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A Guest Editorial from Our Provost and CAO

It gives me great pleasure to write this guest editorial for the Fall 2022 issue of Phoenix Scholar. It is a special issue dedicated to showcasing the fine work being done at University of Phoenix, with a singular focus on being the preeminent university serving working adults. The articles in this journal span research conducted by our faculty, scholars, and deans, but also theory-based research that drives our administrative units to continuously improve.

The research pieces collected for this special issue of Phoenix Scholar represent just a sample of the innovation I am fortunate to witness daily at a university that has emerged from the days of COVID-19 stronger than it entered. While many institutions sought to survive, University of Phoenix has thrived. As Vice Provost Savron and Dean, Dr. Eve Billings note in their piece, institutions of higher education must leverage data and act with urgency if they are to transform themselves to meet the rapidly changing needs of students. They describe University of Phoenix as a place that, knowing its students and the value they place on the practicality of education, has emerged from COVID-19 with nearly all our programs revised, skills-tagged, and ready for use by students, whose learning can now be recognized by the digital badges they can earn.

This issue also highlights studies we conducted to determine the impact of tutoring provided to doctoral students, changes we made to field study components of our programs during COVID-19, efforts we made to increase faculty engagement in the vital area of student learning assessment, and a study to measure our efforts aimed at developing empathy in graduate students in our Master of Health Administration program. And this Phoenix Scholar contains even more than those I have mentioned here: 17 articles that leave one wondering "How can all of this be happening at a single institution?" It can, and it is! This special issue of Phoenix Scholar gives us an opportunity to share some of our stories with the world while demonstrating that a singular focus on students can in fact inform and drive all efforts across an entire institution. It is with great pride we share this scholarship.

We Rise!

John T. Woods, Ph.D.
Provost and Chief Academic Officer

A Note from Dean Eve Krahe-Billings

This edition is the first of its kind for the Scholar: a compilation of work from departments across our university that showcases the academic, DEIB, and faculty development enterprise here at the University of Phoenix. Historically the Phoenix Scholar has been a publication of the College of Doctoral Studies; we are so glad for the invite to join the conversation. In the following pages you will be treated to the established, literature-based work of higher ed as well as innovations in best practice and new spins on tried-and-true methodologies here at the Institution.

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Student Success in an Online Practitioner-Oriented Doctoral Program

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Online education has become an integral part of higher education in the United States. There is a higher demand for online doctoral programs ever than before (Byrd, 2016; Fuller et al., 2014; Massyn, 2021). However, the attrition rate and the extended length of degree completion are referred to as the two major challenges in doctoral programs (Johnson-Motoyama et al., 2014; Lake et al., 2018; Radford et al., 2015). The average length of completing doctoral programs has steadily increased (Gardner, 2012; Massyn, 2021; Sverdlik et al., 2018). Studies reported lower students' retention and achievements in online programs as compared to face-to-face programs (Allen & Seaman 2011, 2013; Bawa, 2016). Particularly, non-traditional adult students in online doctoral programs have a low retention rate. Nontraditional students are students who meet one of the qualities of delayed enrollment into post-secondary education, attends part-time, works full time, are financially independent, has dependent other than a spouse, is single parent,

or does not have a high school diploma (completed high school with a GED) (NCES, 2021). Almost 75% of higher education students are nontraditional (NCES, 2020). Such a high percentage of nontraditional students and demand for online education emphasize the importance of exploring contributing factors to nontraditional student success in online programs.

Online practitioner doctoral programs provide opportunities for adult learners to continue their education and advance their professional lives. Identifying factors for enhancing student success in these programs directly contribute to the advancement of adult learners' continuing education. The following questions guided the present study.

1. What is the nature of student success in an online doctoral program based on doctoral alumni, faculty, and mid-high administrators' perspectives?

2. What are the contributing factors for

enhancing student success in an online doctoral program?

3. To what extent do students' grittiness, as measured by the Grit scale, have a statistically significant relationship with their success, as measured by program completion length, in an online practitioner-oriented doctoral program?

4. To what extent do students' personality traits, as measured by the Big Five test, have a statistically significant relationship with their success, as measured by program completion length, in an online practitioner-oriented doctoral program?

Method

A mixed method with a concurrent triangulation design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011) was used to answer the research questions. Concurrent mixed methods designs are exemplified by research that collects both qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously and progresses through data analysis jointly. The first research strand, a qualitative component, consisted of a survey with open-ended questions with recent alumni, faculty who mentor dissertations, and administrators within the doctoral programs at the target university. After surveys were collected, participants who indicated a willingness to be interviewed were solicited for interviews to explore their responses in more depth and compare interview responses to emergent themes found within the qualitative survey questions. Data from the first strand were targeted at the qualitative RQ1 and RQ2.

The second strand of research, a quantitative component, consisted of an analysis of the university's doctoral faculty and alumni data including faculty endorsement level (scholarly engagement measured by the number of publications and presentations) and alumni reported time to completion. The quantitative strand consisted of the use of two assessments (the Big Five personality test and the Grit test) completed, along with the survey, by alumni (the Big Five personality and Grit) and faculty (Grit only) of the doctoral programs. A correlation design was used to analyze data in the quantitative phase. The second strand was targeted at the quantitative RQ3 and RQ4. A total of 136 individuals completed the study: 77 alumni, 6 alumni, and faculty, 51 faculty,

and 2 administrators. 136 individuals completed the qualitative open-ended surveys, 132 completed the Grit, and 43 (alumni only) completed the Big Five personality.

Results and Conclusion

The present concurrent triangulation mixed method study generated a copious amount of data. However, it is common to bring together the strands of mixed method research at some point in a mixed methods study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). In the present study, the authors focus on the synthesis at the Results and Conclusion phase. As a result of combining quantitative and qualitative findings, the following conclusions are made.

- Some misalignments between how alumni view student success and how faculty view student success, but also much agreement

- The nature of student success from the alumni's view is mainly completion/matriculation through the program and career/professional advancement. While faculty refers to the completion of the program and administrators as completion and good grades as the key nature of student success.

- Regarding the student characteristics contributing to student success, the alumni reported more internal characteristics such as motivation, perseverance, and grit while the faculty focused more on following directions/feedback, skills, and having an open yet disciplined mind

- The alumni with a higher level of grittiness completed their doctoral programs faster with a statistically significant correlation. The more Grit one has (especially 'hard worker' 'stick-with-it' 'diligent' and 'finish everything'), the less time to doctoral completion

- The alumni's personality traits were not correlated to their doctoral completion length

- The alumni extraversion was associated with an increased likelihood of landing a career different from the doctoral program

- Misalignment during the program between program and career is likely to increase the time to completion

- Focus of faculty was on skills/acceptance of feedback, while the focus of alumni was on the necessity of Grit
- Career application/advancement was often overlooked by faculty, but it was more important to alumni
- Faculty more focused on matriculation/graduation/completion
- Both view faculty as important guide/mentor and motivator/supporter
- Alumni also emphasized faculty expertise, but faculty often failed to mention it
- The faculty scholarly engagement correlations were within the small strength correlation with the number of students who graduated
- Coursework viewed as minimally contributing to success; more focus on the faculty-student relationship, skill building, and especially student internal characteristics
- Program structure is often viewed as neutral or against student success, unless flexible
- The alumni completed their doctoral programs faster when there was more alignment between the program and their industry.
- Alignment of the doctoral program with industry helped the graduates working in their field after graduation.

The final four bullet points are particularly poignant as they confirm prior research reported by Butler (2014) who used the achievement goal model to study teacher motivations to teach and found that relational achievement goals and mastery achievement goals were both predictive of student success. Butler's (2014) research highlights our own, in that our participants identified relational achievement goals (viewing faculty as a mentor, guide, and motivator/supporter) and mastery achievement goals (faculty expertise) as key to student success, more so than program structure or course structure. In this sense, the achievement goal model, with both relational achievement goals and mastery achievement goals present, in our study, appears to be related to (a) increased student success and (b) higher levels of persistence and determination to complete (or, in other words, Grit). Thus, the theoretical implications are that Grit may be in itself directly related to successful utilization of relational and mastery achievement goals.

However, the missing component as demonstrated by this study remains the internal component labeled Grit based on the work of Duckworth and her team (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009). Even with high relational and mastery achievement goals on the part of the instructor will not cause a student to matriculate unless the student herself exemplifies determination, persistence, a sense of self-efficacy, and willingness to be transformed (in skill set and cognitive abilities) by the content and relationship with the faculty member. This finding is indicated by faculty emphasizing skill development (mastery achievement) and acceptance of feedback (relational achievement), while alumni emphasized the necessity of Grit. Even with Grit, however, a program must also be aligned with the trajectory of the student. If not, that misalignment, and lack of direct career application, increase the time to completion. Meanwhile, a supportive programmatic context (the green arrow in Figure 1) facilitates student success while an overly rigid programmatic structure (the red arrow in Figure 1) deters student success.

Figure 1 | Model for Student Success in Online Doctoral Programs.

This study aimed to better understand the nature and contributing factors of nontraditional student success in online doctoral programs, and in so doing offer school and program administrators information on how to improve the percentage of doctoral students who 'succeed' in a program. The withdrawal or failure of doctoral students within graduate programs constitutes a large waste of resources for programs across the globe.

The findings indicated that the top indicators of student success are completion of the program and

professional advancement which can be achieved through the enhancement of (a) personal qualities such as grit, (b) program qualities, (c) relationship with faculty, (d) soft, technical, and social skills acquisition such as time management, research, and writing skills, critical thinking, and ability to implement feedback, and (e) social supports such as family and school support, and a healthy balance of social and academic activities. These clarifications of the nature of student success fill the gap in the literature regarding the deeper exploration of the nature of doctoral student success as discussed by previous studies (Lee, 2020; York et al., 2015).

Furthermore, the results of this study identified and expanded a model upon Kebritchi et al. (2017) online education and Butler's (2014) achievement goal models by including an understanding of the value of student Grit, the value of program-student goal alignment, and the impact of the broader context of a supportive, flexible doctoral program structure. Bringing the components together within a supportive program structure allows for optimal doctoral student success. These results contribute to the body of knowledge related to nontraditional student success in online doctoral programs. Administrators and faculty may incorporate the current study findings to further enhance doctoral programs for nontraditional students. The findings inform adult learners about the required skills for continuing their education in doctoral programs successfully.

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Higher Ed Before and After COVID - the Unique Immunity of University of Phoenix

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When talking recent trends in higher ed, many in the sector quickly go to what could be considered two divergent eras of existence: BC (before COVID-19) and AC (after COVID-19). According to PwC and others in what are considered the Big Five consulting firms, initially the difference in these two eras was primarily digital – i.e. how much of an institution's existence could (or did) go online during the pandemic and the degree of agility inherent in that move.

Digging into the current literature, however, we know that there were troubled spots in higher ed well before COVID and we find a more nuanced discussion about the way forward for higher ed (Friedman, S. Hurley, T., Fishman, T., & Fritz, P., 2022).

Unsurprisingly, higher ed itself says one thing and those looking at the higher ed market from outside say another. Simply skim the top headlines in The Chronicle of Higher Education to see the incredible juxtaposition: Tenure without teeth! Shrieks one headline while another laments the massive construction projects of public institutions in light of the need to shrink campus footprints and a third details the financial morass that is college sports. Still another worries whether online conferences will usurp the rich in-person events of the past.

