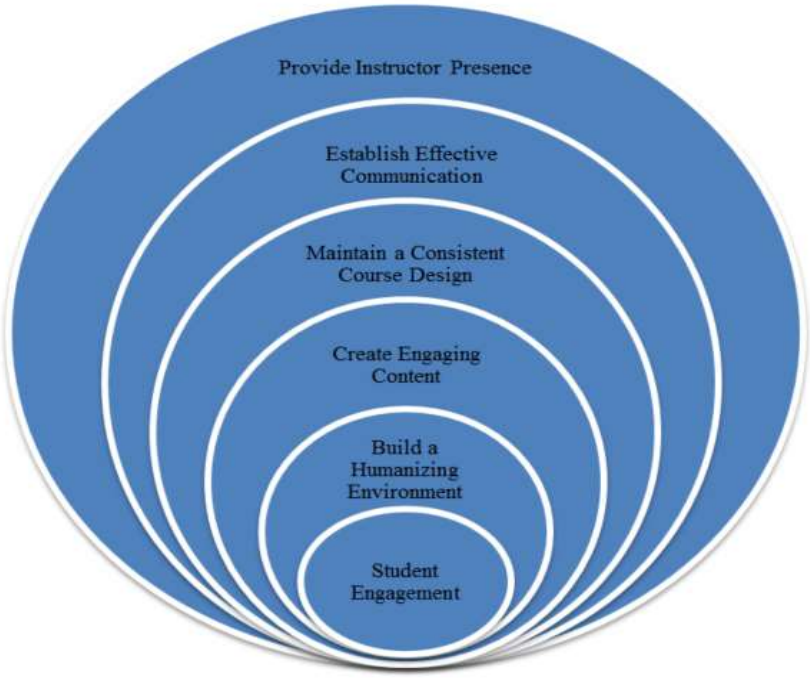

Figure 3. Instructional strategies that faculty perceived to engage the online learner and led to student satisfaction and success. Pictorial representation of the five intertwining themes developed from the review of the literature and participant responses.

All of the faculty felt that instructor presence was key; however, many also felt that creating engaging content, establishing effective communication, maintaining a consistent course design, and building a humanizing environment were also themes that led to student engagement and satisfaction. This feedback further suggests that there is not one monolithic approach to understanding student engagement. Continuous research is needed to explore theories and models because instructional strategies that online

faculty perceived to engage online learners not only span various theories and models, but also continue to evolve as advancements in technology change the educational realm.

This case study grew from a concern at the local site to find ways to increase student satisfaction and success in online learning. The findings represent a pool of knowledge of instructional strategies that faculty at the local site perceived to foster student engagement and possibly led to student satisfaction and success. With continued growth in the online field, the continuation of technological advancements, and the need for colleges to maximize student success the findings from this study begs to be shared.

At the conclusion of the study interview, participants were invited to share additional comments. Many of the faculty stated that they were continually looking for ways to improve their online classes, and several stated that they enjoy collaborating with other online faculty to learn new strategies and technologies. Participant 8, upon hearing that I would be sharing the results of the study, stated, "I am excited that you will be sharing your findings so that we can all learn from each other." Participant 7 felt that she did not have knowledge of what other online instructors do in their online courses:

> I don't have that basis of comparison to see what other online courses look like. It might be [great] just to look at other people's shells—look at how other people present—that could maybe be more educational at this point—the sharing of ideas. I have certainly learned some things from my colleagues.

In Section 3 of this paper, I outlined the project and presented the rationale for the establishment of a CoP e-learning site at the local college. The information from this study will provide the starting point for the project—the position paper that recommends

that the local site creates an in-house professional development area where faculty can share instructional strategies that they perceive to engage online learners. The position paper will help the college address the need to maintain a present-day faculty versed in designing and delivering instructional strategies that engage online learners in the hope that student success and satisfaction improve. In addition, the position paper may help to bring about social change within the college and to external online colleagues through the sharing of published or presented material. The ultimate goal would be to help future practitioners build a better online learning environment—one that leads to greater student satisfaction and success. The creation and dissemination of a position paper to college administrators will provide the college with well-researched information to enact the recommended solution to best increase the knowledge and skills of its online faculty in student engagement practices.

Section 3: The Project

In Section 3, I discuss a description of my project including a description, the goals, and rationale of a position paper. The purpose of my project is to address the findings from my study and to recommend a solution to the college's issue of how to increase online faculty's knowledge of instructional strategies to engage students and enhance student satisfaction and success. To provide support for the genre and content of the project, I reviewed the literature regarding the merits of position papers and professional development initiatives for online faculty. I follow the literature review with a more detailed description of the project's content and evaluation plan. Finally, I conclude the section by discussing possible implications related to the project.

The impetus for my research study was to address the question of how to increase online faculty's knowledge of instructional strategies that engage students and enhance online student satisfaction and success at the local site. In my position paper, I provide college administrators with a synopsis of my research study and a solution to address the college's issue. A goal of the position paper is to help the college gain a more in-depth knowledge of the issue and recommend a well-investigated solution to guide the college towards a course of action (Willerton, 2012).

As Lyons and Luginsland (2014) explained, while a position paper provides only a glimpse of the research, it provides stakeholders with valuable insight for determining the viability of the recommendation. As a result of my review of the literature and my research findings, I recommend that college leaders create a new professional development initiative, a CoP e-learning site, to help address student satisfaction and

retention issues in online courses. The new e-learning site will house a portal where faculty can collaborate and share instructional strategies that they perceive as effective in engaging online learners.

Rationale

The goal of a position paper is to "persuasively articulate and visualize . . . a position" to stakeholders (Powell, 2012, p. 96). This position paper will provide the following benefits:

- increase the stakeholders' knowledge of the issue of student engagement and its effect on student satisfaction and success,
- serve as an avenue to advocate, from the study findings, that the college create a new professional development initiative to increase the knowledge and skills of its online faculty,
- provide support as to why a particular type of professional development initiative, a CoP e-learning site will best help the college to maintain a well-educated and online faculty versed in current instructional strategies that engage online learners,
- explain how and why the findings from the research study will best serve the college in developing the CoP e-learning site, and
- demonstrate to the stakeholders' credible, reliable, and well-researched evidence that supports the recommended solution.

The impetus for this project evolved from the five instructional themes that emerged from the findings of this study and from the desire to share this information with the local site to help solve the issue of how to maintain a well-versed online faculty. The

purpose of the research study was to determine what were the faculty perceptions of and experiences with instructional strategies that they used specifically to foster student engagement in the online learning environment. The study findings revealed five instructional themes encompassing participants' views on effective instructional strategies for ensuring engagement among online students. The five themes are (a) provide instructor presence, (b) establish effective communications, (c) maintain a consistent course design, (d) create engaging content, and (e) build a humanizing learning environment.

In the position paper, I suggest that college administrators use the five themes as a starting point for the creation of the CoP e-learning site. The five themes will provide the initial content in the e-learning site as an outline for best online instructional practices. In other words, the five themes will lay the groundwork to assist the college in increasing online faculty's knowledge of instructional strategies that engage students and to assist ways to enhance online student satisfaction and success.

Content of Problem

My study was grounded in the phenomenon of online learning in higher education. This study stemmed from an upstate New York private college's desire to discover additional ways to design and deliver engaging online instructional strategies that may assist in improving student satisfaction and success. To address this problem, I explored faculty perceptions of and experiences with instructional strategies that they used specifically to foster student engagement in the online learning environment. The goal of the study was to assist the local site in finding a solution for how best to increase

the knowledge and skills of current and future online faculty to enhance student satisfaction and success. The findings from this study repeatedly indicated, throughout the survey, the documents submissions, and in the one-on-one interview, dialectical perceptions of successful student engagement strategies. Particular instructional strategies mentioned were those that encouraged instructor presence, effective communication, engaging content, humanizing environment, and a consistent course design.

Understanding the nature of engagement is imperative whether the encounter is occurring during a faculty-to-student type interaction or a professional development type activity involving faculty-to-faculty collaboration. With continued growth in the online field, the continual advancements in technology, and the need for colleges to maximize student success, I believe that a well-researched solution to address online student satisfaction and success is necessary. Based on my research findings, I recommend that the college creates a sustainable CoP e-learning site as a new faculty professional development initiative for online instructors. This site may offer faculty way to increase their knowledge and skills of instructional strategies that have been found to engage the online learner. The new professional development initiative may also bring societal benefits to both the college and the greater community in the form of up-to-date skilled faculty and more successful students.

Review of the Literature

The literature review conducted for the project was two-fold: to support why a position paper was chosen as the best strategy to advocate for a new professional imitative; and, to support the rationale for a particular type of professional development

initiative—a CoP e-learning site for the local site's online faculty. A variety of electronic databases provided the references collected to support and give credence to the literature review, including Eric, Educational Research Complete, ED/IT Digital Library, Computers and Applied Sciences Complete, and Google Scholar. In addition, open online educational sites directly associated with professional development and CoP included *American Journal of Distance Education, Online Learning Consortium, Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration,* and *Journal of Community Practice*. Queries using keywords and phrases including *faculty development, professional development, professional learning, community of practice, community of learners, mentoring, e-learning, position papers, white papers* generated over 3,500 peer-reviewed studies between the years 2011 and 2017. Furthermore, reference pages of the studies provided additional avenues to explore the literature.

Position Papers

How best to communicate and advocate findings from a study and how best to convey that recommended solutions provide an optimal benefit to the study recipients can be challenging for researchers. A variety of reporting genres is available to researchers, each providing a unique perspective for advocating a position to different stakeholders. For example, a report can take the form of an executive summary, a presentation, a video (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), a two-way dialogue between the researcher and the stakeholders (McDavitt, et al., 2016), or in an electronic, visually-pleasing, format such as a blog (Powell, 2012). What is important is that the method takes a sound approach that addresses the unique problem, and that the strategy clearly articulates the

justification and applicability of the solution that serves the needs of the intended audience (Powell, 2012; Stelzner, 2007).

A position paper was the genre chosen as the best method to convey information to the local site. A written report not only can provide a clear articulated response to the college's issue, but it can also be disseminated to various stakeholders to assess its merits (Stelzner, 2007). As Lyons and Luginsland (2014) professed, a position paper delivers essential factors to stakeholders to capture their interest and to convince them of the feasibility of accepting the recommendation. Elements of persuasion such as the use of pathos, ethos, and logos incorporated into a position paper can give further credence to a particular perspective. For example, enhancing the position paper with emotional appeal, logical reasoning, and personal credibility provides strong support in convincing others to adopt a given conclusion (Diestler, 2012). In essence, the position paper is used to try to sell an idea and to enact change (Kearney, 2016). As Willerton (2012) and Powell (2012) indicated, position papers are widely used in business and government settings to take a stance, marshal support, and shape opinions. A well-written, thoroughly investigated report outlining a viable solution will assist decision-makers in determining how best to address an issue.

The ultimate goal of the position paper presented to the college is to restate the vice president of academic affairs/dean's interest in the issue, clarify the importance of the issue, and recommend a well-researched and credible solution. In other words, lead the college towards the conclusion that the creation of a new professional development initiative, a CoP e-learning site will best serve its needs.

Interconnected Analysis in Support of Project Content

A review of the literature found that not only is there is a need for continuous professional development for online faculty, but there is also a need for a new, shared approach to ensure that online faculty continue to employ productive and innovative student engagement practices. Online faculty are continuously challenged to design and deliver new instructional strategies for the ever-changing online learner (Beaver, Johnson, & Sinkinson, 2014; Booth, 2012; Green, Hibbins, Houghton, & Ruutz, 2013; Golden, 2016; Herman, 2012; Meijs, Prinsen, & de Laat, 2016; Mitchell, 2013; Reilly, Vandenhouten, Gallagher-Lepak, & Ralston-Berg, 2012). With online learning playing a more active role in today's colleges, and with continuing technological advancements, many colleges need to know how best to support online faculty professional development to ensure student satisfaction and success.

Conceptual Framework

Conceptual frameworks provide a foundation, or structure that emphasizes how concepts interconnect or interrelate (Imenda, 2014). Two theories that provide a basis for the proposed social-learning professional development initiative, a CoP e-learning site, include Vygotsky's (1978) theory of social learning and Lave and Wenger (1991) theory of CoP. These two theories provide administrators with greater clarity for the rationale and applicability of establishing a new professional development plan at the College.

Vygotsky (1978) proposed that social interactions foster new knowledge through the engagement and exploration of innovative ideas with others. In other words, new knowledge occurs when collaborative and reflective activities are guided within a

community of learners (Armellini & DeStefani, 2015; Boling et al., 2012; Brinthaupt, Fisher, Gardner, Raffo, & Woodard, 2011; Lamb & Popkin, 2015; Puzziferro & Shelton, 2014; Schell & Janicki, 2013; Yuan & Kim, 2014). Furthermore, Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development proposed that depth of learning is in relation to the intensity of collaborations with knowledgeable peers during problem-solving activities. As mentors and experts connect, a supportive situation or sense of collegiality can lead to greater understanding and, according to Vygotsky (1978), through this collective discourse meaningful knowledge is constructed. It is the hope that a shared dialogue will take place among the stakeholders as they consider the merits presented in the position paper.

A CoP concept conceived by Lave and Wenger (1991) takes the position that when people interact, develop relationships, and collectively construct knowledge toward a shared goal, their performance improves. Lave and Wenger (1991) believed that within a CoP, attributes such as a sense of connectedness and belonging unites the members. These characteristics have been found to eliminate feelings of isolation and loneliness in online learning—a feeling that is often shared not only by students, but also by online instructors (Baran & Correia, 2014; Beaver, et al., 2014; Booth, 2012; Dean, Harden-Thew, & Thomas, 2017; Golden, 2016; Teräs, 2016).

According to Lave and Wenger (1991), CoP have three distinct qualities: continual engagement, a common purpose, and involvement in sharing resources. A CoP e-learning site may allow online faculty at the local site to jointly create and share meaningful knowledge about online learning, to develop and share new instructional strategies to engage students, and to increase student satisfaction and success in their

online courses. In other words, a new professional development initiative, namely a CoP e-learning site, may offer the local site a new way to not only increase faculty's expertise but also provide the opportunity to improve instructional performances of online faculty as they collaborate with one another.

The What and Why of Continuing Professional Development

Faculty expertise may be considered one of the most valuable assets of a college, and having faculty who are proficient in teaching online may lead to enhanced online student satisfaction and success (Teräs, 2016, p. 258). Unfortunately, some researchers have reported that faculty claim to be unprepared to teach online (Baran & Correia, 2014; Hoey, 2014; McQuiggan, 2012; Reilly, et al., 2012; Schmidt, et al., 2013). With online learning playing a more active role in today's colleges, and with continuing technological advancements, many colleges need to know how best to support online faculty professional development to ensure student satisfaction and success.

There are many expressions associated with the term professional development, such as faculty development, professional learning, mentorship, community of learning, and CoP (Saroyan & Trigwell, 2015, p. 93). Many researchers support a common definition of continuing professional development in higher education: a continuation of professional education that extends initial knowledge, transforms beliefs and attitudes, and contributes to the enhancement of learning outcomes for students (Baran & Correia, 2014; Mitchell, 2013; Prestridge, 2017; Saroyan & Trigwell, 2015). In other words, a paradigm shift, change, or enhancement in practice can result from professional

development activities—from the initial seeking of new knowledge, to the reflective process, to the sharing of the new knowledge with others (Prestridge, 2017).

What types of activities can online faculty participate in that may lead to an increase in their knowledge and skills? Faculty can seek out new knowledge and expertise through a variety of professional development activities. Some colleges may offer faculty the opportunity to participate in conferences and workshops, as well as encourage participation in professional associations, networks, and self-initiating activities (reading scholarly publications, collaborating with colleagues, and using the Internet). However, the intrinsic motivation of the faculty member, the support provided by the college, and the ease of access have an effect on the faculty's desire for, and participation in, professional development activities (Baran & Correia, 2014; Beaver, et al., 2014; Hathaway & Norton, 2014; McKenna, et al., 2016; McQuiggan, 2012; Meyer & Murrell, 2014b; Mitchell, 2013; Owen, 2014).

An underlying question that relates to the value of continuing profession development is whether faculty can transform the knowledge and skills learned from a professional development activity into an effective online practice. Online faculty who continuously participate in professional development activities are provided the opportunity to expand their knowledge and skills; and, in turn, offer their students engaging up-to-date cutting-edge instructional strategies (McKenna, et al., 2016; Reilly, et al., 2012) that lead to student satisfaction and success (Beaver, et al., 2014; Mayes, et al., 2011; Meijs, et al., 2016; Owen, 2014; Reilly, et al., 2012; Saroyan & Trigwell, 2015). However, Herman (2012) found that the average institution reported offering

formal professional development for online faculty at best only once a year. Is this level of activity enough for faculty to extend fundamental knowledge, transform beliefs and attitudes, and contribute to the enhancement of learning outcomes for students?

Some researchers have questioned if a one-time didactically delivered approach to professional development is enough to extend initial knowledge, transform beliefs and attitudes, and contribute to the enhancement of learning outcomes for students (Booth, 2012; Green, et al., 2013; McKenna, et al., 2016; Meijs, et al., 2016). Green, et al., (2013) found that traditional professional development programs, while interesting, do not always allow for follow-up active engagement that provides the opportunity for faculty to practice the knowledge and skill and then later reflect on its merit (p. 249). In addition, Grover, Walters, and Turner (2015) observed that online faculty found traditional professional development programs fragmented and directed toward topics that do not always fit specific practical needs (p. 250). An important question that colleges should be asking is: In what ways can continuing professional development be tailored to ensure a transformation in online faculty instructional practice that would best address the needs of both the students and the college?

Change in Professional Development for Online Faculty

A challenge for today's colleges is how best to meet the quality standards set by the institution and the accrediting bodies regarding online courses, while simultaneously enhancing student outcomes. In addition, colleges must face the challenge of preparing online students to enter the professional world with the necessary and current technological skills to be successful (Palmer & Schueths, 2013). In other words, online

faculty must be able to both utilize and teach the most current skills to students. Several scholarly findings have shown that today's colleges need to transform their professional development strategies and develop new approaches to ensure that online faculty are learning and utilizing new strategies to deliver effective and engaging online instruction (Meijs, et al., 2016; Prestridge, 2017; Reilly, et al., 2012; Saroyan & Trigwell, 2015). Ramaley (2014) argued that colleges need a new infrastructure that fosters a more collaborative environment where faculty can learn and develop new learning strategies with the assistance of others. In other words as Brundiers, Wiek and Kay (2013) stated, colleges need more working relationships across disciplines to create a collaborative culture of engagement in which to share practices. Finally, Kennedy (2016) suggested that colleges need a professional development pedagogy that best helps faculty to learn new ideas to transform their teaching.

The ever-changing trends in the distance education world, namely the increase in the demand for online learning, technological advancements, and the need to increase student retention rates, implores for colleges to rethink how they should be supporting faculty to stay abreast of instructional practices to ensure better student outcomes (Saroyan & Trigwell, 2015; Teräs, 2016). A professional development strategy that allows faculty to form social networks and leads to transformed teaching practices may be the key to improved student outcomes (Booth, 2012; Golden, 2016; Mitchell, 2013; Owen, 2014; Teräs, 2016) and a solution to the local site's issue.

A Community of Practice Approach

A CoP is grounded in the philosophy that groups converge to share common interests. When social beings form a group to exchange ideas about common issues and ideologies, a transformation in knowledge can occur that may lead to improved perceptions and vision. The CoP approach for continued professional development is not new; the business world has utilized CoP methods to enhance workers skills and knowledge for numerous years (Wenger-Trayer.com, 2016). However, the CoP approach is relatively new in the education world where social learning could be used for faculty continued professional development (McKenna, et al., 2016; Meijs, et al., 2016; Terosky & Heasley, 2015; Voogt, et al., 2015; Wenger-Trayer.com, 2016).

For a social learning-type professional development to be effective, it is critical that faculty members engage with others and actively share their expertise. Being present to engage with others and effectively communicate are two of the themes revealed in my study that were key to ensuring student engagement—a parallelism between faculty-to-student interaction faculty-to-faculty professional development interaction. Characteristically, faculty are more familiar with a passive-type approach for continued professional development where learning is mostly derived from didactic lectures, a common approach at conferences (Green, et al., 2016; Meyer & Murrell, 2014b). However, when faculty members engage collaboratively in physical, mental, and psychological ways, a new awareness occurs that can lead to new instructional developments and innovations (Meijs, et al., 2016, p. 5). Considering the idea that some faculty may be innovators for change and others may be slow to change, collaborative,

social learning-type development praxis may provide a safe and supportive setting in which faculty can broaden their knowledge and skills as well as their mindsets and viewpoints (Voogt, et al., 2015).

Benefits to a Community of Practice Approach

Why should colleges support a CoP approach for continuing online faculty development? First, a few researchers have found a symbiotic relationship between participatory learning, effective instructional practice, and student success (Green, et al., 2013; McKenna, et al., 2016; Reilly, et al., 2012). Second, in recognizing that colleges have limited funds and resources, it is vital for colleges today to capitalize on professional development initiatives that best supports faculty's learning in a fiscally responsible manner (Herman, 2012; Meyer & Murrell, 2014b; Mitchell, 2013; Palmer & Schueths, 2013; Ramaley, 2014). Finally, a CoP approach can provide societal value when the community's newfound ideas and ideologies contribute to the well-being of stakeholders outside the college, namely the online graduates who contribute to society. Shaha, Glassett, Rosenlund, Copas and Huddleston (2016) found that educators who participate in high-impact professional development learning have a positive effect on student performance and attrition rates, making a CoP a cost effective benefit for society as a whole.

The benefits derived from faculty participating in CoP for professional development are numerous. Several researchers found that a CoP can provide faculty with a serendipitous way to build a safe environment where trust relationships develop and learning praxes are then shared, reflected upon, and applied in the classroom

(Abigail, 2016; Baran & Correia, 2014; Golden, 2016; Mitchell, 2013; Travis & Rutherford, 2012). In addition, faculty have expressed an increase in motivation and drive towards modern, innovative teaching strategies learned from peer interactions in a CoP environment (Terosky & Heasley, 2015). Furthermore, Golden (2016) found that members in the CoP can model and promote their online practices, which allows other members the ability to mimic and apply strategies already found to be successful in engaging online students.

In addition to building a safe environment to share ideas, ideologies, and innovative teaching strategies, CoP can also reduce the isolation that many online faculty members feel as they teach alone in the vast area of cyberspace (Baran & Correia, 2014; Booth, 2012). A CoP can provide faculty with emotional support as they converse with other online, and provide increased self-confidence when they share their ideas and when others offer positive feedback (Dean, et al., 2017; Golden, 2016; McQuiggan, 2012). In other words, faculty may gain a sense of personal fulfillment and camaraderie as they work collaboratively with others. Appreciation and assuredness are two attributes that may encourage faculty to not only embrace new innovative instructional strategies to employ in their classrooms but also to experiment more in their classrooms after witnessing the benefits derived from other online instructors' student engagement successes (Terosky & Heasley, 2015). Ninety percent of the participant responses from my study emphasized attributes such as be present, create a sense of personalization, foster interactions, and create a humanizing environment to ensure student engagement success; similar traits have been found that have led to successful CoP environments

(Baran & Correia, 2014; Golden, 2016; Khalid, et al., 2014; Smith, et al., 2016; Terosky & Heasley, 2015).

With limited funds and resources, a CoP e-learning site will offer all online faculty, full-time and adjunct, access to online pedagogical and technological best practices that have led to student success at the local site as well as serve as a method for continual professional online development. Utilizing the college's already constructed learning management system will not only leverage in-house technology for the new social learning-type professional development design space, but it will also provide a learning space that is already familiar to the faculty. Dean, et al., (2017) found that an e-learning professional development learning community forms a link for faculty to engage in online teaching and learning practices without any time or location issues. It is common for adjunct faculty to forgo traditional daytime professional development opportunities due to full-time job responsibilities; likewise, full-time online faculty sometimes experience similar constraints (Booth, 2012; Dean, et al., 2017; Khalid, et al., 2014).

The current learning management system will also provide a familiar learning space. In my study, 9 out of 10 faculty reported in the survey and all stated during the interview process that a consistent format in a learning environment is important for easy navigation and clear understanding of the content. Ease of use of the CoP e-learning site will enable faculty to focus on the material in the CoP site rather than the use of the technology (Beaver, et al., 2014; Prestridge, 2017).

A new, cost-effective, and innovative faculty development initiative will not only benefit many internal stakeholders, but a societal benefit may ensue. There is a parallelism between effective instruction, student success, and society returns. Faculty who increase their knowledge and skills through continued professional development have been found to show improved student satisfaction and success (Shaha, et al., 2016). Improved educational student success is an accolade to the college and serves as an invaluable benefit to society as a whole. It is imperative for colleges to recognize their continued responsibility to guide faculty toward updating their knowledge and skills to address continued societal needs (Shaha, et al., 2016). A new, cost-effective e-learning professional development initiative will help the College to meet its mission to increase the knowledge and skills of current and future online faculty with the hope of enhancing student satisfaction and success.

Findings in Support of Project Content

Researchers have found a relationship between participatory learning, effective instructional practice, and student success (Green, et al., 2013; McKenna, et al., 2016; Reilly, et al., 2012); but, how does this relationship affect continued faculty professional development? When faculty actively engage in social learning-type professional development activities, an increase in student satisfaction and success has been shown (Beaver, et al., 2014; Mayes, et al., 2011; Meijs, et al., 2016; Owen, 2014; Reilly, et al., 2012; Saroyan & Trigwell, 2015). Similarly, findings have indicated that actively engaged students exhibit a sense of satisfaction and ultimately are more successful in higher education (Freeman & Wash, 2013; Lumpkin, et al., 2015; National Survey of

Student Engagement, 2015, p. 1). As Smith, et al. (2016) suggested, there is a shared repertoire of engagement strategies that have an effect on the success and satisfaction of both online instructors and students. In other words, faculty and students share some of the same issues regarding learning strategies that sustain engagement and bring satisfaction and success.

The findings from my study will provide a scholarly answer to the college's conundrum of how best to support online faculty in helping them to continually design and deliver quality instructional strategies that foster student engagement in online learning that lead to student satisfaction and success. In addition, the findings may not only lay the groundwork for the recommendation of a new, cost-effective, socially constructed online professional development initiative—a CoP e-learning faculty development site--but may also serve as a learning tool for faculty as they are provided the opportunity to experience being students once again as they learn with other online instructors. Five instructional themes that summarized categories of effective online student instructional engagement strategies were captured from the corresponding perspectives of the 10 faculty members who participated in my study: (a) provide instructor presence; (b) establish effective communications; (c) maintain a consistent course design; (d) create engaging content; and (e) build a humanizing learning environment. The five themes will provide the basis for the sharing of an online pedagogical curricular for improved online teaching and learning practices.

Literature Review Summary

The literature review supported the rationale that the report to the stakeholders be a position paper—the genre for the dissemination of the merits of the recommended solution to the stakeholders. In addition, the study findings along with the literature review provided the impetus for the recommendation of the new cost effective in-house professional development initiative—a CoP e-learning site for online faculty. The research and study findings indicated that professional development would provide the college with a plan to strengthen online faculty's knowledge and skills of instructional strategies that engage online learners. The position paper will advocate that administrators at the college take steps to initiate the proposed recommendation.

Project Description

When developing a project, program planners need to determine the project's context, requirements, and outcomes before the project's implementation; the administrative aspects of the project must also be identified, such as creating a schedule, budget, and evaluation process (Caffarella & Daffron, 2013). A position paper will serve as the method of communication to stakeholders. The report will provide a brief synopsis of the research study and persuade the stakeholders to consider the proposed solution to the issue of how best to maintain a faculty who can continually design and deliver online instructional strategies that focus on the strategies that lead to student satisfaction and success. The context of the project is to recommend that college administrators allow the creation of a CoP e-learning site as a new cost-effective socially constructed faculty professional development initiative for online instructors. The need is to fulfill the

college's strategic goal, which is to find ways to improve online faculty's knowledge of instructional strategies that engage students. The outcome will be an opportunity for faculty to increase their knowledge and skills relating to engaging online instructional strategies and ultimately bring societal benefits to both the college and the greater community. Explained below is a brief description of the needed resources, supportive roles, potential barriers and solutions, and timetable for implementing the content of the project. A position paper describing the full details of the project's content is located in Appendix A.