Outside of higher ed looking in, the word "transformation" makes frequent appearance. Of course, there is much coattail-riding in the higher ed consultancy business, with cardboard-and-frosting websites and lots of trendy words used to ensure a download of this or that report to spirit away an email address.

But, when it comes to trusted trend observers like the Big Five, the context of this transformation is carefully laid out – and it is decidedly corporate-sounding. NB: A discussion of neoliberalism and widespread fear of corporatization of higher education at the turn of the 21st century and shortly after isn't the scope of this piece; this anxiety over the impending loss of the mission of the academy has been present for approximately 30 years. Acknowledging this worry, there is a delicate balance: we can't serve students and the mission of the academy if we can't keep the lights on and doors open.

Returning to the present, from McKinsey's (2021) suggestion that higher ed institutions "establish a data-driven organizational baseline" and "create a sense of urgency" to the importance of a board of trustees who are well-grounded in higher ed trends, those outside higher ed are encouraging a more trend-savvy, corporate focus on how institutions are run.

The University of Phoenix is no stranger to this juxtaposition and has balanced the rigors of academe with a corporate culture for several decades. The institution is "doubling down" on this unique positioning as the saturated higher ed market continues to grow, seamless and eye-catching online ed is table stakes, differentiation is increasingly difficult, and there are less prospective students across the sector overall (National Student Clearinghouse, 2022).

Focusing simultaneously on the centrality of its academic offerings and strong faculty culture while maintaining the agility of its supporting corporate

structure, the University is strategically positioned to succeed.

Aligned with McKinsey's guidance to focus on data, the University knows a lot about its students and continues to refine data strategies to uncover more. Approximately 60% of the University's students are first generation college students, and on average 36 years of age (University of Phoenix Facts at a Glance, 2022). Eighty-percent report they are employed and 63% have dependents at home (University of Phoenix Facts at a Glance, 2022). The University recognizes these students have unique needs related to academic offerings and support during their studies.

Although a smaller pool of prospective higher education students exists, the University is poised to maintain immunity to many of the other issues that plague higher education in this post-COVID world. The University has undertaken a constellation of innovative academic initiatives that are driving its continued transformation. Below are two of the flagship projects.

Skills Tagging and Digital Credentialing to Close the Skills Gap

Aligned with the call by PwC (2021), the World Economic Forum (2022, 2020), and others to close the skills gap, the University has implemented skills tagging and digital credentialing enterprise-wide to empower UOPX students, UOPX faculty and individuals in our professional development programs to Career with Confidence™.

Skill identification is guided by programs' existing and approved Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) codes, Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes, Lightcast labor analytics, programmatic accrediting bodies, faculty councils, industry advisory boards, and discipline-specific professional organizations. Skills tagging occurs at the most fundamental parts of the curriculum, is aligned directly to student learning outcomes, and is demonstrated through authentic assignments with dedicated analytic rubrics for scoring. Learners see their attained skills populate real-time on the University's proprietary skills dashboard, motivated to continue on with an understanding of what they're learning and why it ties to their future.

Digital badges, awarding recognition to a learner

based on some combination of existing programmatic or professional development content, is a common, market-competitive practice across higher education. The University of Phoenix has partnered with higher ed vendor Credly to award badges and support our badging infrastructure. As of last month, the University had awarded twenty- three thousand badges across our academic programs, faculty development workshops, and professional development courses. While badges are not awarded for every skill across offerings, specific skills are identified as appropriate to a badge based on academic vision and input from programs' industry advisory boards, faculty training best practice, and professional development benchmarking.

Curriculum 2.0

Building on the skills framework, the university undertook the visioning and execution of a new design framework stretching across curriculum, course experience, faculty engagement, and phoenix.edu content. The University has always focused on career relevance and the socialization of students to the realities of higher education – in this new vision, the university was even more deliberate in the design and messaging of this focus for students and faculty.

Listening to trends within and outside higher education, the University took PwC's (2021) advice that universities "reimagine" the way they support student learning, with a focus on a differentiated academic experience aligned to skills and the expectations of a primarily digital-native audience.

Academic, instructional design, assessment, and student services teams were mobilized simultaneously, brought into the vision, and helped shape it from the outset. Teams struck a delicate balance between established best practice in design and dissemination of curriculum as well as emerging research on skills tagged curriculum and authentic assessment design.

Even the most granular aspects of course design and faculty engagement were examined – how do we ensure everything is "one click away"? What does a student-centric naming convention for assignments look like? Can we refresh our rubrics so that they help students and faculty navigate a course and deliverables within this new vision? How do we empower faculty to even more deeply connect the program to a learner's current or desired career using the faculty's real-world

experience? How do we re-design faculty evaluation frameworks to reflect the vision? Work is underway across programs and faculty are mobilized and energized to integrate the new vision into the way they teach.
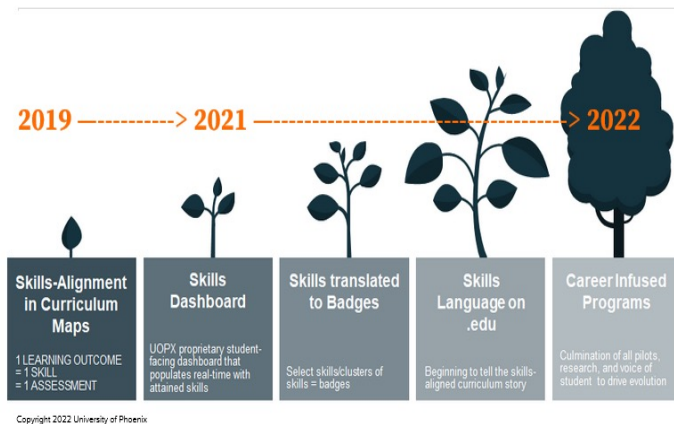
Figure 1 | UOPX Skills evolution timeline.

In sum, through the initiatives highlighted above and many others, the University has evidenced its continued strategic positioning in the saturated higher education market and its immunity to some aspects of the higher ed downturn. Striking a balance between the mission of the academy and the realities of a corporate support model that helps to keep the lights on, the University has demonstrated its simultaneous commitment to its students, its faculty, the larger community of higher education, and partners across industry seeking a solution to the widening skills gap.

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Increasing Online Student Engagement and Retention through Interactive Video Lectures

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Active engagement in learning materials is critical to student success and retention in online higher education. Current online learning materials at the University of Phoenix (UOPX) are text-heavy and lack a deliberate engagement component. It is also not possible to determine if students are engaging with required reading materials. The use of interactive video, micro lectures to supplement reading content as assignments worth a nominal number of points, may help improve student outcomes. Interactivity within the lectures is achieved through brief pauses where students answer knowledge check questions. This paper examines the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) of an interactive video initiative with the goal of increasing student engagement in the learning materials and improving retention at UOPX.

Intervention and Implementation

In April – June of 2019, a pilot was conducted to evaluate the effects of interactive video on student engagement and retention. Control and treatment groups were created for Criminal Procedure, a five-week online course. The control group was exposed to text-heavy lecture material while the treatment group was exposed to lectures with interactive video. Results of this pilot were promising; engagement across the ten interactive videos was sustained (between 69% and 79% completion) throughout the course and the withdraw rate of the treatment group was 2.5% lower than the control group. Lastly, the total number of students earning a final grade of C or better was 7% higher with the treatment group compared to the control.

Following these results, interactive video was fully implemented within four different five-week general education courses that appear early within the undergraduate student course sequence to observe influences upon KPIs on a wider scale: Critical Thinking in Everyday Life, Critical Reading and Composition, Rhetoric and Research, and American National Government. A year over year analysis was performed to test for differences between pre and post implementation. Changes to the curricular approach and delivery of these courses were limited to isolate the impact of interactive video. The time frames of the

months included in the analysis were kept as close as possible to control for seasonality.

Findings

Two-sample z-tests were conducted to compare for differences between Pre-Interactive Video and Interactive Video groups in final grade, withdraw rate (W), fail rate (F), and pass rate (P). Results of the analyses are displayed in the tables below. All differentials noted with an asterisk (*) and in bold were statistically significant with at least 95% confidence.

	Aggregate Results				
	N	Final Grade	W	F	P
Pre-Interactive Video	44420	73.01%	14.78%	7.76%	77.46%
Interactive Video	42352	77.09%	12.53%	7.21%	80.42%
Differential	n/a	**4.08%***	**-2.25%***	**-0.55%***	**2.96%***

	Critical Thinking in Everyday Life					
	Date Range	N	Final Grade	W	F	P
Pre-Interactive Video	2/28/19 - 1/14/20	15729	77.52%	11.27%	5.87%	82.86%
Interactive Video	2/26/20 - 1/12/21	14680	82.30%	8.45%	5.00%	86.52%
Differential	n/a	n/a	**4.78%***	**-2.82%***	**-0.87%***	**3.66%***
Notes	Course changes during this timeframe: 3/10/20 - Revised assignment instructions and replaced fallacy multimedia.					

	Critical Reading and Composition					
	Date Range	N	Final Grade	W	F	P
Pre-Interactive Video	7/9/19 - 1/14/20	12604	72.13%	14.84%	8.59%	76.56%
Interactive Video	7/7/20 - 1/12/21	12064	76.74%	12.34%	8.05%	79.53%
Differential	n/a	n/a	**4.61%***	**-2.50%***	-0.54%	**2.97%***
Notes	Course changes during this timeframe: 8/14/19 - New textbook introduced, upgraded writing assignments, journaling exercises, and a writing-skills inventory were added. 11/13/20 - Points added to interactive videos.					

	Rhetoric and Research					
	Date Range	N	Final Grade	W	F	P
Pre-Interactive Video	7/9/19 - 1/14/20	12485	68.72%	18.93%	9.24%	71.83%
Interactive Video	7/7/20 - 1/12/21	12472	72.12%	16.78%	8.92%	74.20%
Differential	n/a	n/a	**3.40%***	**-2.15%***	-0.32%	**2.37%***
Notes	Course changes during this timeframe: 8/14/19 - New textbook introduced. 11/13/20 - Points added to interactive videos.					

	American National Government					
	Date Range	N	Final Grade	W	F	P
Pre-Interactive Video	4/30/19 - 1/14/20	3603	71.21%	15.51%	7.91%	76.55%
Interactive Video	11/24/20 - 1/12/21	3137	73.84%	12.27%	7.19%	80.08%
Differential	n/a	n/a	**2.63%***	**-3.24%***	-0.72%	**3.53%***
Notes	Date range of pre-interactive video was not a direct year-over-year comparison of interactive video for analysis, but results still look promising and mirror the other 3 courses. Interactive video group also had new PlayPosit assignments, OER and University Library readings instead of OpenStax book in pre-video, and updated assignments.					