Supportive Roles and Resources

College administrators must constantly make transformational decisions on how to address the ever-changing academic environment. Many college initiatives fail without the full support of administration, regarding funding and sponsorship (Golden, 2016; Reilly, et al., 2012). The new CoP e-learning professional development initiative needs not only the full support of administration; it also necessitates the intellectual support and commitment of many internal stakeholders. Baran and Correia (2014) found that faculty require constant technological and pedagogical support, peer support, and administrative support to achieve interest, enthusiasm, and commitment to online teaching.

Vice President of Academic Affairs/Dean. Administrative support is needed to encourage, assist, and appreciate the importance of faculty participation in professional development activities. Support could come in the form of incentives that may include remuneration, tenure, promotion, or credit reduction (Baran & Correia, 2014).

Information Technology Department and Director of Online Learning. The new initiative will require the support of the information technology (IT) department and the director of online learning. The IT department would assist the director of online learning to design and develop the curricular aspects of the CoP site in the learning management system and be available for technological support. The director of online learning will serve as the CoP's designer, administrator, and pedagogical and technical support agent and leader.

Online Faculty. The online faculty, who willingly participated in the study and indicated their excitement to learn the outcomes, will provide the best support for the project. Online faculty will serve as the members of the CoP who will share ideas to promote instructional strategies that engage online learners.

Resources. Acknowledging financial considerations, such as needed technologies and human resources, will ensure the success of the project. The current learning management system could house the CoP e-learning portal, thus eliminating the need for any new software or hardware equipment. Human resource expenses may incur with the additional responsibilities that the IT and director of online learning departments will assume.

Potential Barriers and Solutions

Change within any organization can cause challenges and impediments to success. Obstacles that may affect the new CoP e-learning professional development initiative include a lack of administrative support, availability, and accessibility of technological support, as well as time and motivation commitment of online faculty

(Beaver, et al., 2014; Booth, 2012). In addition, as Chalmers and Gardiner (2015) stated, to be effective, professional development must meet the following four criteria: applicability, thoroughness, practicality, and authentication. If the CoP e-learning site does not respond to the expectations of the faculty to assist them in learning new instructional strategies that engage online learners, the outcomes of the initiative may not be realized.

My position paper will provide a suggestion to help alleviate anticipated impediments to the success of the new CoP e-learning professional development initiative. Caffarella and Daffron (2013) suggest following a systematic or stepwise path starting with the need assessment and ending with the evaluation phase will assist program planners to formulate a practical proposal.

Implementation Time Table

Before implementing the recommended CoP e-learning site, the vice president for academic affairs/dean will need to approve the content of the new professional development initiative and agree upon a timetable to develop the portal in the learning management system. The IT department and director of online learning will need time to create and design the CoP site. The Academic Affairs/Dean will need to notify the online faculty of this new professional development activity to explain and show support of this new professional development initiative. Table 9 depicts a tentative schedule that displays the development of project's content.

Project Evaluation Plan

An evaluation plan provides feedback on whether a project is accomplishing what it set out to achieve; it consists of a systematic collection of information to assist stakeholders in determining what worked and what did not if the effects were beneficial, and if the project is sustainable (Huber & Harvey, 2016). In essence, an evaluation plan provides accountability for the project and helps to determine any needed changes.

Table *9*

Professional Development Plan: A CoP E-Learning Site

Month	Action
Month 1	Present position paper to the college (Vice President of Academic Affairs/Dean (VPAA/D)) The dean will inform online faculty that a new professional development CoP E-learning site is being developed (VPAA/D) - Educate online faculty on the benefits of participating in a CoP e-learning site
Month 2	IT and director of online learning - Set up the structure of the CoP in the learning management system - Set up the relationships – groups and discussions
Month 3	Post themes from research findings to lay the framework for the discussions and sharing of best practices Develop examples of sharing resources to pilot and scaffold faculty Educate faculty on the use of the CoP site
Month 4	Invite online faculty to join the CoP community - Post weekly discussions to identify and share engaging instructional strategies
Month 5	Monitor progress
Month 6	Evaluate

Note. Tentative timetable for the new professional development CoP E-learning site

This project will employ formative and summative-type evaluations. Formative evaluation will assess initial and ongoing project activities starting with the project development and continue through the implementation process. Summative evaluation will assess the quality and success of the project to determine the achievement of the stated outcome. Table 10 provides a brief outline of the main points of the project's evaluation plan. Through continual monitoring and the reporting of activities, interactions, and the sharing of ideas in the CoP E-learning site stakeholders will receive an ongoing evaluation of the professional development initiative. A sustained evaluation plan for the project will not only help to substantiate faculty's improved knowledge but will also provide substantiation for the continued employment of the recommended new professional development initiative. McKenna, et al., (2016) found that through sustained collaboration in the CoP environment, faculty improved their knowledge, attitudes, and adoption philosophies of employing new instructional strategies in their online courses.

Implications Including Social Change

In this position paper, I provide the college with suggestions of why and how to implement the recommended new professional development initiative, a CoP e-learning site for online faculty. The new initiative will provide the college with a plan to strengthen online faculty's knowledge and skills of instructional strategies that engage online learners. The research from this study found that in providing instructor presence, establishing effective communications, maintaining a consistent course design, creating engaging content, and building a humanizing learning environment, online faculty

Table 10

Project Evaluation Plan

Objective	Responsible	Timeline	Evaluation Measure	Instrument
In month four--complete progress reports to the Vice President of Academic Affairs/Academic Dean	IT Department and Director of Online Learning (leader)	By the end of month four	CoP E-Learning site developed and faculty members invited to community	(Formative) Progress reports
In month six, create the CoP site and participate with online faculty community members	Director of Online Learning (leader)	By the end of month six	Community members will be familiar with the use of the site	(Summative) Open-ended survey
In month nine--share and utilize the learned instructional strategies among community members	Community Members and director of online learning (leader)	By the end of month nine	Community members will discuss and reflect on new pedagogical practices used.	(Summative) Discussion board posts
Sustained objective--share and utilize the learned instructional strategies among community members	Community members and director of online learning (leader)	Each succeeding month	Community members will discuss and reflect on new pedagogical practices used.	(Summative) Open-Ended survey and discussion board posts

Note. A brief outline of the main points of the project's evaluation plan. The outcome goal is to provide online faculty with the opportunity to increase their knowledge and skills of instructional strategies that engage online students.

perceived that students were satisfied and successful. The sharing of this knowledge with other online faculty, both locally and nationally have far-reaching implications for students, graduates, colleges, and the greater community.

The creation of a new professional development initiative, a CoP e-learning site will provide the local site with a strategy to deepen online faculty's understanding of instructional strategies that lead to online student engagement. Likewise, the CoP e-learning site will provide access to an inventory of instructional best practices found to

engage online learners that will enrich the knowledge and experience of the present and future online faculty.

In addition to local implications, another potential outcome from this project may be an effect on society-at-large. As I previously mentioned, there is a concomitance between effective instruction, student success, and societal benefits. Online faculty who are knowledgeable in their discipline and in utilizing engaging instructional practices have shown greater student satisfaction and success (Shaha, et al., 2016). Improved student success is a tribute to the educational institution and ultimately serves as an invaluable benefit to society as a whole as graduates share their learned knowledge in the community. Finally, social change could ensue through the sharing of published or presented material at regional conferences, to assist online practitioners external to the institution to enhance their knowledge of instructional strategies that engage online learners.

Conclusion

In Section 3, I outlined the description, goals, and rationale for my project, a position paper presented to the college to recommend the creation of new professional development initiative, a CoP learning site. A review of the literature was offered to support the rationale for the submission of a position paper to advocate for a well-investigated solution; and, to support the rationale for why the college should create a recommended new cost effective in-house professional development initiative—a CoP e-learning site for online faculty. In addition, I discussed implications of the project from a

local and broader perspective. Finally, I explained viable societal benefits derived from my study findings in relationship to the recommended project.

The context of my proposal is to present a position paper to the local site suggesting that the college creates a CoP e-learning site as a new cost-effective socially constructed faculty professional development initiative for online instructors. The need is to fulfill the college's strategic goal, which is to find ways to increase online faculty's knowledge of instructional strategies that engage students. The outcome will be an opportunity for faculty to increase their knowledge and skills relating to engaging online instructional strategies and ultimately bring societal benefits to both the college and the greater community.

My goal is that the college reviews my position paper and accepts my recommendation to create a CoP e-learning site as a new faculty professional development initiative for online instructors. The rationale for my project proposal is twofold: The new e-learning site will address the college's mission to increase online faculty's knowledge of instructional strategies that engage students and may assist in the enhancement of online student satisfaction and success. In addition, it will offer the college a cost-effective socially constructed online, in-house professional development initiative.

To provide support for why the College should adopt my recommendation to create a new professional development initiative, a CoP e-learning site, I constructed my evidence based on two conceptual theories: Vygotsky's (1978) theory of social learning and Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of CoP. A review of the literature revealed, among

other things, that a social learning community-type, professional development approach can provide faculty with an innovative, interactive, and connected way to increase their online knowledge and skills (Baran & Correia, 2014; Blitz, 2013; Booth, 2012; Dean, et al., 2017; Lackey, 2011; Meyer & Murrell, 2014b; Palmer & Schueths, 2013; Prestridge, 2017; Reilly, et al., 2012; Teräs, 2016; Yuan & Kim, 2014). In addition, faculty who participate in a CoP-type professional development activity have been found to report greater student satisfaction and success (Beaver, et al., 2014; Mayes, et al., 2011; Meijs, et al., 2016; Owen, 2014; Reilly, et al., 2012; Saroyan & Trigwell, 2015).

I propose that both formative and summative evaluations be conducted in order assess initial and ongoing project activities. A sustained evaluation plan for the project will not only help to substantiate faculty's improved knowledge but will also provide substantiation for the continued employment of the recommended new professional development initiative.

Potential outcomes from the project include benefits to the local study site as well as the greater societal community. The college will have a plan to strengthen online faculty's knowledge and skills of instructional strategies through continued learning in areas such as providing instructor presence, establishing effective communications, maintaining a consistent course design, creating engaging content, and building a humanizing learning environment. Students will benefit from having an online faculty that has knowledge and skills of current, cutting-edge instructional strategies (McKenna, et al., 2016; Reilly, et al., 2012). Finally, when the CoP members share their newfound ideas and ideologies, they will be contributing to the well-being of stakeholders outside

the college, namely the online graduates who enter and spread their knowledge to the greater community.

In Section 4, I discuss my final reflections and conclusions of my proposed project. I begin with an introduction and then discuss the project strengths and limitations. I close my study with a reflection of my doctoral journey by describing my growth as a leader, scholar, practitioner, and project developer.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

The purpose of the position paper is to provide the local site with a synopsis of the research study and recommend a solution to address the college's issue of how to increase online faculty's knowledge of instructional strategies that engage students that may lead to greater student satisfaction and success. The position paper will help the college gain a deeper knowledge of the issue and suggest that college administrators adopt a new course of action for online professional development (Willerton, 2012). The recommendation is supported by well-researched and current evidence from the literature (specifically within the last 5 years) and based on the findings discovered from the perspectives of the local site's faculty.

I will present the findings from my research in the position paper to provide a scholarly answer to the college's conundrum of how best to support online faculty to continually design and deliver quality instructional strategies that foster student engagement in online learning. The ultimate goal will be to help online faculty to enhance student satisfaction and success in their courses. The findings not only lay the groundwork for the recommendation of a new, cost-effective, socially constructed online professional development initiative—a CoP e-learning faculty development site—but may also serve as a learning tool for faculty. The e-learning site may provide the faculty with the opportunity to experience being students once again as they learn collaboratively with online colleagues.

The rationale for the project is twofold: (a) to provide justification for presenting a position paper to disseminate my findings to the local site and (b) to propose a recommendation that the college create a new professional development initiative—an e-learning site to address the college's mission to increase online faculty's knowledge of instructional strategies. The goal is to help students in improving their satisfaction and success in online learning. The new professional development initiative is intended to offer college administrators a cost-effective socially constructed online, in-house professional development solution to help them enhance their online faculty's knowledge and skills. For the remainder of this section, I will include a discussion of the project's strengths and limitations and recommendations for alternative approaches. This content is followed by a reflection of my doctoral journey. I conclude the section with a consideration of potential impacts of my project study on social change and future research.

Project Strengths and Limitations

For the project, I will provide the college with a scholarly implementation plan to address the issue of how best to support online faculty continually design and deliver quality instructional strategies that foster student engagement that lead to student satisfaction and success. I recommend the following deliverables that may be acted on by college administrators:

- a cost effective socially constructed online in-house professional development plan—the creation of a CoP e-learning site where faculty can access an inventory of instructional best practices found to engage online learners.

- inclusion of five engaging instructional themes derived from the findings of the study to lay the groundwork of the e-learning site to assist online faculty in enhancing their technological and pedagogical skills, and
- assistance in fulfilling the Middle States Commission on Higher Education's (2015) requirements to promote academic integrity in online courses by ensuring that faculty responsible for delivering the online learning curricula are appropriately qualified and effectively supported.

While the strengths of the project include a cost effective socially constructed online in-house professional development initiative that may help the college enhance its faculty's expertise, fulfill accrediting body requirements, and possibly help with student retention, there may be some limitations to consider. Some of these limitations are the potential reluctance of faculty to participate in the CoP e-learning site and inadequate technological skills for properly accessing the site. Some researchers found that impediments to faculty participation in CoP initiatives might include time availability, the reluctance to share ideas with others, and the learning curve necessary to become a proficient user of the site (Houghton, Ruutz, Green, & Hibbins, 2015; McKenna, et al., 2016). Finally, the types of instructional strategies shared by the individual community members may be too unique for a small community of faculty to assimilate into their learning content. In other words, a small CoP membership might limit the type or relevance of instructional strategies that can be shared and effectively used by individual members (Meijs, et al. 2016). The new CoP e-learning site if developed has the potential

to optimistically affect many stakeholders including the college, its faculty and students, as well as the greater community as graduates enter the labor force.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

With continued growth in the online field, the continual advancements in technology, and the need for colleges to maximize student success (Albert et al., 2014; Shattuck & Anderson, 2013; Schmidt et al., 2013)., college administrators need to provide opportunities for faculty members to increase their knowledge and skills related to online instructional strategies designed to engage learners. In addition, scholars have noted that no monolithic pathway currently exists to understand the combination of mechanisms that foster student engagement (Kasworm & Abdrahim, 2014; Lawson & Lawson, 2013) or the instructional strategies that engage online learners. However, a review of the literature revealed, among other things, that a social learning community-type, professional development approach can provide colleges with an innovative, interactive, and connected way to increase faculty's online knowledge and skills (see Baran & Correia, 2014; Blitz, 2013; Booth, 2012; Dean et al., 2017; Lackey, 2011; Meyer & Murrell, 2014b; Palmer & Schueths, 2013; Prestridge, 2017; Reilly, et al., 2012; Teräs, 2016; Yuan & Kim, 2014).

Administrative support is a key factor in the success of continued professional development. Administrators need to encourage, assist, and appreciate the importance of faculty participation in professional development activities. A recommendation to address the project limitations could include administration offering remuneration, tenure, promotion, or credit reduction to faculty who participate in the CoP e-learning

professional development initiative. Administrative support might increase faculty's motivation and drive to take part in the CoP e-learning site.

Scholarship, Project Development, and Leadership and Change

Confucius once stated, "By three methods we may learn wisdom: first, by reflection, which is noblest; second, by imitation, which is easiest; and third by experience, which is the bitterest" (as cited in BrainyQuote.com, 2017, p. 1). The doctoral journey has left me with a deeper understanding of the definition of scholar-practitioner, and ways I can effect positive social change through reflection, imitation, and experience.

I concur with Lindh and Thorgren's (2016) perception that deep reflection is important for improvement in learning and profound understanding because I have found through reflective practice that my knowledge and expertise have increased, my philosophical understandings are better developed, my thought processes are clearer and more diverse, and my belief in social change is stronger. Through working with other influential professionals, I have learned the importance of collaborative learning. Oscar Wilde once said, "Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery that mediocrity can pay to greatness" (as cited in Goodreads.com, 2017). As a budding scholar-practitioner, I learned the significance of respect and trust when provided with constructive advice to assist me in becoming a better communicator, both in the development of the study and project, as well as in the sharing of my new knowledge with others. Finally, there is no substitute for experience. Previous education and praxis provided a basis for me as I

investigated a pertinent issue relative to the world of online learning—how best to design and deliver engaging instructional strategies that lead to student satisfaction and success.

Building on my previous experience, I advanced my knowledge in how to support my research with evidence-based practices through scholarly research and through exploring a specific situation by designing and implementing an instrumental-type qualitative case study. What I learned along the way was that I was increasing my critical thinking skills as I gathered, analyzed, synthesized, interpreted, and reported my findings—important skills needed to excel as a scholar-practitioner.

Upon reflection, my most enjoyable part of my research and the part I learned the most from were in conducting the one-on-one interviews. I gained a greater appreciation and respect for faculty who dedicate themselves to having a positive impact on the lives of online students and who openly share their ideas and ideologies to help inform others on how to effect positive societal benefits through online teaching. It was through my conversations with the participants in my study that I learned how much faculty desired additional professional development in online learning instructional strategies. The project I designed will make a positive contribution not only to the college as a whole but also to individual faculty teaching online as my project helps to fulfill faculty's desire for continual professional development.

Conducting a research study and disseminating the findings is a great achievement that should be admired and celebrated. However, utilizing the newfound knowledge to improve a situation through a specific project is a giant step towards effecting positive social change. As a project developer, I have learned the nuances of

creating a position paper to recommend that the findings from my study be situated into practice. In suggesting that the college creates a new professional development initiative, a CoP e-learning site, I feel I have achieved professional excellence in solving a specific issue faced by the local site. If the local site adopts this recommendation, my research will have made a difference to the organization and a transformation on the part of teaching and learning will have an effect on many stakeholders at the college—a testament to my goal of making a difference through my scholarly learning. I will have become a leader in the sense of initiating change in the practice of professional development at the local site.

Reflections on the Importance of the Work

In this study, I sought to discover instructional strategies that faculty teaching online at the local site have designed and delivered that they perceive to have fostered student engagement in online learning. Understanding student engagement techniques through the lens of instructional strategies are especially meaningful in the online environment primarily because the online environment confronts continuous issues such as a growing demand for online learning, technological advancements, and retention concerns. The study findings and the culminating project is important to many stakeholders. The findings may not only lay the groundwork for the recommendation of a new, cost-effective, socially constructed online professional development initiative—a CoP e-learning faculty development site—but may also serve as a learning tool for faculty as they are provided the opportunity to experience being students once again as they learn with other online instructors. The CoP e-learning site project will assist the

college with creating opportunities for faculty to increase their knowledge and skills relating to online instructional strategies designed to engage learners and ultimately bring societal benefits to both the college and the greater community. The greatest lesson I learned from my study and the project is that I have the professional skills and knowledge to enact scholarly change. I feel that I have an increased level of confidence in my learned research skills and believe that I am better equipped to set forth new ideas.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

An important implication of my study is that colleges will continually need faculty who can effectively design and deliver successful online instruction that engages the online student, especially with the demand for online learning continuing to grow and with technology always advancing. With researchers concluding that effective student engagement strategies are positively associated with student satisfaction and success, it is even more important for colleges to ensure that online faculty receive continual professional development (Bigatel & Williams, 2015; Boston et al., 2014; Boton & Gregory, 2015; Centner, 2014; Cho & Cho, 2014; Davidson & Wilson, 2013; LaBarbera, 2013; Lee, et al., 2013; McCormick et al., 2013; Oncu & Cakir, 2011; Smith, et al., 2016).

My recommendation, if enacted, has the potential to bring about social change for instructors, students, the college, and society as new knowledge is discovered, transformed, and shared. Through a shared discourse in the Cop e-learning site, social learning will permeate among the community members and a transformation of knowledge and collegiality will be understood and, conceivably, set forth in society.

Research is an ongoing process. There will always be a need for a continued understanding of new ideas and ideologies. As the growth in online learning continues, colleges will continually need to consider ways in which to enhance the learning environment to ensure student satisfaction and success.

Conclusion

This study is situated within the context of online learning in higher education. An important issue that served as the impetus for this study asked what online instructional strategies did faculty perceive would engage students, thus leading to student satisfaction and success. The literature abounds with theories and practical ideas to help answer this question. As technological advancements increase, there will be an ongoing need to seek new answers as to how colleges can best help online faculty to stay current in new instructional strategies that engage online learners (Agyei & Keengwe, 2014; Al-Salman, 2011; Lackey, 2011). Without effective professional development, online faculty may be ill-prepared to sustain the knowledge and skills required to continually engage their students (Reilly, et al., 2012). As I stated earlier, an important implication of my study is that colleges are in need of faculty who can continually design and deliver successful online instruction that engages the online student (Armellini & DeStefani, 2015; Chakraborty & Nafukho, 2014). More importantly, regular faculty professional development holds the key to online student satisfaction and success (Booth, 2012; Golden, 2016; Mitchell, 2013; Owen, 2014; Teräs, 2016).

While there are myriad types of professional development activities available for faculty, the literature supported that a new-shared learning approach provided better

outcomes for faculty learning and increased application of new instructional strategies (Booth, 2012; Golden, 2016; Mitchell, 2013; Owen, 2014; Teräs, 2016). The ever-changing trends in the distance education world, namely the increase in the demand for online learning, advancements in technology, and the need to increase student retention rates, will warrant continued research in how best to help faculty stay abreast of instructional practices that engage online learners (Saroyan & Trigwell, 2015; Teräs, 2016). In the quest for excellence in the scholarship of teaching and learning, there will be a continual need to develop new ideas and ideologies on how best to serve the online student.

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Appendix A: The Project

A New Professional Development Initiative:

A Community of Practice E-Learning Site For Online Faculty

Prepared by Sharon M. Hope, Doctoral Student at Walden University

March 2017

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Executive Summary

Problem

Higher education administrators at the local site face unique challenges as the demand for online learning continues to grow. There is a continuous need for faculty who can design and deliver successful online instructional strategies that engage online learners and lead to student satisfaction and success. However, what are the best engaging instructional strategies that faculty can use to keep students motivated to be successful? Even more, how can administrators maintain a faculty who can continually design and deliver engaging online instructional strategies that lead to student satisfaction and success

Student demand for online learning continues
Technological advancements continually transform instructional strategies
Student satisfaction and success is essential

Importance of Engagement

Kearsley and Shneiderman's (1998) engagement theory formed the conceptual framework for this study; they found that deep learning and persistent involvement is noted when students engage with one another, with the teacher, and with the course materials. In addition, researchers have found an improvement in student satisfaction and success when students collaborate with others in an engaging learning environment. Online faculty who use instructional strategies that encourage interactions, social presence, and best practices, encourage students to engage in the course; the reported outcome has indicated increased overall satisfaction and success for students.

A Qualitative Case Study

Purpose. To discover instructional strategies that faculty teaching online at the local site designed and delivered that they perceived to fostered student engagement in online learning.

Goals. To assist the local site to achieve its mission to enhance the knowledge of present and future online faculty and further improve online student success. To provide societal benefits to students, the college, and the greater community through improved online instructional practice.

Summary of Results, Conclusions, and, Recommendation

Summary. Data analysis revealed numerous successful instructional practices from the perspectives of the faculty at the local site that engage online students. Three data collection processes included a survey, document submissions, and one-on-one interviews.

Conclusions. The analysis process revealed similar viewpoints for effective engagement strategies: (a) provide instructor presence; (b) establish effective communication; (c) maintain a consistent course design; (d) create engaging content; and (e) build a humanizing learning environment.

Recommendation. Based on the study findings, institute a new professional development initiative, a community of practice e-learning site. The site will provide a well-researched and cost effective solution for the college to continually increase online faculty's knowledge and skills of new and engaging online instructional strategies—an approach that has found success with enhancing student satisfaction and success.

Background

Problem and Supporting Literature

Determining ways to engage online students is a continuing issue in higher education and one that needs continual study. As the growth of online learning continues, colleges need to be cognizant of how to ensure course effectiveness and quality (Allen & Seaman, 2015; Boton & Gregory, 2015; Hathaway & Norton, 2014; LaBarbera, 2013; Vivekananthamoorthy & Naganathan, 2015).

Effecting a viable future in online learning will require colleges to adopt appropriate, engaging online pedagogies to stay abreast of the constant changes occurring in this field. In essence, colleges must be mindful of the need for maintaining a faculty who can continually design and deliver successful online instructional strategies that engage online learners that lead to student satisfaction and success (Armellini & DeStefani, 2015; Chakraborty & Nafukho, 2015; McMurty, 2013). A goal of the local site is to enhance the understanding of student engagement among its faculty with the intent of improving retention rates (vice president of academic affairs/dean, personal communication, January 14, 2016).

The Importance of Student Engagement. What is student engagement and why is it important for the local site to be responsive to this concept especially for online learning? According to Newmann (1992), student engagement is the degree of effort that a student contributes towards learning. In other words, it addresses how much attentiveness and enthusiasm students possess to advance and be successful in their learning. What does this mean for instructors? Kearsley and Shneiderman (1998)

asserted that instructional strategies that encourage students to engage and interact with the class content, instructor, and classmates contribute to sustained involvement and deep learning. In addition, Short, Williams, and Christie (1976) proposed that social presence fosters student engagement; and, Chickering and Gamson (1987) advocated for seven principals of good practice for instructors to promote student engagement. More importantly, college stakeholders need to be mindful that an association exists between engaging instructional strategies, student interaction, social presence, and improved student satisfaction and success (Bigatel & Williams, 2015; Boston et al., 2014; Boton & Gregory, 2015; Centner, 2014; Cho & Cho, 2014; Davidson & Wilson, 2013; Freeman & Wash, 2013; LaBarbera, 2013; Lumpkin, Achen, & Dodd, 2015; McCormick, Gonyea, & Kinzie, 2013; Oncu & Cakir, 2011).

Student engagement plays a significant factor in student satisfaction and success.

More than four million students in the United States today participate in online classes and enrollment continues to grow not only nationally (Allen & Seaman, 2015; Boston et al., 2014; Boton & Gregory, 2015; Hathaway & Norton, 2014; LaBarbera, 2013; Vivekananthamoorthy & Naganathan, 2015), but locally as well.

With more students turning toward online classes, and with technology continuing to progress, there will be a perpetual need for faculty to discover new instructional practices to ensure that students are satisfactorily engaged in their learning. What colleges need today is a different pedagogy, one that promotes interaction or what Serdyukov (2015) advocated for which is a community of learners who together can engage and foster deep learning. This paper will address how the local site could

continually assist its online faculty in developing new ways to engage online students and in creating impactful instructional strategies that lead to student satisfaction and success.

Professional Development: A Strategy to Enhance Student Engagement

The local site encourages professional development activities for faculty through external and internal initiatives. Faculty who join in professional development activities are provided opportunities to improve their knowledge and skills and ultimately apply their new expertise in the classroom (McKenna, et al., 2016; Reilly, Vandenhouten, Gallagher-Lepak, & Ralston-Berg, 2012).

Faculty knowledge and skills may be one of the most valuable assets of a college.

Online faculty members who are more knowledgeable and skilled in technological and online pedagogical practices have been reported to promote greater student satisfaction and success (Beaver, Johnson, & Sinkinson., 2014; Mayes, Luebeck, Ku, Akarasriworn, & Korkmaz, 2011; Meijs, Prinsen, & de Laat, 2016; Owen, 2014; Reilly, et al., 2012; Saroyan & Trigwell, 2015). Consequently, implementing a professional development initiative to assist online faculty in designing and delivering online instructional strategies that foster student engagement may help the college to ensure student satisfaction and success.

Professional development is even more imperative for online faculty.

What type of professional development activity best advances online faculty's knowledge and expertise, supports the continued transformation of engaging instructional

practices, and offers the college a fiscally sound way to increase the knowledge and skills of online faculty?

New learning transpires when knowledge and ideas are shared and exchanged with others (Vygotsky, 1978).