Next Steps

Retention KPIs in this study significantly improved through the use of interactive video, which suggests it may improve student engagement and successful course completion. However, there are a number of limitations that should be addressed in future studies. Pre/post analyses of interactive video impact on KPIs should continue to be replicated to increase confidence in its effect. Additionally, interactive video should be tested across different demographics including program-specific courses, graduate programs, and at other institutions. The full implementation of interactive video in this study was limited to entry-level undergraduate education courses. While the initial pilot study was in a program-specific course, the sample size was very small (approximately 100 students) compared to the full implementation. Further, student retention is lowest at the beginning of a student's academic life cycle. Since the courses in this study were some of the first students would take, it is possible the positive effects of interactive video may be diminished for more seasoned students who are either deeper in their programs of study or continuing their education at the graduate level as these courses will generally boast higher baseline retention rates. Subsequent research in these areas continue to elucidate the reach of interactive video and its positive effects.
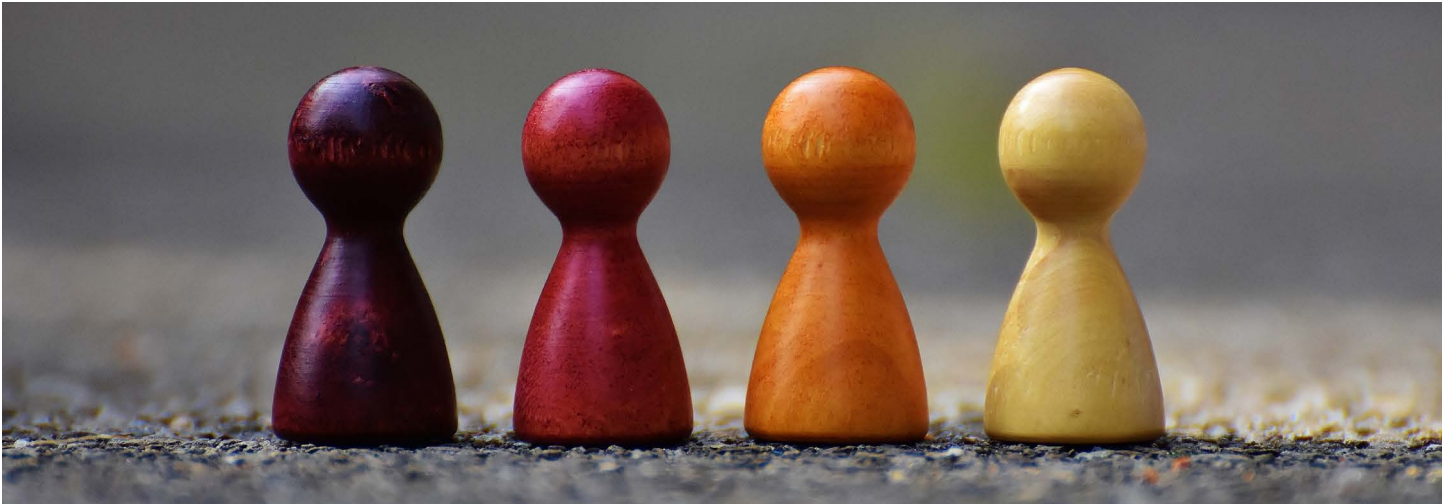
Developing Inclusive Communities with Intention and Belonging

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Office of Educational Equity
University of Phoenix

In January of 2020, the Office of Educational Equity (OEE) at University of Phoenix began developing a strategic plan to align its objectives with the purpose and vision of the university. Collecting data to comprehend how to address the needs of the student population was a necessary step in the creation of this strategy. As a result, the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) student survey was administered to assess their experiences on various dimensions, including those related to diversity. The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) student survey was conducted to assess their experiences on various dimensions, including those of diversity, equity, and inclusion (Assessment and Institutional Research, & Office of Educational Equity, 2020).

With a survey sample size of 34,518 students and a 9.8% response rate, results revealed the following:

- 61.5% of students state that participating in university organizations and/or events contribute to their sense of belonging.

- 86.4% state that it is important that faculty are sensitive to the needs and perspectives of diverse groups.

- 86.7% state that it is important that university staff are sensitive to the needs and perspectives of diverse groups.

As a result of these findings and the tragic events of 2020, OEE recognized an increased need to examine how the COVID-19 pandemic, social injustices, and limitations to access would impact students, staff, and faculty. With nearly 60% of students identifying as Black, Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) it was imperative to design programming that addresses the human need for belonging by integrating social

practices that highlight the intersectionality among everyone.

This approach to prioritize a sense of belonging in program development is further validated by the research from a study indicating that social bonds are strengthened by a shared sense of community and the opportunity to express oneself authentically (Miño-Puigcercós, Rivera-Vargas, & Cobo Romaní, 2019).

Etienne Wenger argues social participation is the foundation to learning, as opposed to other pedagogies that assume learning is an individual process (Wenger, 2009, as cited in Masika & Jones, 2015). Furthermore, Wenger claims "Over time, the regime of competence associated with a given community of practice implies a sort of colonization of the social space: it defines what counts as competence there. For your identity, this means you have to reconcile your affiliation and accountability to multiple communities" (Farnsworth et al., 2016).

Intervention and Implementation

In late spring of 2020, OEE developed **The Inclusive Café**, a virtual community chat for faculty and staff. The intention of these conversations was to cover critical issues relating to equity and inclusion and how they show up in the classroom, workplace, and our communities. The cafe incorporates cultural and personal awareness to cultivate connection and community. This was created with an understanding that once an individual embarks on the journey of becoming more self-aware, they can take a next step towards personal development by committing to understand and acknowledge differing perspectives.

This model provides a facilitated forum for participants to assess personal values and feelings and see themselves objectively through reflection and introspection. The intentional design of The Inclusive Café has provided visibility to faculty, alumni and staff who have related expertise as well as collaboration on various programs and initiatives. Some examples include facilitating the adaptation of the 21-Day Equity Habit Building Challenge (Irving & Moore, 2014) for all faculty and staff, hosting community chats and in-depth monthly webinars focused on critical topics such as the 1619 Project (Hannah-Jones et al., 2019), an inclusive content review (curriculum), faculty training, etc.
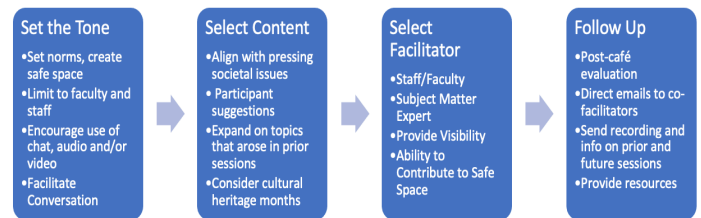
Figure 1 | Intentional steps to foster belonging.

Findings

Over 1000 staff and faculty have participated in at least one of these voluntary chats, 82% of whom have attended more than one session. The Inclusive Café was designed to provide a safe space to connect and build community, drawing on participants' diverse perspectives to explore powerful and effective responses as daily living continues to shift.

- 3254 Total attendance since June 2020
- 31% Leadership (Managerial levels and above)
- 13% Faculty
- 56% Staff (Academic counselors, enrollment, instructional designers, financial aid advisors, career services, etc.)
- 44 Inclusive Café's

Topics are designed to increase awareness and stimulate dialogue to address the human need of belonging through conversations highlighting intersectionality within the community's multi-dimensions of identity. Below is a list of some of the topics covered:

- How to consciously change the conversation during a time of uncertainty
- The Trap of Masculinity
- Taking action in spheres of influence
- What is privilege? How can I embrace my privilege to create change?
- Social consciousness in the presence of language
- Parenting during a Pandemic: Are we really all in this together?
- Still More Doors to Open: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Experiences, Challenges & Injustices

- Mental Health During a Pandemic
- Examining Intersectionality through the Higher Education Lens
- Which Box Do I Check? Exploring Hispanic Heritage and Why This Matters to Us All
- Understanding Guilt & Shame: Living Beyond Traditional Expectations
- The Silent Pandemic: Disproportionate Impacts of COVID-19 on Women
- Microaggressions: What are they?
- The 1619 Project & Our America Series
- Colorism 101: Racism v. Colorism
- Culturally Sensitive Consumerism: Spending at Year End
- Power of Social Media and Impact on BIPOC Communities

Next Steps

The intentional design and implementation of The Inclusive Café actively fosters community and belonging for faculty and staff; hence favorably improving support and engagement for students. Reiterating Etienne Wenger's social theory of learning, which claims "Participating in a playground clique or in a work team, for instance, is both a kind of action and a form of belonging. Such participation shapes not only what we do, but also who we are and how we interpret what we do" (Wenger, 2009).

The Office of Educational Equity is in the midst of constructing a version of The Inclusive Café tailored to the University's students and alumni. In direct accord with the office's objective to foster inclusive environments for continuous learning and development to increase community and belonging for all students and the faculty and staff supporting them.

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Assessing Co-curricular Learning and the Student Experience

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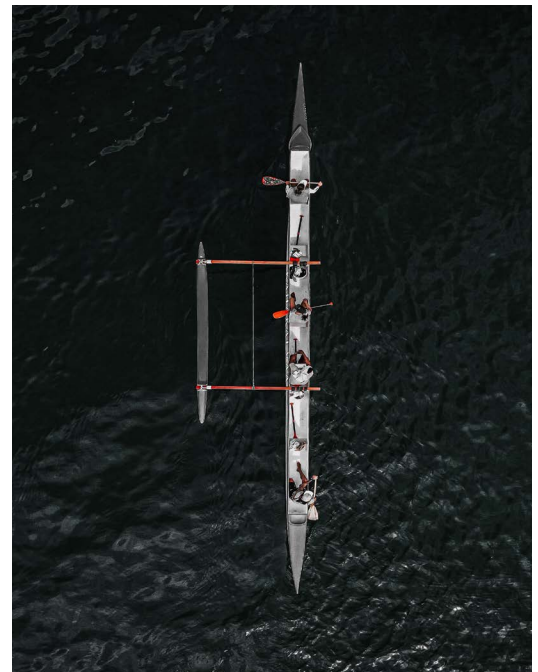
Student learning experiences occur through engagement in activities and programs in and outside of the classroom. They are referred to as curricular and co-curricular experiences. The curricular experiences are associated with the learning that occurs in the classroom – students take courses that lead to a degree. In the classroom, students are introduced to content through textbooks, videos, supplemental materials; they are given opportunities to demonstrate their learning and they are given opportunities to apply that learning by completing assignments and they receive a grade for their work.

Learning can be defined as a co-curricular experience when a student elects to engage, outside of the classroom learning environment, in an activity, service or program. Combined the two experiences, curricular and co-curricular, help to create a holistic learner and has the potential enhance the student experience.

While students obtain content knowledge in the classroom, a student's university experience is not limited to the learning that occurs in the classroom environment. Students are also learning when they interact with a variety of units throughout their academic journey. Those units include but aren't limited to

- Research Experiences
- Career Center
- Professional clubs or organizations
- Honor societies (Higher Learning Commission, 2020)

University of Phoenix defines co-curricular learning as passive or active interventions, programs, or services outside the formal academic curriculum designed to support student experience or enhance learning. These efforts exist to educate and support the development of the whole person as a life-long learner. UOPX students can elect to engage in co-curricular activities (i.e., recognized student organizations/ honor societies, professional associations, interactive study sessions, career advising and other enrichment opportunities).

Co-curricular learning impacts the overall learning experience as it has the potential to positively affect student perceptions of connectedness and belonging (Muljana & Luo, 2019; Peacock & Cowan, 2019; Redmond et al, 2018). Through involvement and engagement in co-curricular activities, Astin (1999) cited increased satisfaction with the entire college experience as well as increased rates of retention. Additionally, Bean (2015) found students are more likely to feel loyal towards their institution and persist when they feel like they are part of the campus community.

There is an abundance of literature to support the benefits that participation in co-curricular learning affords college students; however, much of that research leans towards traditional college students in traditional college settings. With that in mind, the Institutional Assessment branch of Assessment & Institutional Research seeks to better understand how student participation in co-curricular learning impacts

the learning experience and satisfaction of University of Phoenix (UOPX) online students.

Intervention and Implementation

The Institutional Assessment unit developed a curricular assessment practice which defined co-curricular learning and described the co-curricular assessment practice at University of Phoenix. The assessment practice includes a four-step process (plan, collect, analyze & report, and act & reflect) that allows administrators in student-facing units to measure students' learning experiences, and levels of satisfaction necessary to better understand their needs to enhance their co-curricular offerings and the student experience.

In tandem with the release of the enhanced assessment practice, Institutional Assessment staff administered the Academic Alumni Questionnaire, a biennial survey of University of Phoenix alumni from the previous two fiscal years (in this case, FY2020 and FY2022). The data was separated into two categories: alumni who identified as being a member of a recognized student organization (RSO) while attending UOPX, and alumni who did not identify as being a member of an RSO while attending UOPX. This disaggregation was done to reveal any underlying trends or patterns among the two groups.

Findings

When comparing the experiences of non-RSO members to RSO members, it was found that alumni who were members of RSOs during their time at UOPX:

1. Rated higher levels of skill attainment pertaining to the University Learning Goals which consist of Communication, Critical Thinking & Problem Solving, Information Utilization, and Collaboration.

2. Were more likely to identify career goals during their program.

3. Were more likely to be involved in professional development experiences post-graduation.

4. Were more likely to be involved in leadership/ community service roles post-graduation.

5. Were more likely to have formed connections

with their peers as a result of non-course-related experiences

6. Felt more connected to the UOPX alumni community.

7. Were more likely to recommend UOPX to a friend or colleague (AAQ, 2022).

Next Steps

As the AAQ findings appear to align with the existing research on co-curricular learning, retention, and student perceptions of belonging, connectedness, and engagement, there is an opportunity for the Institutional Assessment unit to further examine student perceptions in those areas through surveys and other methods as well as continue to support and collaborate with student facing units in measuring co-curricular learning experiences through the enhanced co-curricular assessment process.

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Leading Academic Innovation and Faculty Fulfillment for the Best Student Classroom Learning Outcomes: An Interview with Eve Krahe-Billings, Ph.D., EDAC, and Tahnja Wilson, MBA, MIM

Eve Krahe Billings, Ph.D., EDAC
Dean, Academic Innovation & Evaluation, University of Phoenix

Tahnja Wilson, MBA, MIM
Director of Training and Development, University of Phoenix

Interviewer: Rodney Luster, Ph.D., LPC
Senior Director of Research Strategy, Innovation and Development
Chair for the Center for Leadership Studies
College of Doctoral Studies, University of Phoenix

RODNEY LUSTER:

Thank you for participating in this special edition of our Phoenix Scholar publication where we focus on the classroom experience. I'm going to let both of you introduce yourselves. So, let's start with Eve.

EVE KRAHE-BILLINGS:

Thanks Rodney. I'm the Dean of Academic Innovation and Evaluation for the University of Phoenix, and that position is divided very distinctly into two diametrically opposed areas. The first area I focus on is spending time across higher ed looking at trends, identifying best practices, and then bringing that back to the university and facilitating conversations about the best way to integrate them to be sure they are appropriate and help support the learning outcomes.

We spend much time differentiating ourselves from a very saturated market. Our goal is to constantly improve and deliver a unique educational experience. The second area of my job I oversee is in regards

to assessment and evaluation team. Finally, I have accountability for oversight of all of the student learning at the university. This includes program-level institutional assessments. For example, surveys that we do for students and alums, and then also the systems and technology that analyze such data. So, I oversee those three areas that are manned by experts of their own.

RODNEY LUSTER:

Thank you for that introduction. You certainly have the weight of the academic world on your shoulders and we are so grateful for your service. And prior to joining the University?

EVE KRAHE-BILLINGS:

I was a tenure-track associate professor at Arizona State University and I was an academic administrator. I oversaw undergrad and grad programs in the area of health innovation. So, the intersection of health administration and entrepreneurship, if you will. I

had students in the incubators doing innovative stuff, working with small business, and then others who actually received funding. I had an NIH grant for my dissertation work, with a complexity science lens on systems thinking. Oh, on a side note, without knowing, Tahnja and I actually worked there but we didn't know each other at the time. I was in my program run through ASU Online, which belonged to Tahnja's realm. But I will save that for her to relate more on!

RODNEY LUSTER:

What a perfect segue. Tahnja, you have the floor!

TAHNJA WILSON:

I'm the Director of Faculty Training and Development, within the Faculty Engagement Department where I have served since December 2019. Our mission essentially is to assist faculty in being the best they can be so that students can be the best that they can be, always keeping our eye on the importance of learning outcomes, retention, persistence, etcetera. We accomplish this via a number of different avenues. Most of the University stakeholders know about faculty training and development, or think about us through our cadre of facilitated and self-paced trainings. When I began, we did a complete inventory of what we had, what needed to be shelved and revamped, and what we yet needed to offer.

Over the last couple of years, we've also introduced just-in-time webinars, the inclusive classroom webinars, and our pathway webinars. And, most recently, we introduced our podcast Educationally Yours (By Faculty, For Faculty). My colleague Eve has been featured and interviewed a number of times. Rodney, we will have to get you on the podcast!

RODNEY LUSTER:

Of course! Happy to anytime!

TAHNJA WILSON:

We have included Eve a few times since her role is multifaceted and she is involved in a number of key initiatives. For example, Eve participated in our June podcast on the origins of our Storytelling in Higher Education workshop podcast and she will appear again in our October podcast discussing the Course Design 2.0 initiative. Additionally, we've also revamped the Faculty Resources Center to better focus on pedagogical resources as opposed to policy and

compliance. Those resources can now be found in the Human Resources section of PhoenixView Faculty.

RODNEY LUSTER:

Thank you for that overview Tahnja. What about your background prior?

TAHNJA WILSON:

I've had several different careers in my lifetime. I have a Master's in international management (MIM), and a MBA. Directly after graduate school, I went into healthcare for several years. I worked for 13 years in that capacity and then went into K-8 education, where I obtained my K-8 elementary certification. I later joined ASU Online/ EdPlus and conducted work on special projects and initiatives. For example, a project dubbed Starbucks College Achievement Program (SCAP), which is Starbucks degree completion initiative for their employee partners and another Starbucks project focused on professional development for their US and International partners. I also worked on ASU's first MOOC program – Global Freshman Academy (now called Universal Learner Courses) and specialized in bringing science and engineering courses into the online environment.

RODNEY LUSTER:

I see. Sounds like you have had quite a hand in the education sector?

TAHNJA WILSON:

I have. It's been good. I'm glad that Eve and I are on this journey together!

EVE KRAHE-BILLINGS:

We intuitively knew how to support one another and fortunately did not have to see any heads roll! [laughing]

RODNEY LUSTER:

[laughing] That is fortunate. You know, it sounds like Eve's kind of got the pragmatic optics of innovation here and Tahnja, you're really that functional component, especially with faculty right?

TAHNJA WILSON:

That is about right! Faculty Training and Development has a lot of pragmatic innovation as well.

RODNEY LUSTER:

That said, with the competitive nature of a number of

schools these days, some appear to throw a number of programs at the wall to see what sticks. When I think of the Higher Learning Commission a few years back, I remember partaking in a meeting where we were reminding them about a myriad of programs planned over the next 10 years as most institutions must retain and grow their enrollment. So, what's on your agenda in the near future?

EVE KRAHE-BILLINGS:

Here at University of Phoenix we have placed professional skills front and center, making sure the curriculum is tagged to actual cognitive and affective skills that show up in the marketplace as verified by labor analytics data. We're focused on bridging the skills gap, a position we're taking to help our students, help industry, and continue to differentiate the university across higher ed. Putting my assessment hat on, a quick comment: what our undergrad and grad students produce in their courses, their formative and summative deliverables, are also aligned to this initiative – real world, authentic assessments that are designed by our faculty and academic leaders in collaboration with each College's industry advisory council members. Our doctoral programs are even in on the initiative – we've always offered practitioner doctorates – terminal degrees that are intended for "practitioners" - leaders in their respective fields who want to contribute in meaningful, data-driven ways in their organizations. Our doctoral programs follow the Scholar Practitioner Leader model unique to the University - students align their dissertation work with industry needs, solving problems and advancing their fields of study.

We dovetail all this with career advising and resources that support students as they first become employed, transition from one to another job, or career-change completely.

Part of the discomfort with the skills-based initiatives across some of higher ed is the perception that a skills-focused education may result in learners missing the important socialization higher ed provides – such as scholarly comportment, critical thinking. The assumption is that advocacy for learner development doesn't exist and faculty aren't empowered in a skills-based curriculum to help learners refine that sense of self.

EVE KRAHE-BILLINGS:

Addressing these worries was foundational to our

work. We were very cognizant of the balance between the crucial growth that occurs as learners function as part of a University community and the importance of bridging the skills gap; the skills tagged curriculum work we've done was underpinned by striking this balance.

With Tahnja's collaboration, we triangulated this support through faculty development. We incorporated storytelling training for faculty so they could facilitate empathetic learning environments for students that would empower them to understand themselves as products of an ecosystem - higher education and the complexities of employment and job growth – not simply I'm going to go potentially just do this kind of job. This approach went against the grain of just being taught.

RODNEY LUSTER:

This sounds very progressive, a scaffolded set of rich experience through storytelling.

TAHNJA WILSON:

Yes! However, let me add to the storytelling aspect as Eve mentioned because part of the workshop was modeling facilitation best practices for the faculty in addition to valuing everyone's story.

Often with our everyday lives, we tend to discount our own personal narratives. Students, in particular, may devalue their lived experiences, and their stories. Their stories may subconsciously say they have failed because they did not take a traditional educational route or have had challenges that have postponed certain milestones. But we were able to circumvent this by modeling the diversity of experience with our pilot faculty. Everyone has a different path with each path having value. The premise is that faculty too may not all have taken a traditional educational or career route. It was amazing to me to see the faculty go, wow, I've got a story. I'm worthy! And these are Phoenix500 faculty that were expressing this sentiment. So, imagine how powerful that is or will be for their students.

And we're already hearing anecdotally from the faculty who participated in the pilot how powerful the sharing of their stories is in class and how that has led to students grabbing onto some aspect of their story, a kernel if you will, giving them confidence to proceed with their education and build their own unique success story.

RODNEY LUSTER:

That makes sense. I know the aspects of storytelling inspire empathic listening. How were you able to find out more about testing what you did with storytelling?

TAHNJA WILSON:

One of the things that we did with this Rodney is a pre and post workshop survey of the faculty. We also surveyed the students but we're still collecting that data. It takes a little bit to follow up on longitudinally. But we asked, in the pre and post faculty survey, several questions and one of the questions concerned whether they understand the relationship between empathy and storytelling. Other questions concerned how they understood the relationship between diversity, equity, and inclusion, and belonging, how they connect the use of storytelling to career relevant education and if they were comfortable using storytelling in their teaching practice.

RODNEY LUSTER:

What I'm hearing from you with faculty is that it's really helping to build rapport between the instructor and the students in a way that effectively moves them deeper, I love it.

RODNEY LUSTER:

At the end of the day it sounds like this process helped to spark student interests, maybe helping the flow of lectures and things like that. And even probably overcoming some student resistance and anxiety. Do you guys see that in your day to day?

EVE KRAHE-BILLINGS:

We've always, as a university, connected curriculum to career relevance. What storytelling does is enlarge the capacity for faculty to facilitate and model the connection between a learner's personal narrative – their experiences and insight – the expectations of higher education, and integrate of these as something meaningful to their present job and future career journey.