Ramaley (2014) argued that colleges need a new plan for online professional development, one that promotes a team-like effort where faculty can learn and develop new learning strategies with the support of other online faculty. Brundiers, Wiek, and Kay (2013) stated colleges need more working relationships across disciplines to create a collaborative culture of engagement in which to share best online practices. Finally, Kennedy (2016) suggested that colleges need a professional development pedagogy that best helps faculty to learn new ideas to transform their teaching.

Faculty who participate in social relationships to share knowledge and culturally responsive teaching practices may hold the key to improved student outcomes (Booth, 2012; Golden, 2016; Mitchell, 2013; Owen, 2014; Teräs, 2016). An in-house professional development initiative that includes social networking aspects will offer the college a cost-effective approach to increasing online faculty's knowledge, skills, and capabilities that may have a direct impact on student engagement, learning, and achievement.

An Engaging Professional Development Approach: A Community of Practice E-Learning Practicum

Individuals form communities of practice to collectively engage with others and expand their knowledge regarding shared topics or endeavors. Three distinct characteristics delineate a community of practice: commitment is a continual praxis, a

common purpose exists, and resources are shared (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The creation of a community of practice e-learning site would assist the college in fulfilling a part of its strategic retention plan. Online faculty would be able to consult with each other and share engaging instructional strategies that they have found to be useful for student learning. A community of practice e-learning site may strengthen the skills of online faculty, help to build a community of experts, and contribute to online student success.

One of the tenets of the local site's strategic plan is to develop a comprehensive retention strategy to enhance the understanding of student engagement practices among its faculty through in-house faculty development initiatives.

Benefits of a Community of Practice E-Learning Site. The community of practice e-learning site will provide the following advantages:

- an associative relationship between participatory learning, effective instructional practice, and student success (Green, Hibbins, Houghton, & Ruutz, 2013; McKenna, et al., 2016; Reilly, et al., 2012),
- capitalization on a fiscally pragmatic professional development initiative (Herman, 2012; Meyer & Murrell, 2014; Mitchell, 2013; Palmer & Schueths, 2013; Ramaley, 2014),
- societal benefits ensuing from the positive effects on student performance and retention rates (Shaha, Glassett, Rosenlund, Copas, & Huddleston, 2016).

A community of practice e-learning site will allow online faculty to learn new instructional techniques regardless of day, time, or location constraints.

Overview of the Study

Purpose and Rationale of Study

The goal of this qualitative instrumental case study was to discover instructional strategies that faculty teaching online at the local site designed and delivered that they perceived to have fostered student engagement in online learning. The rationale was to assist the college in increasing its success rate for online courses (vice president of academic affairs/dean, personal communication, January 14, 2016).

The research question focused on faculty perceptions of and experiences with instructional strategies that they used specifically to foster student engagement in the online learning environment.

Role of the Researcher

I provide technological and pedagogical training and support to faculty at the local site; however, I do not hire, supervise, or evaluate online faculty so objectivity could be maintained and bias reduced. My role in this study, therefore, was to be a researcher and not a consultant to faculty at the college.

Study Design

An instrumental-type case study methodology was used because the case served as an instrument for studying online faculty perspectives of instructional strategies related to student engagement. In addition, the case was bounded by the limited number of participants who could participate in the study—online faculty at the local site.

Study Participants

Homogeneous sampling was used to invite online faculty at the local site who taught online for at least three years to participate in the study. Specific members were invited because they shared an experience with online teaching and knowledge of the institutional culture of the local site (Creswell, 2012; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Ten online faculty who taught at the college for at least 3 years agreed to participate in the study (see Figure A1).

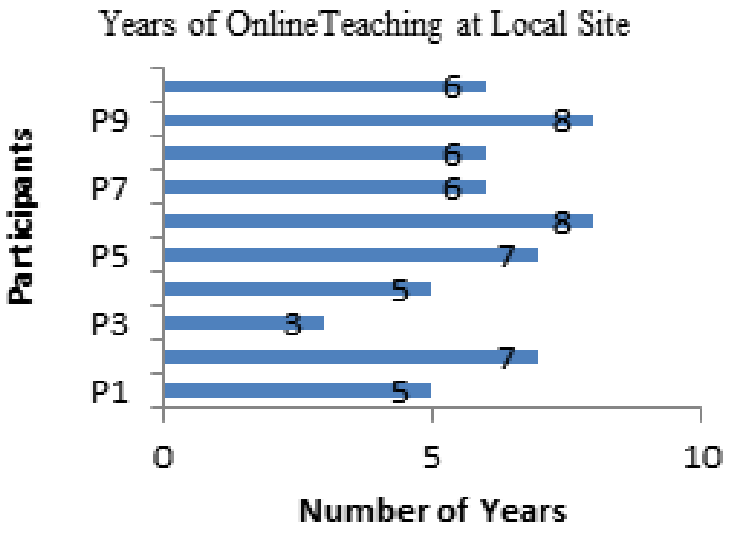

Figure A1. The types of documents faculty submitted that represent their perception of student engagement.

Research

One research question aligned with the study problem and purpose: What are faculty perceptions of and experiences with instructional strategies that they have used specifically to foster student engagement in the online learning environment?

Data Collection and Analysis

Three methods of data collection were selected to allow participants' responses to be compared, verified, and examined for interrelationships (Creswell, 2012; Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010). The three methods were an open-ended online survey, document collection, and a one-on-one, open-ended interview.

In organizing the data, an exploratory, provisional-type coding was first used to consolidate the data followed by an axial-type coding process to more efficiently condense the data into meaningful codes and themes (Saldana, 2009). In addition, mind-mapping software helped me to conceptualize visually the themes derived from the codes (see Table A1).

Table A1

Data Analysis Strategy: Two-Cycle Process

Type of analysis	Steps
First Cycle	
Exploratory, Provisional-Type Coding	Codes generated from the literature review and research question
In Vivo Coding	Exact words captured from the participants
Second Cycle	
Axial-Type Coding	Return to initial coding and re-labeled codes and categories
Created tables, figures, and mind-map graphics	Assisted in deeper understanding of the evidence presented

Note. The framework for exploratory, provisional-type coding, In Vivo coding, and axial-type coding was suggested by Saldana (2009) to help researchers develop a flexible, adaptable, creative, and recursive-type process during the data analysis stage.

Summary of Findings

Research Question. What are faculty perceptions of and experiences with instructional strategies that they have used specifically to foster student engagement in the online learning environment?

The findings of this study revealed a variety of instructional strategies that the participants designed, delivered, and perceived to foster student engagement in online courses. Five themes emerged from the consolidation of the data collection processes:

- provide instructor presence;
- establish effective communications;
- maintain a consistent course design;
- create engaging content; and
- build a humanizing learning environment (see Table A2).

Nevertheless, as Lawson and Lawson (2013) discovered, engagement is a complex "dynamic, social, and synergistic process" (p. 441). In other words, as the demand for online learning continues to grow, technological advances keep proliferating, and retention remains a concern, there will be a recurrent need to discover instructional strategies that may lead to student engagement and help enhance student satisfaction and success.

Continuous discovery of effective online instructional strategies will help faculty to create opportunities for student engagement that will benefit students, the college, and the wider community

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Table A2

Development of Themes, Categories, and Instructional Strategies

Themes	General categories	Instructional strategies
Provide instructor presence	Be there Foster interactions Comfortable environment Sense of personalization	Discussion boards Technologies/Multimedia Announcements Opening video of instructor Weekly summaries/E-mail Course design
Establish effective communication	Clear, concise directions and expectations Relevant, timely, and constructive feedback Reminders Repetition	Announcements Feedback Discussion boards Narrated power points Videos-instructor created
Maintain a consistent course design	Ease of navigation Consistent content, summaries, and feedback	Clear structure – learning Learning materials, assignments, and discussion boards Weekly lesson or modules Weekly announcements Weekly summaries
Create engaging content	Current, Relevant, and Autonomous	Discussion boards Links YouTubes PowToons
Build a humanizing learning environment	Sense of personalization Supportive and kind language Respect Value students	Respond by name Personal videos Provide assistance – e-mail, webinars, office hours, phone calls

Note. Development of themes as they emerged from the research question and data collected from the participants through three sources (survey, document submission, and one-on-one interview).

Recommendation

The creation of a new professional development initiative emerged as a way to share the findings with the local college. In addition, the professional development initiative may help the college to provide sustaining opportunities for online faculty to increase their knowledge and skills of engaging instructional strategies that may lead to increased student satisfaction and success. A new professional development initiative, namely a community of practice e-learning site will provide the college with the following benefits:

- an easily-accessible, innovative solution for online faculty to build relationships at the college and increase their knowledge and skills in learning new professional development activities relating to successful, engaging instructional practices that faculty may share, reflect upon, and apply in the classroom. Community of practice e-learning sites have been found to provide an inviting space where faculty can freely share, embrace, and employ new innovative instructional practices (Baran & Correia, 2014; Golden, 2016; Khalid, Joyes, Ellison, & Daud, 2014; Smith, Calderwood, Storms, Lopez, & Colwell, 2016; Terosky & Heasley, 2015);
- five engaging instructional themes derived from the findings of the study that will lay the groundwork of the e-learning site to assist online faculty in enhancing their technological and pedagogical skills;
- assist in fulfilling Middle States Commission on Higher Education (2015) requirements to promote academic integrity in online courses by ensuring that faculty

responsible for delivering the online learning curricula are appropriately qualified and effectively supported;

- offer a cost-effective, in-house, strategy for online faculty to increase their knowledge and expertise With limited professional development funding, the utilization of the current learning management system can serve as the portal for the new e-learning site;

- societal advantages will follow for students, who may achieve deeper learning and achieve greater success, the college, who may witness improved retention rates, and for society as a whole, as graduates go forth and share their knowledge and skills with the community-at-large.

Implementation Plan

Approval and support from the vice president for academic affairs/dean must be granted to implement the new community of practice e-learning site. Next, administrative support from the director of online learning and the information technology department will need to be secured to provide pedagogical and technical assistance to create the new e-learning site in the current learning management system. Finally, faculty must offer their endorsement to participate in the new professional development initiative. Figure A2 depicts a tentative schedule of the implementation plan along with stakeholders' responsibilities.

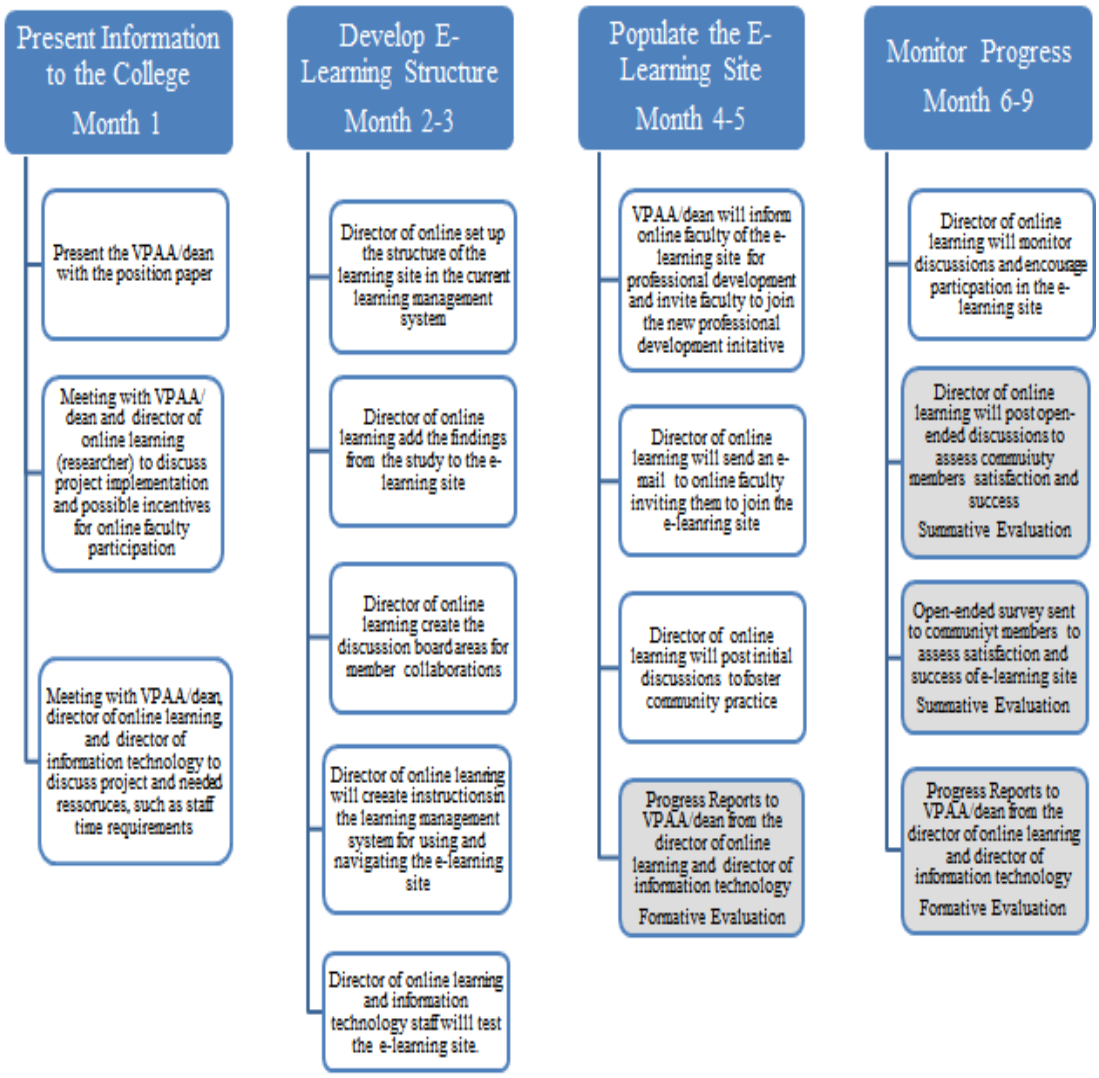

Figure A2. Nine month implementation plan for community of practice e-learning site.

Project Evaluation Plan. An evaluation plan will inform the College if the new professional development initiative is successfully assisting the college in accomplishing its goal: to increase the knowledge and skills of its online faculty in the design and development of instructional strategies that foster student engagement in online classes. Individual stakeholders will employ formative evaluation periodically throughout the

professional development initiative to assess initial and ongoing activities. Summative assessments, including open-ended surveys, will be administered by the director of online learning (leader of the site) to measure what new applicable instructional strategies faculty have learned and applied in their online classes. Table A3 depicts the details of the project evaluation plan, including initial objectives, timeframe, stakeholders' responsibilities, measurement outcomes, and the instruments used for assessment purposes.

Project Implications

Local Implications. The project has the capability to provide the college with a plan to strengthen the knowledge and skills of faculty regarding instructional strategies that engage online learners. The five themes derived from the study findings provide constructs that current and future online faculty should incorporate into their online practice: instructor presence, establishing effective communications, maintaining a consistent course design, creating engaging content, and building a humanizing learning environment. The community of practice e-learning site will provide access to these themes and an inventory of instructional practices that the participants in the study found to engage online learners.

External Implications. Once published, this study has the potential to not only share the findings but also provide a new and innovative way for colleges to provide professional development to online faculty.

Table A3

Project Evaluation Plan

Objective	Responsible	Timeline	Evaluation Measure	Instrument
In month four--complete progress reports to the Vice President of Academic Affairs/Academic Dean	IT Department and Director of Online Learning (leader)	By the end of month four	CoP E-Learning site developed and faculty members invited to community	(Formative) Progress reports
In month six, create the CoP site and participate with online faculty community members	Director of Online Learning (leader)	By the end of month six	Community members will be familiar with the use of the site	(Summative) Open-ended survey
In month nine--share and utilize the learned instructional strategies among community members	Community Members and director of online learning (leader)	By the end of month nine	Community members will discuss and reflect on new pedagogical practices used.	(Summative) Discussion board posts
Sustained objective--share and utilize the learned instructional strategies among community members	Community members and director of online learning (leader)	Each succeeding month	Community members will discuss and reflect on new pedagogical practices used.	(Summative) Open-Ended survey and discussion board posts

Note. A brief outline of the main points of the project's evaluation plan. Outcome goal: to provide online faculty with the opportunity to increase their knowledge and skills of instructional strategies that engage online students

Societal Implications. There is a relationship between effective instruction, student success, and societal benefits. Knowledgeable faculty who utilize engaging instructional practices have shown greater student satisfaction and success (Shaha, et al., 2016). Improved student success gives recognition to the college and ultimately serves as

an invaluable benefit to society as a whole as graduates share their learned knowledge in the community. Finally, social change could emerge through the sharing of published or presented material at regional conferences, to assist online practitioners external to the institution to enhance their knowledge of instructional strategies that engage online learners.

Conclusion

The findings from this study may assist the local site in enhancing the knowledge and skills of present and future faculty who teach online regarding instructional strategies that engage online learners. In addition, the findings may provide the local site with information to create a community of practice e-learning site where faculty can access an inventory of instructional best practices found to engage the online student.

A desired outcome of the study would be to bring about social change through the sharing of published or presented material with the local site, as well as at regional conferences. Sharing the collective knowledge gathered from the study may assist current online practitioners in enhancing their knowledge of instructional strategies to engage online learners and help future practitioners build a better online learning environment.

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Appendix B: Site Letter Approval

February 11, 2016

Institutional Review Board
Walden University
100 S Washington Avenue South
Suite 900
Minneapolis, MN 55401

Subject: Site Approval Request

Dear IRB Members:

Please note that Sharon Hope, doctoral student at Walden University (and [redacted] and [redacted] at [redacted] has the permission of [redacted] to conduct research at our institution for her study, "Instructional Strategies that Foster Student Engagement in Online College Courses.

Prior to data collection, Ms. Hope will provide [redacted] with copies of all Walden University IRB approved documents. Data collection strategies involving invited online faculty will include an open-ended questionnaire, a solicited interview, and the collection of documents that support instructional strategies that engage the online learner. Steps will be taken to ensure that the data collection process will be completely anonymous and that faculty members may opt out of the study at any time. In addition, collected data will be secured and stored off-site. A copy of the final study will be provided to [redacted].

After Ms. Hope receives approval for her research project from Walden University's Institutional Review Board, she will then submit the required paperwork to [redacted] IRB Committee. If Walden University needs additional information at this time, please contact me.

Sincerely,

[redacted]

Appendix C: Local Site IRB Approval

July 18th, 2016

Sharon M. Hope

Re: Faculty Perceptions of Instructional Strategies that Foster Student Engagement in Online Courses
Protocol #: 006
Review: Expedited

Dear Ms. Hope,

Thank you for your IRB application. Your proposal was approved by the [redacted] Institutional Review Board on July 18th, 2016.

We request that you submit a copy of your completion report to the [redacted] IRB when your research is complete. If you have not submitted a copy of your notice of study completion by July 18th of 2017, you will be due for continuing review at that time.

Please note the following five conditions attached to this approval letter:

- No subjects may be involved in any study procedure prior to the IRB approval date or after the expiration date. All unanticipated or serious adverse events must be reported to the IRB within 5 days.
- All protocol modifications must be IRB approved prior to implementation.
- Store research records containing research subjects' personal identifiers in locked or secure storage with restricted access.
- Protocols must be re-approved yearly by the IRB, who will notify you prior to the expirations date. You must submit 5 weeks in advance of the expiration.
- Notify IRB of study completion: Submit a 1-2 paragraph summary of study results to the IRB when the study is terminated or completed and after data analysis is complete.

Of course, please feel free to contact the IRB at [redacted] with any questions.

Sincerely,

[redacted]
[redacted] IRB Chair

Appendix D: Walden University IRB Approval

IRB <irb@waldenu.edu> 8/10/16

Dear Ms. Hope,

This email is to notify you that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) confirms that your study entitled, "Faculty Perceptions of Instructional Strategies that Foster Student Engagement in Online Courses," meets Walden University's ethical standards. Our records indicate that the site's IRB agreed to serve as the IRB of record for this data collection. Since this study will serve as a Walden doctoral capstone, the Walden IRB will oversee your capstone data analysis and results reporting. The IRB approval number for this study is 08-10-16-0415792.

This confirmation is contingent upon your adherence to the exact procedures described in the final version of the documents that have been submitted to IRB@waldenu.edu as of this date. This includes maintaining your current status with the university and the oversight relationship is only valid while you are an actively enrolled student at Walden University. If you need to take a leave of absence or are otherwise unable to remain actively enrolled, this is suspended.

If you need to make any changes to your research staff or procedures, you must obtain IRB approval by submitting the IRB Request for Change in Procedures Form. You will receive confirmation with a status update of the request within 1 week of submitting the change request form and are not permitted to implement changes prior to receiving approval. Please note that Walden University does not accept responsibility or liability for research activities conducted without the IRB's approval, and the University will not accept or grant credit for student work that fails to comply with the policies and procedures related to ethical standards in research.

When you submitted your IRB materials, you made a commitment to communicate both discrete adverse events and general problems to the IRB within 1 week of their occurrence/realization. Failure to do so may result in invalidation of data, loss of academic credit, and/or loss of legal protections otherwise available to the researcher.

Both the Adverse Event Reporting form and Request for Change in Procedures form can be obtained at the IRB section of the Walden website: http://academicguides.waldenu.edu/researchcenter/orec

Researchers are expected to keep detailed records of their research activities (i.e., participant log sheets, completed consent forms, etc.) for the same period of time they retain the original data. If, in the future, you require copies of the originally submitted IRB materials, you may request them from Institutional Review Board.

Both students and faculty are invited to provide feedback on this IRB experience at the link below:

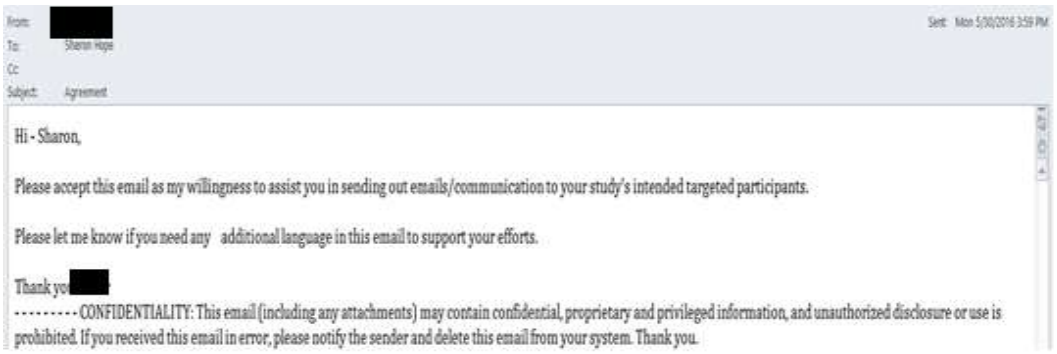
http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=qHBJzkJMUx43pZegKlmdiQ_3d_3d

Sincerely,

[redacted]

Office address for Walden University:
100 Washington Avenue South, Suite 900

Appendix E: Information on Personnel Associated with the Study (Faculty A)



From: [redacted]
To: Sharon Hope
Cc:
Subject: Agreement
Sent: Mon 5/30/2016 3:59 PM

Hi - Sharon,

Please accept this email as my willingness to assist you in sending out emails/communication to your study's intended targeted participants.

Please let me know if you need any additional language in this email to support your efforts.

Thank yo[redacted]

---------CONFIDENTIALITY: This email (including any attachments) may contain confidential, proprietary and privileged information, and unauthorized disclosure or use is prohibited. If you received this email in error, please notify the sender and delete this email from your system. Thank you.

Note: Faculty A will forward e-mail to the study's targeted participants. Faculty A has successfully completed the human subject research training and will not be a participant in the study.

Appendix F: Open Ended Anonymous Online Survey and Document Submission

Open-Ended Survey Questions and Document Submission

Thank you for choosing to participate in this survey and document submissions. I am extremely grateful to you for contributing your valuable time and your expertise. Your feedback in this survey and document submissions will help me to complete my doctoral study. The information you provide may also contribute to the scholarship of teaching and learning in the online environment. Completion of the survey should take approximately 30 minutes and the uploading of documents to support your answers in the survey should take approximately 15 minutes.

Research Question: What are faculty perceptions of and experiences with instructional strategies that they have used specifically to foster student engagement in the online learning environment?

Directions: Please keyboard your responses in the area provided beneath each question. Also, please be as detailed as possible in your responses. Upon completion of the narrative section of this survey, you will be asked to attach 2-3 assignments that support your responses.

Engagement strategies are defined as the formation of positive learning experiences leading to effective student learning (Chakraborty & Nafukho, 2015).

- How many years have you been teaching online at the local site?
- From your experience with teaching online students, describe some course activities and/or assignments you have found to successfully engage your online students.

- What instructional practices do you use to support, assist, and provide students with an opportunity to interact with you, fellow students, with course content and with technology in your online course?

- What instructional practices have you found that work best in creating a sense of presence or intimacy in your online classroom? Please describe ways that you may have constructed your own presence in the online classroom, student presence, and/or content presence in the online classroom.

- In what ways have you designed the structure of your online course that you perceive fosters best practices that lead to student engagement in your online classroom?

- Please provide any additional comments you would be willing to share about student engagement strategies you incorporate in your online courses.

- After completing the narrative portion of this survey, please attach 2-3 examples of course assignments that you have found to foster student engagement in your online classroom. To remain anonymous, eliminate any identifiable information from your assignments.

- If you would be willing to waive your anonymity and participate in a one hour one-on-one interview session with me to further discuss online instructional strategies related to student engagement, please type your name below and then return to the researcher the signed letter of consent that was attached to this e-mail. I will contact you to set up a convenient time and place for a one hour interview. Please be assured that this study is completely voluntary. You may change your mind and withdraw from this study at any time.

_____

Name

Again, thank you for taking your valuable time to complete this survey and attach documents you feel support your responses. Your perceptions of and experiences relating to instructional strategies that engage online learners are very much appreciated.

Sharon M. Hope
Doctoral Student
Walden University
[e-mail address redacted]
[phone number redacted]

Appendix G: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

Participants: Faculty who have taught at least three years online at the study site

Date/Time/Location:

Interviewer: Sharon M. Hope

Interviewee:

Consent form on file: Yes / No

Procedures: First, I would like to thank you for taking the time to meet with me. This session will last no longer than one hour. I will take notes during the interview, and also, with your permission, audio record the session. You may ask me to stop the recording at any time. After the interview, I will e-mail you the transcript of our session for your verification of our conversation. It would be very much appreciated if you would return the verified transcript to me within a week of receiving it. Do you have any questions before we begin?

I would like to begin by asking you to state your name and tell me a little bit about yourself. For example, how long have you been teaching? How long have you been teaching online? Do you enjoy teaching online?

The following open-ended questions (relating to interactions, social presence, and instructional best practices) will help me to gain a deeper understanding of your perceptions of instructional strategies that engage online learners:

- In what ways do you think you foster students' sense of belonging within your online course?

- Please describe the types of communication tools you have used in your online course that you perceive lead to student engagement and student satisfaction.

- Please share with me some of the course designs or frameworks you have used in your course while using the learning management system. What designs or structures have you found to best engage online students and have led to student satisfaction?

- Have you used technological tools besides the learning management system tools to engage with your students? If so, what kinds of technological tools have you used that you perceived successfully engaged your students?

- In your opinion, what engagement strategies have you found most encourages online student satisfaction and success (prompt, if needed interactions, social presence, and instructional design)? Explain.

- Are there any additional ideas that you would be willing to share with me about how you design and deliver your online course(s) that lead to student satisfaction and success?

I will thank the interviewee for their time and the sharing of their perceptions of and experiences with me. I will inform them that they will receive a transcript of the interview within a week for verification of my notes and ask politely if they would be willing to remit the verification to me within a week. I will also politely ask if they would be willing to be contacted if follow-up questions were needed.