RODNEY LUSTER:

Excellent! I think that's really poignant. Now, let's pivot a bit, and with regard to measuring this great vehicle of innovation Tahnja, How do you go about doing it?

TAHNJA WILSON:

Great question. Like Eve I do a lot of benchmarking.

I do a lot of higher ed and K-12 surveying. Often, K-12 moves more quickly than higher education for a variety of reasons.

So in terms of innovation, one of the things that we try to do within faculty training and development is not to have blinders on, sort of speak. To be more aware, mindful. This is the way that the University of Phoenix does it. I like to look around to see what's going on in other spaces. Then we can decide if it is relevant to our university. We're an interesting institution in that we tend to have a more structured curriculum. Faculty are encouraged to add their distinct touches to the curriculum, but they are not charged with creating the course curriculum. We free our faculty up to apply their expertise and real-world stories which enhances the learner experience by promoting faculty-student connection and further illustrating course concepts.

RODNEY LUSTER:

I'm curious, what's the most innovative thing that you've seen another teacher do? We can pivot on this to Eve as well too. I've personally seen some teachers create graphic novels in the classroom and all kinds, interesting things, but just from your perspective.

TAHNJA WILSON:

Well, again, I'm going to have to reach back to K-12 and my interest in games in education because it extends to higher ed as well. I wrote extensively for ASU Online on the use of games in the higher ed classroom and it is an innovation that I would love to bring here as well. I am also a huge fan of incorporating accepted learning science into course design and faculty practices, e.g., interleaving, spaced practice, etc.

Recent UOPX innovations include faculty use of videos, synchronous student time, storytelling as a vehicle for course personalization and career relevance, the Course Design 2.0 initiative, etc.

RODNEY LUSTER:

Whether it's pedagogic theory and its transitory potentials to various methods, or methodological approaches to teaching techniques and instructional tools, there are many people trying to figure out what works. Can you tell me, what else do you see on the horizon?

EVE KRAHE-BILLINGS:

So, this might not be popular when the tendency is to think of innovation as bright and shiny new things or

easy answers. To me, innovation isn't necessarily a new thing or a generative process toward an answer. I believe it is actually an environment that's facilitated or a way of facilitating an environment so that unexpected, new things can emerge.

And I would place my bets on an open, rigorous, heart-centric classroom environment against the best artificial intelligence (AI) or newest ed tech vendor product, any day of the week. For me it's much more a subset of strong personal characteristics that someone brings to the facilitation of an environment, whatever that is, that allows for relationship building, connection, and co-adaptation which keeps that environment rich, moving and engaging.

TAHNJA WILSON:

I call 'em the ed-tech vultures. Not a pretty term, but the focus is on "new and shiny" and not on purpose.

And because of where I was over at ASU, I was able to try a lot of the "shiny technologies". Adding "bling" to the educational proposition can be nice, but I've been at institutions where all they did was chase the latest shiny object which obscures the true purpose of what we should be trying to do in education.

We always circle back to what the facilitator does with this technology, I'm not interested unless the rationale leads to better learner learning outcomes.

The bottom line is that we all crave connection. Our students crave that connection. Connection is powerful in the human narrative and voice. People crave the power of their own narratives and for students and faculty, the power of that instructor/student narrative.

RODNEY LUSTER:

Connectivity has always been the foundation of human existence. Technology may not be able to ever completely fill that gap. Thus circling back to innovation, we end right back where we started, the importance of human connectivity, a sense of immediacy and understanding, harnessing something like relational connectivity, even in the online classroom.

Thank you both for demonstrating the type of connectivity in this interview. It's great to know that we are not just building in a linear pathway for students and faculty, but also in deeper, more meaningful ways that enhance their career skills and set them apart in today's turbulent marketplace!

EVE KRAHE-BILLINGS:

Thank you for shepherding us along Rodney! [laughing].

TAHNJA WILSON:

Most grateful to share with the Phoenix Scholar readers!

RODNEY LUSTER:

Thank you both!

Workload Efficiency

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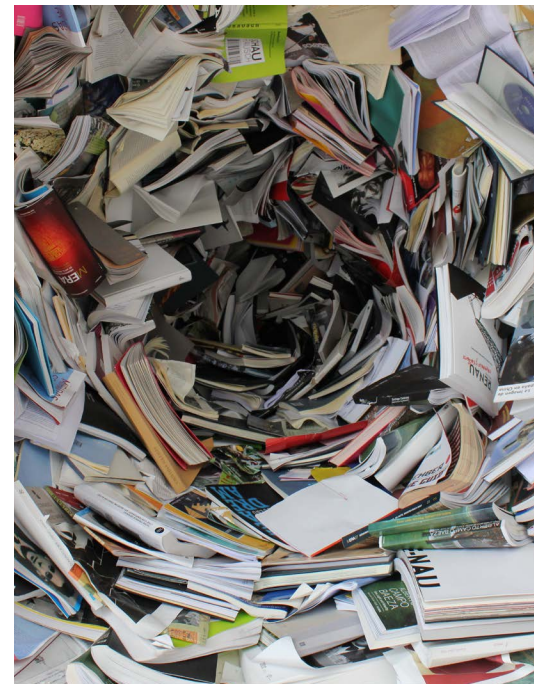
Faculty workload is a common conversation among nursing educators. This is especially true with doctoral faculty and the time spent working with students outside of the classroom or class environment on a final project within a Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program.

The DNP program at the University of Phoenix is a new program that is growing. There is a need to effectively monitor student/faculty interactions and time spent working with students as a part of assembling the final cumulative work product for the program and as a requirement for graduation.

There is a vast amount of literature available about faculty workload. While most of the evidence supports the need for a structured and transparent system that defines acceptable workload, there is little evidence that defines what this looks like and how a program or university would develop such a system (Ludwig-Beymer et al., 2022).

There are many things to consider when developing a faculty workload calculator. Perhaps this is the reason why there is no standard spreadsheet or workload calculator that would address the needs of multiple universities and programs. At the University of Phoenix, faculty teaching in the DNP program must balance teaching responsibilities, project responsibilities, administrative responsibilities, office hours, scholarship requirements, and service to the program/university. This level of engagement can make it a challenge to develop a workload calculator that can address all these requirements and provide

an accurate and compelling calculation of workload hours.

Despite the challenges, programmatically, we developed a workload calculator that addresses all the elements and requirements expected of full-time faculty in the program. Our focus was on the idea of defining productivity that is balanced, fair, and provides students with a high level of faculty engagement. The faculty workload calculator is structured with defined hours each week for administrative and scholarship work, as well as service and open office hours (see Table 1).

Assumptions
40 hours in a work week
Faculty have student-facing responsibilities
Faculty have administrative responsibilities
Session = 8 Weeks (except DNP/700)
Office Hours = 3.125 hours per week
Planning hours = 3.125 hours per week
Administrative hours = 1.875 hours per week
Scholarship hours = 1.875 hours per week

Table 1 | Assumptions

In addition, a defined number of hours are calculated into the workload for courses taught. The real challenge and perhaps the most difficult to calculate is the time full-time faculty spend with students they chair, and the time spent working to approve practice

hours, edit written work, and provide services such as advisor and scholarly guide to students. Within the context of this challenge, we developed a preliminary workload calculator that addresses the time each full-time faculty chair spends with students and broadly extends these hours over a teaching session in order to calculate workload (see Table 2).

Course	Breakdown of hours by course	Credit
Teaching	3 credit hour course – 160 worked hours (20 hours per week)	3
LOA	No Current Course – 1 hour worked	0.1
DNP/700	DNP/700 = 1.5 hour worked	0.3
DNP/701	DNP/701 = 1 hour worked	0.1
DNP/705	DNP/705 = 2 hours worked	0.3
DNP/750	DNP/750 = 6 hours worked	0.8
DNP/710	DNP/710 = 1 hour worked	0.1
DNP/715	DNP/715 = 2 hours worked	0.3
DNP/751	DNP/751 = 8 hours worked (Proposal)	1.0
DNP/725	DNP/725 = 4 hours worked (IRB/Implementation)	0.5
DNP/730	DNP/730 = 2 hours worked (implementation)	0.3
DNP/740	DNP/740 = 1 hours worked (Implementation)	0.1
DNP/752	DNP/752 = 10 hours worked (oral defense, final manuscript)	1.3

Table 2 | Faculty Workload Calculator - DNP Program

The overarching goal of this calculator is to acknowledge the role the faculty member plays in student success and providing services to our students and ensuring a balanced and fair teaching workload. Having a balanced workload for faculty demonstrates the university's commitment to its mission, values, and overall philosophy.

The faculty workload calculator takes data from across the spreadsheet to identify the total productivity of each faculty member based on the courses they are teaching, the number of students in their project chair caseload, and the fixed hours (administrative, planning, scholarship, office hours, and university service) to calculate the faculty member's percentage of productivity (See table 3).

CHAIR - TOTAL STUDENTS	18	26	0	12
COURSE ID				
PRODUCTIVE HOURS (100%)	47.75%	100.94%	25.00%	34.00%

Table 3 | Productivity

Intervention and Implementation

The initial intervention was focused on the development of an EXCEL spreadsheet that provided a rough idea of faculty workload including teaching responsibilities as the central element of the calculation. We then addressed additional responsibilities of faculty including administrative, scholarship, planning, and office hours. From there, we developed a time allowance by course for project chair interactions with assigned students. This allowance was our best guess on the number of hours project chairs were spending with students for an 8-week course session and for students that had taken a break from active course work but were still developing their project idea with their project chair (See Table 1).

The spreadsheet was then reviewed by a number of stakeholders to determine the accuracy and validity of the calculator. Once the validity of the calculator was established (within a fair assumption the calculator would measure what we needed it to measure), we began testing the tool for full accuracy.

Full-time faculty covering students as project chairs and teaching classes have been asked to record hours spent with students they are assigned to chair. At the conclusion of the data collection, we will be able to calculate the average hours spend each week with students to arrive at an accurate base for calculation (See Table 4).

Course ID	Date	Time (Min)	Course ID	Date	Time (Min)	Course ID	Date	Time (Min)
			DNP750	7/29/2022	20			
DNP750	7/26/2022	25				DNP/750	8/1/2022	15
			DNP701	7/28/2022	45			
						DNP/750	8/1/2022	15
						DNP/750	8/1/2022	15
DNP730	7/25/2022	15	DNP730	7/25/2022	15			
			DNP730	7/29/2022	70	DNP/730	8/1/2022	30
			DNP750	7/26/2022	15			

Table 4 | Data Collection

Findings

Results of the new workload calculator are still pending.

Next Steps

The next steps involve validating the accuracy of the workload calculator and from there fully implementing the calculator for a period of six months to determine final accuracy. In order to encourage faculty buy-in for the new calculator, it is important to validate the faculty's overall sense of the use of the calculator and how they feel about the workload expectations based on the tool.

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Destigmatizing the Receipt of Accommodations By Using Character Personas in a General Education Nutrition Course

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Students who qualify to receive accommodations may do better in academic situations if they receive accommodations. Students often must self-report the desire to receive an accommodation. However, students were not self-reporting at the beginning of their academic journeys to maximize the effectiveness of receiving an accommodation. In discussions with the Office of Accessibility and Disability Services, explanations for why students may delay or cease to receive accommodations included lack of student awareness of accommodation opportunities, negative student stigma associated with receipt of accommodation, and faculty awareness of processes to communicate to students. Failure to receive timely accommodations may negatively impact student persistence and course completion.