Appendix H: Stage 1, Survey Data Coding Analysis

Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Participant 5
Years Teaching 5	**Years Teaching** 7	**Years Teaching** 3	**Years Teaching** 5	**Years Teaching** 7
Activities/Assign -Engage	**Activities/Assign -Engage**	**Activities/Assign -Engage**	**Activities/Assign -Engage**	**Activities/Assign -Engage**
Welcome discussion	Asynchronous DB - No pressure	DB	Interviews	DB to solicit prior knowledge
Introduction DB	Multi-media-prevents boredom	Colorful graphics	Thought provoking DB	DB to solicit life experiences to content
Graded DB	Supplemental sources	Relevant assignments	Peer collaboration	Encourage questions-peers & instructor
Relevant Content-Videos-Articles	Relate content to real life			Online group project
Demonstrate knowledge in DB	Grading rubrics			Let students choose own topics
Peer Responses in DB				
Interact-You-Stu-Cont-Tech	**Interact-You-Stu-Cont-Tech**	**Interact-You-Stu-Cont-Tech**	**Interact-You-Stu-Cont-Tech**	**Interact-You-Stu-Cont-Tech**
On campus students can visit	Graded DB	Coffee and Danish DB	Course calendar for course preview	Provide voice feedback on assign
Objective tests - f-2-f meetings	Non-graded DB	Color coded comments	Weekly announcements	Weekly DB
Consistency	24 hour e-mail response	YouTube	Videos	Require students to collaborate on DB
Clear expectations	Positive feedback in DB	Websites	Educational readings	Open DB for conversations and issues
Regular DB			Power points	Question & answer DB
Feedback from students - DB most favorite			Assignments related to objectives	Online group projects
			Journal entries shared with instructor	External links to videos - related to content
			Encourage e-mail and phone questions	Study options - electronic flash cards

				Optional links for deeper learning
				Practice quizzes
Sense of Presence	**Sense of Presence**	**Sense of Presence**	**Sense of Presence**	**Sense of Presence**
Teaching presence is important		Graphics	Discussion board with instructor	Supportive advice in announcements
Introductory video		Fun facts	Requiring collaboration of students in DB	Adding personal advice
Narrated PPT		Lively announcements	Continual feedback from instructor in DB	Giving credit to students in DB
		Positive reinforcement	Quick to compliment students	Respond to individual posts in DB
		Engaging DB	Encourage student compliments	Thanking individual students publically
			Encourage in depth questions	Share news with all students
			Encourage questions to instructor & classmates	Encourage interaction in DB
				Remind that they are in the course together
				Encourage students to help on another
Course Structure-Best Practices	**Course Structure-Best Practices**	**Course Structure-Best Practices**	**Course Structure-Best Practices**	**Course Structure-Best Practices**
Format of delivery is important	Assignments in syllabus	Regular pattern format	Process for navigating through course	Having students introduce one another
Modules or Weekly Items	Encourage students to work ahead	Weekly format	Repeat navigation steps throughout course	Have student share a story of themselves
Weekly course announcement - Friendly Reminder	Cooperative weekly work in DB		Cannot repeat expectations and due dates enough	Story connects to course content
	Relate course objectives to real life			
	Support individual value to learning			
	Include humor, joke, cartoons			
	Create relaxed learning			

	Openness to all questions			
Additional Strategies	**Additional Strategies**	**Additional Strategies**	**Additional Strategies**	**Additional Strategies**
Use of videos to explain difficult content	Create a sense of student value		Assign DB due dates	Ensure student engage with course content
Different content for different learning styles	Students have control over learning		Communicate privately tech issues	
Share engaging content	Share personal, self-deprecating anecdotes		Seek assistance from other online instructors'	
Participant 6	Participant 7	Participant 8	Participant 9	Participant 10
Years Teaching 8	**Years Teaching** 6	**Years Teaching** 6	**Years Teaching** 8	**Years Teaching** 6
Activities/Assign - Engage	**Activities/Assign - Engage**	**Activities/Assign -Engage**	**Activities/Assign - Engage**	**Activities/Assign -Engage**
DB	Videos	Getting to know you DB	DB foster controversy-debate-creativity	DB introduction
	Music	Course content DB 1st week	Follow same content as F2F	Open forum for peer-to-peer talks
	Interviews	to explore course & ask	DB allow for differing opinions	DB assignments
	Personal writings	questions	Interactive ppts	Use of current topics to keep engaged
		Self-awareness DB		
		First week - Responsibility form		
		for expectations of course		
Interact-You-Stu-	**Interact-You-Stu-**	**Interact-You-Stu-Cont-**	**Interact-You-Stu-Cont-**	**Interact-You-Stu-Cont-**

Cont-Tech	Cont-Tech	Tech	Tech	Tech
YouTube Videos	DB main platform for integration	DB share and reflect	Introductory video	Links to videos and animations
Publisher products	Personalize weekly announcements	Online office hours	Voice in ppts	Videos as assignments in DB
Provide help	Comments in weekly assign	F2F office hours	PowToon	Weekly announcements
	more than in F2F	Phone office hours	Power Point Mix	
		Orientation to class	Wiki	
		Course content DB 1st week	Encourage contact with instructor	

Sense of Presence	Sense of Presence	Sense of Presence	Sense of Presence	Sense of Presence
Building ownership into assign	Weekly announcements	Respond to e-mail w 24 hrs.	Words are not enough	Narrated ppts
Have students choose assign	Photos to gain attention	Presence in DB	Pictures, videos, voice	Share stories to help with difficult concepts
Online chats	Voice-my audio	Personalized feedback	Banner	
Go-to-Meetings	My photo-visual	Contact instructor section	Links	
		Photo of me	YouTube	
		Invite students to post picture	First name contact	
			DB wrap-up	
			Sum up students responses using their names	
			Content presence with pictures,	
			interviews	
			Timely responses to e-mails	

Course Structure-Best Practices	Course Structure-Best Practices	Course Structure-Best Practices	Course Structure-Best Practices	Course Structure-Best Practices
Weekly quizzes	Organized, easy to follow,	Well-organized course	Week by week presentation	Not an independent study course
Short question essays	and predictable	User friendly	LM, Assignments, DB	Create sense of community
DB	Expectations are clear	Timely, frequent feedback	DB 2-3 posts per week-diff days	Use different teaching styles
Video case studies	Week-to-week expectations	Variety of learning materials	Current events	Course content can be dry
	Continually modify	Repeat instructions to reinforce experience		Difficult content can discourage students
	Use of rubrics for DB part	Encourage e-mails to instructor		
	Overlap of LM, A, & DB			

Additional Strategies	Additional Strategies	Additional Strategies	Additional Strategies	Additional Strategies
Online engagement is more difficult than F2F engagement	Subject matter is sensitive	Feedback during and after course imp	New technologies keep engagement	
	Learned that sensitive matter	Online faculty should share strategies	Text alone will not engage	
	can be taught online		Make students feel valued	
	Student feedback is positive		Show students relevance of work	
			See that instructor is also engaged	

Appendix I: Stage 2, Survey Data Analysis—Mind Mapping

From your experience with teaching online students, describe some course activities and/or assignments you have found to successfully engage your online students.	
What instructional practices do you use to support, assist, and provide students with an opportunity to interact with you, fellow students, with course content, and with technology in your online course?	
What instructional practices have you found that work best in creating a sense of presence or intimacy in your online classroom? Please describe ways that you may have constructed your own presence in the online classroom, student presence, and/or content presence in the online classroom.	
In what ways have you designed the structure of your online course that you perceive fosters best practices that lead to student engagement in your online classroom?	
Please provide any additional comments you would be willing to share about student engagement strategies you incorporate in your online courses.	

Appendix J: Stage 1, Interview Data Coding Analysis

Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Participant 5
Sense of Belonging	**Sense of Belonging**	**Sense of Belonging**	**Sense of Belonging**	**Sense of Belonging**
Sense of belonging is key	Use a combination of humor	Begin with an introduction	DB - 1st assignment tell me. .	Bring personality into the course
Feel comfortable interacting	and humility	Respond to students by name	Introduce me and the students	Very informal approach
Student-student & student-teacher	Course content can be dry if allowed	Using positive statements	Intro helps me to help students	Send out lots of e-mails
DB-Coffee Talk	Use cartoons to make enjoyable	Attentive to words	Share knowledge with each other	Make them feel they are not alone
Contact privately	Introduce yourself to the class	Hospitably and pedagogical		Structured interaction in DB
Instructor is a real person	Tell students I am their tour guide	Use of color and graphics--welcoming		Post early and respond in DB
Visit during office hours	Here is what is important	Welcoming and fun		Connect content to experience
Know instructor is supportive	What do you want to get out of the class			Tie content to personal life
Not a pre-packaged canned course	Apply knowledge to personal experience			Tell stories of technology issues
Not feel disconnected	Tell them they will be the expert			Share own struggles
Support content and technology	I don't know everything			Two DB - formal and informal
Foster peer-to-peer interactions	At end, let them know I appreciated			Check students 2x day
Hear classmate's thoughts	the experience			Have students visit office
Real person				

I get better each semester
Require them to share information
Build them up
Ask questions that everyone already knows the answers to in the beginning
Set up two DB forums
Respond timely to students
Morning and evening
Question from student could be critical
It's my responsibility to respond to you
I take my job seriously
Con't overwhelm - give calendar
Compete with only yourself - self efficacy

Communication Tools	Communication Tools	Communication Tools	Communication Tools	Communication Tools
Weekly announcements	Weekly announcements	Create themes for the course	Weekly content is all related	Announcements
Announcements go to e-mail	Help documents for course	Gave the course a sense of specialness	Interaction with weekly content	E-mails
Private communication with students	Two discussion forums	Use repetition within the course	Video and ppt bring life to course	Microphone-voice
Regular DB	Provide personal contact information	Videos	DB	Use other sources rather than
Consistency in	Communicate objectives,	YouTube	DB that requires	textbook

communication	assignments		application	
Rhythm in course	If 2 announcements during the week	Taught through my writing	E-mail - alternate way to comm	Use publisher materials
Weekly rhythm	would use different color and font	Some e-mails	if problems with Bb	Use of flash cards and videos
Regularity	Announcements would go to e-mail too	Coffee and Danish forum	Appreciative responses	
Prepare and plan the course precisely	Keep a routine for communication	Provided feedback in DB and assignments	Calendar is overview of course	
Clear expectations	Remind them to post in DB midweek	Respond to students in DB	Clearly state the weekly items	
Changes next terms	Nicely tell them the importance of DB	Provide affirmation in their thinking	Provides a roadmap	
Narrated ppts, animations	Interject in DB when needed	Announcement - great job		
Publisher content	Believe in peer-to-peer learning	Name particular students in public communications		
YouTube	E-mail individual students			
Different learning materials	Help students with technology			
Sense of belonging through tech	DB Rubrics - Post 3 times			
	Content means better grade			
	Always give feedback			
	Keep all feedback positive			
	Feedback on all assignments			
	Feedback on all tests-right answer			

Course Design/Framework	Course Design/Framework	Course Design/Framework	Course Design/Framework	Course Design/Framework
Two camps-Modules & Weeks	Keep online experiences same as F2F	Weekly rhythm	I love links	Week to week course
Design for course content	Always explain the week like in a F2F	Videos, quizzes, DB, projects, final exam	Have students assess themselves	Announcements to introduce week
Like weekly format practical	Make it colorful	Always had an opening assignment to assess writing skills	and their classmates	Reminders mid-week
for 15 week course	Make it user friendly	No junk in course-tailored course	Use YouTube	Pose individual questions to class and use student's name
Make sure students know expectations	Post important items chronologically	Only put into course what you want students to know	Always video	Use of mastery teaching
Make clear to students the structure	Visually easy to discern	Chose very intentional materials	Clear instructions on how to use technology and the course	Repetition and consistency
Due dates	Cartoons and pictures		Weekly content	
1st week no grading	How to experts		Keep a routine	
Welcome students	Have a roadmap to follow - habits of mind		Be consistent	
Students sign a sheet acknowledging	Consistent reminders		Provide relevant materials	
expectations	Reminders		not just a talking head in a video	
Students want to know they are following the procedures	Multi-media to get them hooked Use of music to engage			
Set a good tone the 1st week	Supplemental readings			
Let students get familiar with the course	Weekly work to control the pace			
Eliminate feelings of discouragement	Force deadlines and slow students down			

Reflect on learning
Try to get students to think on online as if the course were meeting during the week
Used materials from F2F course to design online course
Adapted ppts -- added slides

Technological Tools	Technological Tools	Technological Tools	Technological Tools	Technological Tools
Two ppts - regular and narrated	Asynchronous discussions	YouTube	Narrow the tools	Survey feature for added content
Positive feedback on narrations	Synchronous discussions--did not like	Kept course basic	Electronic calendar, syllabus,	Let students choose content
Rewatch content	Narrated Power Points	Picture of myself	and announcements	Group feature
Visit instructor	Did not like creating videos		Announcements that guide	Choice of case study
YouTube	Use of external videos		Power Point Presentations	Online quiz feature
Action videos	Use of online tests - personality			Power Points - Textbook
Feedback on videos if discussed in DB	YouTube			
	Ted Talks			
	Clips			
	Movies			
	Electronic journal articles			

Strategies Most Engages	Strategies Most Engages	Strategies Most Engages	Strategies Most Engages	Strategies Most Engages
Weekly announcement	Assigned group work - abandoned	Quizzes using higher level taxonomy questions	DB	Make student feel good--voice
Mixed feedback on the use of DB	Forced interaction	Group projects	Brings out people	Match content with learning styles
Peer-to-peer knowledge is important	DB case studies	Groups projects lightened my load - 150 students	Brings out type of learning	Providing different choices for
DB require students to work more	Those that were satisfying to students	Fun creative project	Student can teach each other	the way students learn
Critically analyze--requires more effort	Student-Instructor-Instructor-Student	Collaborative learning using social media	Students can teach me	Create my own power points
Students need to be aware of online expectations	Guide the DB discussion	Keep expectation and instruction clear	Students can share knowledge	Use power points from text too
Have had push back from students DB	Course design makes success easier	Keep material relevant	My social presence - DB	Praise students
Match rigor to class -- 100 versus 200 level	Instructor presence most important	Relate material to current events	Compliment students	Use of analogies
Prepare course ahead of time	My social presence was probably	I showed up and made comments	Encouraging words to pat	Student-Instructor Interaction
Allow students to work ahead 1-2 weeks	selfish-I wanted to know them to	Responded through e-mail or phone calls	themselves on the back	Instructor presence
Positive feedback about being able to work ahead	help them	Wrote feedback on all papers		Peer-to-peer interactions
Course fits student's flexible schedule	Revise course for me as well--bored	Provided feedback in DB		A good comfortable situation
An electronic calendar shows due dates, etc.	Applying content to current situations	I was there all of time		Supporting students
				A variety of learning materials
				Physical, electronic, visual