In an exploratory analysis of twelve start dates of undergraduate English composition courses in 2019, student withdrawal/fail rates were regressed on the number of student accommodation per course start date. The number of accommodation cases at course start was inversely correlated to the withdrawal rate at the end of course ($r=-0.68$, $p=0.01$). The more accommodations present at the beginning of a course start, the less students are likely to withdrawal from the course. To better support student success, it is imperative that students who are eligible to receive accommodations able to and confident in receiving

them.

This research aimed to answer the following research question: Can implementation of diverse, accommodation-eligible, character personas in a general education course decrease student stigma for receiving accommodations and improve student familiarity with how to receive an accommodation?

Intervention and Implementation

An introductory undergraduate nutrition course was selected for the context of the intervention. This course is a health and wellness course taken by about 1300 students per year of various programs. The revision team consisted of college leadership, instructional designers, faculty, and staff from the Office of Accessibility and Disability Services.

First, the revision team met to elicit the primary reasons students receive accommodations. In this exploration, the Office of Accessibility and Disability Services provided context for the quantitative metrics that were collected, identified rationale, and information about student experience and historical trends.

Second, targeted learning outcomes were developed. These included designing in-course materials that could do the following:

- Increase faculty knowledge about how to support students with accommodations

- Increase faculty empathy for students with accommodations

- Increase student familiarity with the Office of Accessibility and Disability Services

- Increase student understanding of how to inquire about or request an accommodation

- Decrease student stigma for receiving an accommodation

Third, collaboration within the revision team occurred to create characters that would be the context for content delivery within the nutrition course. Five character personas, shown in the table below, were created to represent the most common student profiles at the institution who were eligible to receive support services of accommodations.

Character	Persona
Alfonso	Alfonso is a 36-year-old schoolteacher. He lives in rural Georgia with his wife Emma and their 2 school-aged children. Alfonso was recently diagnosed with Crohn's Disease (an inflammatory bowel disease), and he has been trying to control some of the symptoms with a change to his nutrition. Alfonso has struggled with his weight in recent years, and he is hopeful that some of the changes to nutrition not only will be effective in managing his flare ups related to Crohn's Disease, but also will assist with his weight loss goals.
Evangelina	Evangelina is a 67-year-old retired nurse who is widowed. She lives alone in an apartment building for senior citizens in Northern Arizona. Her apartment building is located several miles from the local grocery store. Evangelina has very poor eyesight and she rarely drives. Her daughter, Christina (and Christina's two children) live out of town, and are not available to help Evangelina with daily activities. However, Evangelina does have a couple of neighbors who are willing to drive her to the store, doctor appointments, or other places when necessary. As a former nurse, Evangelina realizes the importance of eating nutritious meals. However, Evangelina has an extremely difficult time going to the grocery store to purchase the nutrient-dense foods she needs. She also has a hard time reading the signs in the store and locating the items she needs.
Gabriella	Gabriella is a 24-year-old student. She lives at home with her parents in Southern California. At the age of 18, she was diagnosed with type 2 diabetes. To maintain proper insulin levels, she has to be very careful about eating the right kinds of foods. Gabriella doesn't want to have to take insulin shots, so she spends a lot of time researching nutrient-dense foods. Gabriella also spends most of her day on the computer, so she doesn't get much exercise, other than an occasional short walk.
Nathan	Nathan is a 42-year-old construction worker. He lives in Boston with his wife, his 15-year-old daughter and his 10-year-old son. Nathan's son struggles with being overweight and was diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) a few years ago. Nathan was provided with an individualized education plan (IEP) to assist his son in school. One of the suggestions from the psychologist was to make some adjustments to food and physical activity to help with managing some of the symptoms that are more difficult to manage with a traditional approach. Nathan is determined to find what changes he and his family can make to their daily food intake and activity level to support everyone's overall health and wellness. In addition, Nathan's mother and father, who are in their mid- to late-60s, recently moved in with him because the rent on their small apartment doubled and they could no longer afford to live on their own. Since his parents helped support him throughout his life, Nathan is happy to take them in. Nathan is ready to start a "Health and Wellness Vision Board." He will use this vision board to help set goals, save information, and visualize his health and wellness goals. Nathan would like to add some information about obesity and ADHD and what that means to him and his family, including ways to manage food intake and activity levels to better assist his son with both issues. In addition, Nathan wants to address the nutritional needs of his pregnant wife, their soon-to-be-born baby, his teenage daughter, and his aging parents.
Rebecca	Rebecca is a 50-year-old manager in the insurance industry. She lives in New York City with her teenage daughter, Jennifer, who suffers from depression and anxiety. Rebecca's job is fast-paced and demanding. She is under constant pressure to perform and increase sales throughout her division. The stress over the recent year has taken a toll on her health and she has been struggling with high blood pressure. Her doctors are concerned that the high stress environment will continue to take a toll on her health and wellness. Rebecca is looking for ways to decrease her stress and manage her day to day, as well as help her daughter with her depression and anxiety. Rebecca is ready to start a "Health and Wellness Vision Board". She will use this vision board to help set goals, save information, and visualize her health and wellness goals. To start her board, Rebecca would like to add some information about stress, high blood pressure, anxiety, and depression, and what these issues mean to her and her daughter. She also wants to add some information about ways to decrease her stress and lower her blood pressure by eating healthier and exercising.

Character personas were embedded, authentically, into the learning environment. Following introduction of the personas and their experiences with nutrition and wellness (as aligned to the student learning outcomes in the course), students were provided formative opportunities to learn about what institutional services were available to support each of the characters and their families in their unique situations. The course was revised and prepared for full implementation beginning on a start date in February 2021.

Last, a student survey questionnaire was developed to be deployed in the first and last week of the course. Questions used a Likert scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly agree. The questionnaire was voluntary and not worth points. The following statements were included on the questionnaire:

1. As a student, I am eligible to request an accommodation for any temporary or permanent diagnosis, including medical

conditions, sensory impairments, physical limitations and/or learning disabilities.

2. I know how to request accommodations.

3. I can request accommodations at any time during my class even if it has already started.

4. Successful and respected students have been provided accommodations.

5. If I were to receive an accommodation, faculty would continue to treat me fairly.

Data was analyzed for the initial February 2021 start date.

Findings

On the February 2021 start date, 165 students were enrolled in the course. At the time of start, there were 6 accommodations in place for the sample of 165 students. As of May 2021, there were 7 accommodations in place for those students. For the sample of students enrolled in the February 2021, 20 additional referrals for accommodations were made.

Of the population of 165 students, 69 completed the questionnaire at the start of the course and 48 completed it at the end of the course. Mean student responses to all statements on the questionnaire were more favorable following the completion of the course, shown in the figure below.

Pre/Post Student Questionnaire Responses

	I am eligible....	I know how....	I can request....	Successful students have....	Faculty will treat me fairly....
Week 1 Average (N=69)	4.29	3.725	3.957	3.782	4.159
Week 5 Average (N=48)	4.375	3.96	4.245	4.143	4.51
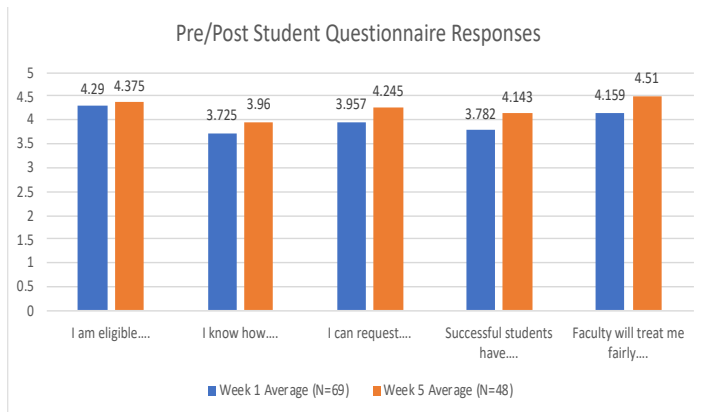
Figure 1 | Student responses improved on all items after completion of the course.

This research aimed to answer the following research question: Can implementation of diverse, accommodation-eligible, character personas in a general education course decrease student stigma for receiving accommodations and improve student familiarity with how to receive an accommodation? From the preliminary analysis, it can be concluded that the use of character personas both decreases student stigma for receiving accommodations and improves student familiarity with how to receive an accommodation. These effects were seen within the study sample. However, further analysis is needed to determine if the effect can be inferred to the population.

Next Steps

The course has been offered for multiple start dates since initial implementation. Over time, student attrition has reduced. While the questionnaire is still being deployed, additional follow up analysis has not been completed. Next steps are to complete a more robust analysis with much larger samples. Additionally, longitudinal follow up of the impact on the number of accommodations received can be compiled and assessed.

Evaluation of the Design 2.0 Initiative: An Interview with Nancy Stackhouse, Ed.D., and Jason Covert, MAEd

Nancy Stackhouse, Ed.D., M.A.
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Assessment and Institutional Research, University of Phoenix

Jason Covert, MAEd, MEd.
Learning Designer
University of Phoenix

Interviewer: Rodney Luster, Ph.D., LPC
Senior Director of Research Strategy, Innovation and Development
Chair for the Center for Leadership Studies
College of Doctoral Studies, University of Phoenix

RODNEY LUSTER:

I am happy to be joined today by two outstanding professionals, Jason Covert and Nancy Stackhouse. Welcome to this interview for the Phoenix Scholar! Based on both of your roles we really felt you could lend some great insight into the work you are doing around assessment and the course design framework. Jason and Nancy, I will simply let you both introduce yourselves and your current role in the university for our readers.

JASON COVERT:

Happy to be here, so I will begin. My name's Jason Covert. I am a Multimedia Learning Designer with the Learning Experience and Innovation team here at the university.

NANCY STACKHOUSE:

And, I am Nancy Stackhouse, an Assessment Manager with the Assessment and Institutional Research team for University of Phoenix. I work, primarily, with the College of Nursing and the College of Education.

RODNEY LUSTER:

Very good. Very good. Again, welcome to you both and thanks for taking the time to sit with me and talk about how you both are impacting the classroom experience. Nancy, let's begin with you, and what you're working on now in regards to the Design 2.0 project?

NANCY STACKHOUSE:

Yes, I am working with Jason who is heading up this evaluation project. We are working together to develop questions for faculty surveys that we will be administering along with student surveys and student interviews. We are also going to be conducting a targeted focus group with ID's (Instructional Designers). The primary purpose of the project is to comprehensively evaluate the Design 2.0 implementation process.

RODNEY LUSTER:

Okay. So, a deeper probe into this. So, if you would, could you give us the higher-level purview of this thing called Design 2.0?

NANCY STACKHOUSE:

Okay, I should let Jason go ahead and jump in here.

JASON COVERT:

So, yeah, I mean, it's kind of implied in terms of what we're doing here. We want to evaluate the effectiveness, if you will, of Design 2.0, as it is applied to the first set of courses, and in particular, we're really kind of looking at perceptions, such as perceptions of the application and its usefulness, and the effectiveness of Design 2.0 from multiple perspectives, the student perspective, the faculty perspective, and the design perspective. And, like Nancy referred to, we're going to be doing a targeted focus group with I believe six instructional designers who are working on the courses right now.

RODNEY LUSTER:

And what do you hope to accomplish from this?

JASON COVERT:

Well, we've got three very broad research questions. They are pretty self-explanatory. Like, for instance, how did students, IDs, and faculty perceive the application, usefulness, and effectiveness of Design 2.0? What was the effect of design 2.0 on student performance? And what opportunities exist to improve the effectiveness of Design 2.0? We're looking at like five overarching constructs I guess you can say, such as, skills and careers, assessments, resources, performance, and design.

RODNEY LUSTER:

Okay. Great. And Nancy, how do you, say taking the role from an outsider perspective, if we were on an elevator, convey in short more about this endeavor and what you hope to accomplish?

NANCY STACKHOUSE:

Well, we are aspiring to rise to the next level in how we can do a much better job at designing the courses we have and then, hopefully, from there, be sure they're delivered according to research-based best practices. To add just a little more clarification, the programs we are piloting and converting to Design 2.0

are the Bachelor of Science in Education/Elementary Education (BSED/E), the Bachelor of Science in Health Administration (BSHA), and the Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice Administration (BSCJA). Jason, are there four here?

JASON COVERT:

Yes. And the Master of Management (MM).

NANCY STACKHOUSE:

Right. So, we are initially doing this right now for these four programs. As an outsider and as an evaluator, I know what's really important to me is what we're going to be doing even before these pilots roll-out, and that is to pull all of the summative assessment data for the first couple of courses for each of the four programs to see where the students are in terms of academic achievement. This would demonstrate and establish a baseline of how well they did pre-Design 2.0 with the old programs and the former way of teaching.

And, after conversion to Design 2.0, which incorporates elements that we know are research-based and best practice, we will pull data again. That would address the one question that Jason was mentioning about what kind of an impact it is having, quantitatively, on the summative assessments.

My background is teaching, and I have previously taught in the College of Education at NAU (Northern Arizona University) for over 10 years. And so, I really love these aspects of project design regarding the Design 2.0 project, and I'm so excited about what we're doing there, but then, my background is also in evaluation research, which is perhaps why I am also so engaged. As an outsider coming in from NAU, I'm able to help with designing the questions for both students and faculty so that data can emerge that will help us improve.

RODNEY LUSTER:

That background sounds like it really complements this project. When you guys advance these course evaluative processes, moving them, into this kind of "pilot state," it sounds like it's a very comprehensive agenda for the stakeholders involved, right?

JASON COVERT:

Yeah. This is definitely something that we've had to look at from a "systems" perspective just because there are so many moving parts, you know, we're not just talking about communicating with

college stakeholders, but we're also looking at other {emphasized} institutional stakeholders like academics, finance, enrollment, and operations because this doesn't just impact a small department. This is instead, university wide.

RODNEY LUSTER:

Do you think it's a little bit different for University of Phoenix than say, other institutions, maybe even traditional state institutions when it comes to such design initiatives?

JASON COVERT:

Well, you know, based on my experience, generally speaking, if you're following an ADDIE—and I'm not saying we follow an ADDIE (Analyze, Design, Develop, Implement, Evaluate) model—it always ends with evaluation. And it seems like in my experience, so many initiatives are released without having the opportunity to evaluate their true effectiveness. So, it is my hope that other institutions as well are doing this, and really creating such an evaluative-rich set of measures. I kind of look at it as a form of "action research." You know, this is truly a cycle of action research that we're engaging here. What excites me is that I get to engage in this as a researcher, and based on the findings, which I'll also be involved in, we can then best determine where there might be further opportunities to explore regarding making more enhanced future improvements.

RODNEY LUSTER:

Excellent. Nancy, anything to add to that?

NANCY STACKHOUSE:

Well, I think a huge amount of work has gone into this and where we stand poised now. For instance, so much work went into the "discovery" phase necessary for putting Design 2.0 together with M.E. (Mary Elizabeth Smith, Learning Innovation Strategist) and Eve (Eve Billings, Dean of Academic Innovation and Evaluation) as well. And some of our other assessment managers on my team have been involved especially, for instance, in the design of the summative assessments in this new model. I believe quite a bit of research was done on the front-end, prior to, into understanding what other institutions are also doing. I think we're really trailblazing a course here. I feel like we're trying to do so much more to "brand" ourselves and set ourselves apart using this new Design 2.0 model.

RODNEY LUSTER:

Nice insights Nancy! I know the difficulty with such intensive projects.

JASON COVERT:

I would additionally say that we're trying to "bridge" this divide that seems to exist between curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Instructional designers work with SME's (Subject Matter Experts) on creating assessments and whatnot, but generally speaking, the Office of Assessment isn't involved in that process, or they haven't been, whereas now, you know, all of the changes we've made in terms of rubrics and assignment construction, they have also been informed by the Office of Assessment and, as well, there are the faculty assessment liaisons who are going to be working with some instructional designers to also ensure that this vision of assessment is actually implemented the way that it should be. So, it's nice to see us bridging that gap between curriculum and assessment. Now one of the things we've been talking about is how can we move it one step forward and bring in, you know, that faculty instructional component even further.

RODNEY LUSTER:

You know, as I reflect on that Jason, it seems like logically, it should have to have been an instinctive part of it, right? That those areas would be married in some way. But this sounds like it's going to be even more of a refined, sort of elegant and dialogic process between the two?

JASON COVERT:

Yes. Most definitely.

NANCY STACKHOUSE:

Yes. I think it takes into account all parts of the whole cycle of assessment, and we see what our results are, and evaluate next steps which in this case begins with sharing these outcomes with College administration and faculty. As a result, they can then recommend other course changes to be implemented so the cycle can inform itself again. I think we will see continuous quality improvement.

And going back to what you asked about how we might be a little different from other institutions in this process, I know we have been, for a while, really focusing on career-based skills. We have extensive curriculum mapping going on which our assessment

team has been very involved with in supporting the connection of curriculum with careers. This is very tightly tied in with what we're doing in Design 2.0 in these pilots as well.

RODNEY LUSTER:

It sounds like some of the informed inertia from "gainful employment" plays into this heavily these days for everyone?

NANCY STACKHOUSE:

Yes!

RODNEY LUSTER:

I think every university is, if they haven't come to understand this yet, on the hook for a student's potential for employment. In addition, I know many universities struggle with simply keeping students engaged alongside prioritizing how they prepare them for the future so they're not left out there trying to figure it all out.

JASON COVERT:

Well, what else is unique about this too, is, we very rarely ever engage in any sort of student interviews. I mean, yes, there have been some projects where groups have done student interviews within CTL (Center for Teaching and Learning), but, you know, we've got two large research projects that we're working on that will specifically focus on student populations from this sample of courses that we're utilizing. And so, for instance, last week, I partnered up with Stacey Schink Joseph from the user-experience team to learn more about user- experience interviews, because, it's like, not only do we want to get that qualitative data from the interviews, but with these, we're also doing unique screen-sharing sessions, so it allows us more discovery. And so that's really kind of different, and we're offering incentives to students to participate to make it more of an engaged experience.

RODNEY LUSTER:

Absolutely. I think with research it can be hard to get subjects involved so I definitely understand the potential for motivating people.

JASON COVERT:

Yes. For instance, we might allocate five points to a survey so if you do it you get the points. Small gestures help.

RODNEY LUSTER:

Well, very good. I love the pragmatics here. You guys are doing some great work.

I'm going to throw out a different question that's a bit off topic. So, we have all endured this pandemic, this sort of wild anomaly that came in and permeated everything, touching all aspects of life. How did that affect what you guys were working on? Has it changed anything or perhaps created the inertia for something else? What has been the result of this phenomenon?

JASON COVERT:

Well, for me, I would say, it could be an unanticipated convenience that, in tandem, we started focusing even more on education to careers. Because, you know, since the pandemic, we've seen the seismic shift of people either working from home or desiring to re-career. I think another thing that we started doing as a result is maybe focusing more on the resources that we have always provided to students and trying even harder to be as supportive as possible. Now, we are advancing our preparation for such events, we're trying to imagine the resources students might need as the world is shifting because of the pandemic. We're trying to be proactive. That's what comes to mind for me.

RODNEY LUSTER:

I can see that. The university has always had a hand on the pulse of things and even as we rolled into the pandemic we moved with it because of who we are, what we've always done.

JASON COVERT:

I think the pandemic really kind of gave us the inertia to further our progressive eye.

As we are looking at this currently, we have expanded our use of video content, that's my area, creating very career-focused videos that help bridge the gap between learning and careers.

NANCY STACKHOUSE:

Well, and, to add to this, I'm hearing more along that same line with faculty, at least in the two colleges I work with- nursing and education- that they're providing more video feedback to their students. So, it's just a more personable approach, a way of telling them how they did, on say, an assignment. They actually create a short video to give the feedback to

the students and I would also say that ever since I have been at University of Phoenix, I hear how important it is to demonstrate "empathy." During this pandemic, the university has really been responsive to nurturing this potential for empathy, encouraging faculty to accommodate students in need and give them a little extra time to turn work in.

RODNEY LUSTER:

Yes, Pam Roggeman, who we also interviewed for this edition of the Phoenix Scholar, had mentioned that aspect of empathy.

JASON COVERT:

I think in a lot of ways, I can also see some of the good things that emerged from people enduring the pandemic, like, I feel it affected our faculty, who, were already nurturing, in ways that they wanted to create a more humanized environment for students going through this. You know, they recognize that the needs of students are different now than they were before. And so, I can see there's almost a greater responsibility they feel to help, to bridge that transactional distance and evolve a deeper presence in the classroom, creating a sense of community.

RODNEY LUSTER:

You know, I think in many ways we can look at the pandemic as a, and I'll use a term I once heard a French Psychologist use, "black sun" where this sort of translucent kind of energy emerges, that even though there is this dark spot, there is also something to be had from it, something to be learned.

On a different note, what do you see as coming in the next year and a half to two years within the areas that you guys are working in?

JASON COVERT:

Well, I know for me the direct assessment program that's being developed, we'll be working on that quite a bit. We're focusing a lot on more of these type of research projects. In fact, there are already plans in place to start conceptualizing a similar sort of evaluation plan for the CBE-DA (Competency-Based Education – Direct Assessment) program as it gets released. I can envision a lot more research projects we're extending out, as well as more programs that are going to be using "digital badging." That's the other research project I'm working on right now, looking at how students perceive digital badges at the undergraduate level and making comparisons between the graduate level and things like that.

RODNEY LUSTER:

That's pretty fascinating, the idea of badging and all of that. Really will be interesting to see how that evolves!

NANCY STACKHOUSE:

Well, I am very anxious to see how the results turn out on Design 2.0 in a way that might push us into the future. As well, what I'm seeing just from the assessment and institutional research team is that, as I meet with colleges and we talk with about how faculty provide feedback on courses, that we're getting higher response rates on those surveys. Faculty are more involved and they're giving more details. For example, just before this interview, I had a meeting with the College of Education, and we had something like an 81% response rate on course surveys that the faculty provided feedback on. Whereas a year ago, it might have only been 25-50% response rates. So, what I'm hoping for in the future because I'm seeing this desire by faculty to really be involved and really improve these courses and improve teaching, is that we might provide more professional development to them on how they can improve especially on the course delivery side.

RODNEY LUSTER:

Very good. Sounds like it shakes up the "fixed identity" of the university and the faculty in what we thought we were and what we can find the opportunity to do.

As we close this interview, I'm going to ask a lighter question. What would we find you guys reading right now? <Laugh>

JASON COVERT:

Well, me personally, I'm trying to finish my dissertation, so my life is nothing but research articles.