				Touch every student
				Replicate F2F class
				Respond to students timely
				Tone is important
Weekly announcement	Assigned group work - abandoned	Quizzes using higher level taxonomy questions	DB	Make student feel good--voice
Additional Ideas/Comments	**Additional Ideas/Comments**	**Additional Ideas/Comments**	**Additional Ideas/Comments**	**Additional Ideas/Comments**
	Online training was the best thing I did to prepare for teaching	Relationship is different--can's make assumptions	I'm a better teacher from teaching online	Students would comment on my voice in the course
	Have to work as hard as the student to make the course enjoyable	Product of work is the same as a F2F	Seek out advice to students on how to make the course better	When I started teaching it was new I jumped on board right away
	More opportunity to engage in online classroom	Not sure about engagement in online course vs F2F	Online learning is great for everyone	Was able to get to know some of the students better than others
	Students can not feel shy about participating	Most students knew me from F2F courses	You can sit at home and teach and students can sit at home and learn	In a classroom you know if a student does not want to be approached
	Can control student domination	Use appreciative inquiry	I find I can interact more deeply with my online students	Limitation with the LMS
		Course evaluations were strong, except for testing		
		Test were hard		
		Heard words like fun, lively, colorful course		

	Stayed current by using other technologies Can't use the same assignments from a F2F course all of the time Provide the same objectives from F2F Change ways of assessing- assume students will look up answers Golden rule--keep the integrity of the course		Nobody has to anxious I find online students very respectful	
Participant 6	Participant 7	Participant 8	Participant 9	Participant 10
Sense of Belonging	**Sense of Belonging**	**Sense of Belonging**	**Sense of Belonging**	**Sense of Belonging**
Biggest issue connecting with them	Welcoming announcement	Welcoming DB	Decorate the course for comfort	Introductory DB
Start with a welcome page	Personalized video with my face	Everyone writes about themselves DB	Use of colors, graphics, comics	Create sense of belonging
Everyone writes about themselves	1st week DB introductions	Second DB to review course and format	Course association	Interactions among classmates
Course continuity	Make DB very personal	Check e-mail several times/day	Talk by name	Informal DB for questions
Start a dialogue on a get acquainted DB	Weekly announcements with pictures	Respond to e-mail within 24 hours	Wrap-up DB and use names	Introduce myself with a ppt or
Encourage interaction in DB	cartoons, etc.	Make them feel they are not alone	Videos of me talking	voice recording
Encourage critical thinking--deep thinking	Feel my presence in the course	Display picture throughout course		Tell them how the course is set up

	Sending personal e-mail if student has not completed an assignment	Encourage them to post picture		Pictures of students makes more personal
	Summary in DB rather than always individual responses--but use names	Online office hours		
	Content that connects students	Meet at college		
	Current content to keep engaged			
	Keep flow of goals, outcomes each week			
	Use of song or movies to relate to content			
	Elicit emotions and personal connections			
	Pictures of me to make me a real person			
Communication Tools	**Communication Tools**	**Communication Tools**	**Communication Tools**	**Communication Tools**
Remember students are customers	Announcements	DB	Written communication	Weekly updates
Have 24/7/365 office hours	Predictable communications--weekly	E-mail	Videos	E-mail blasts
Provide cell phone	Rubrics in DB	Appointments	Videos to introduce the week	Remind them of upcoming assignments
Need one-on-one communication	Minimum of three posts in DB	Weekly announcements	Written announcements	Grades
Be prompt in replies	Weekly commentaries	Separate announcement for special items	PowToon videos- short 3-4 minutes	Narrated power point

E-mail extensively
Keep content relevant and fun

Real life examples
Video-tape lectures
Go-to-meeting--but not always

E-mails to individual students
Reminders to students that there are other resources to help them be successful - LRC
Scaffold them to ensure their continued success
Put feedback on every assignments
Positive reinforcement
Go extra mile to communicate

Stoke their self-efficacy

Collaboration in DB - learn from peers
Repeat instructions in announcements
Feedback on every assignment
Personalized comments
Personalized comments in DB
Feedback on assignments within 2-3 days
First week I reply to all DB posts

Cartoons

Narrated power points
Feedback on written work
Lots and lots of feedback

E-mails for notifications
E-mails for one-on-one communications
Announcements every week
Repeat, repeat, repeat

Tracking students work
Orientation video on course
Course calendar-objectives-dates, etc.
Map out the semester - course calendar
Meet with students in office
Phone calls

Publisher power point

YouTube
Publisher content/animations

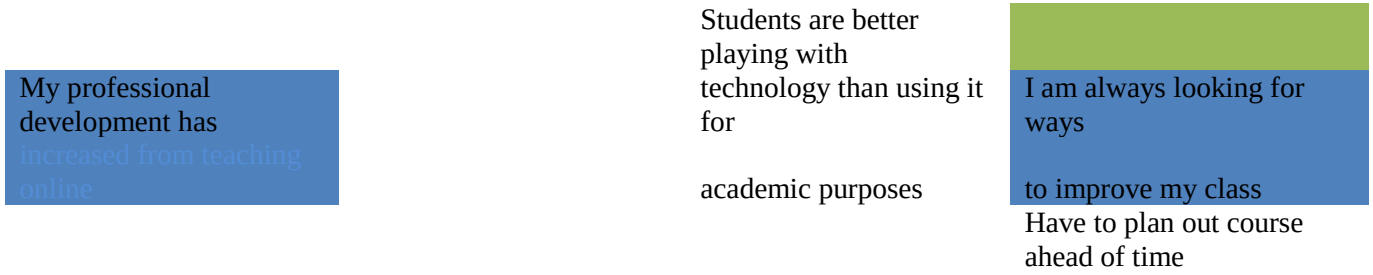
Course Design/Framework	Course Design/Framework	Course Design/Framework	Course Design/Framework	Course Design/Framework
Content, assignment, DB	Weekly format	Course menu in Bb	Feeling of home	Different class levels are designed differently
Syllabus containing description of assignments, dates, and times	Repetition of format--LMS-Syllabus	Give instructions for accessing materials	Cartoon mascot	Chapter by Chapter or Unit
Use of calendar feature to remind students	Predictable structure--feedback positive	in the DB	Consistent, systematic structure	Consistency
Announcements-LM-Assign-DB	LM, Assignments, DB, Midterm, Final	Weekly format	each week	Roadmap
Continuity helps students	Control weekly content	Three postings in DB	Mirrored in syllabus, calendar, and LMS	Same type of activities each week
Hodgepodge of content is confusing	I can change content if it is wk-to-wk	No late work accepted	Color code each section of the course	
to students	Can look back but, not forward at content	Control weekly content		
Weekly content	Banner, pictures, color--inviting	Course builds so encouraged not to		
Keep it simple	Pictures to make students feel connected	jump ahead		
Streamline the course		Final project is given in advance		
		Used a formal calendar for students		
		Calendar is also in syllabus		
		Revisit using calendar		
		Links are updated so weeks are not		
		shown ahead of time		
		Students find links and add them		

		Feedback from students about links on course evaluation- positive		
Technological Tools	**Technological Tools**	**Technological Tools**	**Technological Tools**	**Technological Tools**
Apps for mobile devices	Voice in ppts	Offer a variety of learning materials	Narrated power points	Narrated power points
Publisher content- electronic labs	Recorded webinars	YouTube	Embedding videos	Links
Don't need to reinvent the wheel	Twitter - post articles for students	Article links	Power Point Mix	Animations
Power Point Presentations	Twitter - see another part of instructor	Case studies	Near Pod	Material is dry--make more lively
	Share additional information	Power points	Active power points	YouTube
		Visuals in course - color, graphics, pictures	PowToon	
			Slide share	
			Ted Talks - graphics in background	

Strategies Most Engages	**Strategies Most Engages**	**Strategies Most Engages**	**Strategies Most Engages**	**Strategies Most Engages**
Extensive feedback	Provide choice of topics in DB	Feedback - want students to know I am	Relevant up to date materials	Engagement is hard
Phone conversations	Match online with F2F	actively involved		DB forums

Instructor-student interaction	Instructor presence if most important	I am present in the course	Students vote on assignments	Read articles, watch videos - DB
Be there	Instructor is most invested and committed	Colors for behavioral therapy	Summarize article - discuss in DB	Fun topics that are current
Student-to-student is less important	Instructor is prepared	Beginning DB -- getting to know each other	Feedback using word comments	Interesting case studies
Buy in for group work--make it real	Relying on the feedback I have received	Making students comfortable	Take pieces of writing and place in	Must respond to 2 classmates in DB
Real life, relevant content	Flipped - maybe course design is imp	Creating habits	power points for class review	I do not post in DB unless needed
		Getting back to them even on weekends	Quizzes get grade and feedback	I monitor DB
			Voice tells students you are there	I do not want to interrupt or
			DB primary tool for interaction	steer them in a direction
			Compliment their respectfulness	Tailor course to different
			Instructor Presence and Design	learning styles -- age related
			Interacting with each other	Interaction - sense of belongingness
			Be enthusiastic	I try to be present
			Word alone will not engage students	I don't like to interfere
			Choosing content that is relevant	Bonding with other students is important
			Choosing content that makes them think	Mastery teaching with testing
			Choosing content that can be fun	Timed and questions are always different

Extensive feedback	Provide choice of topics in DB	Feedback - want students to know I am	Relevant up to date materials	Engagement is hard
Additional Ideas/Comments	**Additional Ideas/Comments**	**Additional Ideas/Comments**	**Additional Ideas/Comments**	**Additional Ideas/Comments**
Plan class ahead of time. Make changes following semester	Teaching a diverse group of students--age, careers, etc.	More personal in F2F class	One of the first instructors to teach at this institution	Don't have access to other online courses--do not know what other courses look like
Leave DB for current events	Students take online for convenience	Can't make it as engaging as a F2F	Skeptical at first-love teaching online now	Feedback from students tell me they like my structure
Student will not want to take a course with unremoved body	Students have asked for more voice commentaries on slides	Have gotten good suggestions from students in course evaluations	Not the immediacy in an online course--but certainly engagement	Required course-few fail/drop
Feedback tells me they are satisfied	It's important to learn from colleagues new strategies and ideas	The interview has helped me to think about things I might want to incorporate Into my class.	Have had students take up to three online courses with me--like my style	More committed students in online
Class evaluations	Staying current with online learning	I want to read your findings	Hard to keep up with new technology	More self-directed online
	Misconceptions about online learning		Go to conferences	More interactive, better success
	Spark creativity within yourself as an online instructor		Anecdotally and through course evaluations--students seem satisfied	Online allows students to study when it's a time for most optimum learning
	Online teaching has enhanced my F2F teaching -try to find different ways to teach		Want students to know we are all	Students are more open in online notions about each other


My professional development has increased from teaching online
Students are better playing with technology than using it for academic purposes
I am always looking for ways to improve my class
Have to plan out course ahead of time

Appendix K: Stage 2, Interview Data Analysis—Mind Mapping

In what ways do you think you foster students' sense of belonging within your online course?	
Please describe the types of communication tools you have used in your online course that you perceive lead to student engagement and student satisfaction.	
Please share with me some of the course designs or frameworks you have used in your course while using the learning management system. What design or structures have you found best engages online students and has led to student satisfaction?	
Have you used technological tools besides the learning management system tools to engage with your students? If so, what kinds of technological tools have you used that you perceived successfully engaged your students?	
In your opinion, what engagement strategies have you found most encourages online student satisfaction and success (prompt, if needed: interactions, social presence, and instructional design)? Explain.	
Are there any additional ideas that you would be willing to share with me about how you design and deliver your online course(s) that lead to student satisfaction and success?	

Appendix L: Research Questions, Mind Maps, and Themes

	Survey	Interviews	Documents	Survey	Interviews	Themes
	(1)How many years have you been teaching online at the local site?					
Activities, Assignments, and Technology	(2) From your experience with teaching online students, describe some course activities and/or assignments you have found to successfully engage your online students.	(4)Have you used technological tools besides the learning management system tools to engage with your students? If so, what kinds of technological tools have you used that you perceived successfully engaged your students	(P10) Real Life Current – Sports Injuries (P1) Music (Fun)	DB	Narrated PPT YouTube Groups Links	Creating Engaging Content
Interaction And Presence	(3)What instructional practices do you use to support, assist, and provide students with an opportunity to interact with you, fellow students, with course content and with technology in your online course?	(5)In your opinion, what engagement strategies have you found most encourages online student satisfaction and success (prompt, if needed: interactions, social presence, and instructional design)? Explain	(P4) – Real Life Collaboration	Links DB	Be present Student interaction Autonomy	Providing Instructor Presence
Presence Instructor Presence Sense of Belonging	(4)What instructional practices have you found that work best in creating a sense of presence or intimacy in your online classroom? Please describe ways that you may have constructed your own presence in the online classroom, student presence, and/or content presence in the online classroom.	(1)In what ways do you think you foster students' sense of belonging within your online course?	(P1)DB] Welcome – Introduced instructor (P9)DB – Using Student's Name (P4)DB Welcome	Supportive Language Feedback Audio Graphics Be present Student interaction Autonomy	personality feedback communication personalize	Building a Humanizing Learning Environment

Course Design	(5) In what ways have you designed the structure of your online course that you perceive fosters best practices that lead to student engagement in your online classroom?	(3)Please share with me some of the course designs or frameworks you have used in your course while using the learning management system. What design or structures have you found best engages online students and has led to student satisfaction?	(DP) First Week Orientation (BM) Graphics & Real Life			Maintaining a Consistent Course Design
Communication Tools		(2)Please describe the types of communication tools you have used in your online course that you perceive lead to student engagement and student satisfaction	(P2)DB – Instruction Clarification (Positive Reinforcement) (P9)DB-Wrap-up; Graphics			Estab;osjomg Effective Communication
Most Important Strategy Instructor Presence		(5)In your opinion, what engagement strategies have you found most encourages online student satisfaction and success (prompt, if needed: interactions, social presence, and instructional design)? Explain				Providing Instructor Presence
Additional Comments	(6)Please provide any additional comments you would be willing to share about student engagement strategies you incorporate in your online courses.	(6)Are there any additional ideas that you would be willing to share with me about how you design and deliver your online course(s) that lead to student satisfaction and success?