RODNEY LUSTER:

Oh my gosh. Yes.

JASON COVERT:

<Laugh>. So, you know, I can't really say that I have a chance to read anything <laugh> other than that right now.

RODNEY LUSTER:

What's your topic Jason?

JASON COVERT:

I'm actually investigating students' perceptions of usefulness on career-focused instructional videos. And also looking at whether or not there's any correlation between those perceptions and perceptions of satisfaction with the videos and overall course satisfaction.

RODNEY LUSTER:

Oh, that should be interesting. We'll see how that turns out when you finalize all of that.

JASON COVERT:

I'm doing it here at University of Phoenix. I already gathered all my data.

RODNEY LUSTER:

Oh, that's awesome. Awesome. I'm glad to see that you're immersed in that process and yeah, we'll be calling you doctor soon!

JASON COVERT:

In the next few months!

RODNEY LUSTER:

Oh my gosh. <Laugh> Yeah, that's awesome. All right, Nancy, what are you reading lately?

NANCY STACKHOUSE:

Well, I've become a, a fan of author, Gary Zukav, who has written Seat of the Soul. And his most recent book is Universal Human. It is about people becoming much more authentically empowered rather than externally empowered. So, I'm really appreciating that. I am also a huge fan of Tony Hillerman, a mystery writer who lived in Albuquerque.

RODNEY LUSTER:

Excellent!

Well, Nancy and Jason, it was a pleasure meeting with you today. I am sure this will be a great read for many.

NANCY STACKHOUSE:

Thanks for having us here to speak, Rodney!

RODNEY LUSTER:

Absolutely!

Direct Assessment of the Communication Skill of Empathy in Healthcare Students Using the Empathy Clinical Evaluation Exercise (ECEX) Rubric

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University of Phoenix

Empathy is generally deemed a required or important clinical skill for any healthcare professional (May, 2013). Indeed, empathy is a stated core competency within academic programs across the healthcare professions (Ekman & Krasner, 2017). High empathy scores have been associated with professionalism, clinical competency, confidence, well-being, and emotional intelligence all of which are important to healthcare professionals (Olsen & Kemper, 2014; Ogle et al., 2013). Most agree any medical or healthcare curriculum should teach, assess, and improve a student's level of empathic response.

Clinical empathy has been described as encompassing the following four distinct components: affective empathy – the ability to experience patients'/clients' emotions and perspectives; moral empathy – the internal motivation to empathize; cognitive empathy – the intellectual ability to identify and comprehend others' perspectives and emotions; and behavioral empathy – the ability to convey understanding of those emotions and perspectives back to the patient or client (Morse et al., 1992).

Students and simulated clients (SCs) consented to participate in video recording of clinical encounters (Stackhouse et al., 2020). Three independent observers evaluated and coded each videotaped interaction and awarded the student's performance an overall empathy score that reflected both the number of opportunities for empathy and the student's points (0 – 3 from Table 1: Performance Categories, Scores, Criteria, and Empathy Components for the ECEX) for each of these opportunities. All encounters started with a similar planned number of opportunities for empathy display to make these scores comparable between different scenarios. Actors (SCs) could repeat or add opportunities in response to the student's performance during each encounter. Investigators tabulated and analyzed the results to determine the utility of this novel empathy assessment tool provided in Table 1 below.

Rating (Number of Points)	Criteria	Components of Empathy
Inadequate (0)	The student did not acknowledge the opportunity to display empathy – score 0 points (there are no empathic statements following the client's emotional statement)	The observer is unable to detect moral empathy, even if present.
Needs Improvement (1)	The student acknowledged the client's emotional concern without further action – score 1 point (e.g., the student said, "It seems like you are sad," or "I'm sorry this is so difficult for you."	The observer detects cognitive empathy. The student displays moral empathy.
Competent (2)	The student acknowledged the client's emotional concern and reciprocated with reflective empathy – score 2 points (e.g., "It seems like you are sad. I can see why this would be emotional for you," or "I remember when I had a similar situation with my own pet. It was a really difficult time for me, too."	The observer detects moral and cognitive empathy. Reflective listening may or may not include affective empathy.
Advanced (3)	The student probed the client for more information regarding their emotional concerns – score 3 points (e.g., "It seems like this is making you upset. Can you tell me more about your feelings?"	The observer detects moral, cognitive, affective, and behavioral empathy.

*ECEX = Empathy Clinical Evaluation Exercise

Table 1 | Performance categories, scores, criteria, and empathy components for the ECEX*.

The Stackhouse et al. study (2020) found that when comparing different student cohorts, the number of student attempts to display empathy was statistically lower for the cohort of students completing the encounter before their primary care rotation. For the cohort of students completing these encounters by the end of their primary care rotation, total points achieved/final empathy scores were statistically higher. The significant difference in total points achieved between the first and second cohorts following the primary care rotation may reflect 1) additional time spent in other rotations prior to primary care, 2) unmeasurable differences in the performance of the standardized clients over time, or 3) differences in scoring by observers over time.

To validate the use of the ECEX, a comparison of these results with those of the students' self-reported Toronto Empathy Questionnaire (TEQ) scores (both pre- and post-clinical rotation) occurred and noted similar statistical conclusions using both instruments. Neither the ECEX nor the TEQ was able to detect significant differences when empathy scores were compared for all participants before and after their clinical rotations. Similarly, both ECEX and TEQ failed to detect significant differences when each student cohort was individually assessed. In contrast, both ECEX and TEQ detected a significant difference in empathy scores obtained after the clinical rotation when comparing cohort 1 to cohort 2 and both methods detected an improvement in empathy scores in the majority of students.

A novel approach to measuring empathy through directly observable behaviors can improve one's ability to accurately assess and educate students for the development of better empathy skills. The ECEX direct assessment rubric tool provided a sensitive measure of change and created a teaching tool for empathy skills.

The ECEX had high inter-rater reliability scores when applied in this pilot student population. This measure will need to be validated in a larger group of students and be applied to others before more complex measures of its validity can be determined. The three evaluators in the Stackhouse et al. (2020) study contributed to the development of this tool and inherently understood how and why the tool should be used. Further studies are needed to determine inter-rater reliability for researchers other than its developers.

A unique strength of the Stackhouse study is the infusion of four distinct components of clinical empathy within the direct empathy assessment (ECEX) tool. Careful measurement of the components and levels of empathy displayed by medical/healthcare students underpins and can inform the design and delivery of effective empathy training and education.

The training of students to become more empathic may protect students in all healthcare professions from compassion fatigue. The ECEX rubric can be applied to students, colleagues, oneself, or used by clients to rate faculty, practitioners, and students in practice. If shown to be effective, this tool may help improve levels of empathy throughout healthcare professions resulting in better patient outcomes.

The University of Phoenix (UOPX) has implemented the use of rubrics to provide criteria and standards for student success on summative assessments in courses. As academic program reviews, health checks, and course improvements continue to evolve at UOPX, the ECEX rubric may serve as a rigorous exemplar and template for rubric improvements. Finally, the improved rubrics can serve as teaching tools for faculty when explaining summative assessment assignments to students.

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Improving Student Outcomes: Testing How Direct Faculty Engagement with Online Students Using Collaborate Live Sessions Impact Student Retention

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Previous literature review and testing was conducted by a former University of Phoenix Program Chair, Dr. Brent Duncan, PhD., in which he explored the psychological factors influencing student persistence. Dr. Duncan's research revealed that the convenience of online learning has some downsides; online asynchronous learners often feel unprepared and isolated (Duncan, 2018). Results from an experiment he conducted in 2018 at University of Phoenix, revealed that courses that included weekly Live Sessions had students with higher attendance rates, higher assignment completion rates, improved persistence rates, and higher satisfaction rates. Positive results from this test drove the desire to evaluate direct faculty engagement further with larger populations of students and our most vulnerable population – newly enrolled Undergraduate students.

Intervention and Implementation

The College of General Studies (CGS) and the College of Business and Information Technology (CBIT) began testing live sessions using the Blackboard Collaborate Tool in April and July of 2020, respectively. The two colleges set about to test the tool in different ways, working with faculty to enhance student connection and engagement through synchronous meetings.

In June of 2020, the CGS set about to test how live sessions would impact success for online students enrolled in the first course taken by most Undergraduate students at the university, GEN/201: Foundations for University Success. The College asked Full-Time Faculty teaching GEN/201 on June 2, 2020, to hold a live session in one of their three sections. The college asked faculty to conduct one live session in Week One of their course and in only one section of GEN/201, which would become the pilot section. All Full-Time Faculty who participated in the test were teaching a total of three sections of GEN/201 on June 2, which provided us a control group that controlled for faculty and course start date. Live sessions were optional for students, but those who attended received points toward their weekly participation requirement to provide incentive for students to attend.

Faculty participants were instructed on how to use Blackboard Collaborate and were provided a Quick Start Guide with detailed instructions for how to conduct a live session. Faculty were also provided a presentation deck specific to GEN/201 content for them to use to conduct their session. They were not required to cover all the content but were advised to personalize their approach for their students. The presentation topics were designed to resolve anxiety for new students, encourage them, provide tips and information about support resources, and answer

questions. We emphasized that the most important element was to allow their students to see them on camera to make a more personal connection and help students feel more comfortable.

Positive results from the first round of tests, led to expanded testing in the same course with Associate Faculty in June of 2021. We saw positive results again in the second round of tests, which prompted the College of General Studies to adopt a live session requirement for all Full-Time Faculty teaching first-year Undergraduate courses at the university, which we call the Phoenix Success Series (PSS). The PSS, which begins with GEN/201, consists of six courses that are intended to provide a solid foundation of learning for Undergraduate students enrolling at the university. The live session requirement for Full-Time Faculty teaching any PSS class went into effect with classes starting on September 14, 2021, and the College has seen almost a 1% improvement in WF rate collectively, which amounts to around 1,491 additional students persisting.

W, F, and W/F by Course ID				
Course ID	Std Count	F %	W %	W/F %
ENG/100	1,696	7.0%	15.3%	22.2%
ENG/110	223	10.8%	12.1%	22.9%
ENG/200	1,891	9.4%	21.5%	30.9%
GEN/201	5,002	7.0%	15.0%	21.9%
HUM/115	5,179	4.5%	9.8%	14.3%
PSY/110	3,196	4.6%	15.7%	20.3%
Total	**17,187**	**6.1%**	**14.2%**	**20.4%**

Table 1 | Historical PSS Course WF Data for FTF Prior to Live Session Implementation (Sep20-May21).

W, F, and W/F by Course ID				
Course ID	Std Count	F %	W %	W/F %
ENG/110	1,882	8.3%	12.6%	21.0%
ENG/210	1,997	6.2%	11.9%	18.1%
GEN/201	5,581	9.0%	14.3%	23.3%
HUM/115	5,916	5.9%	10.7%	16.6%
PSY/110	3,273	6.2%	12.6%	18.9%
Total	**18,649**	**7.2%**	**12.4%**	**19.6%**

Table 2 | PSS Course WF Data for FTF Post Live Session Implementation (Sep21-May22).

Findings

Round I Test, June 2020 (GEN/201, Full-Time Faculty Only). N=268 Students, 11 Course Sections:

- 268 pilot students posted positive attendance in GEN/201 and of those 88 students attended the optional live session (33%). We exceeded our target of 30% attendance.
- 59 of the 88 students who attended a live session completed a feedback survey (67% response rate).
  - 98% agreed or strongly agreed that the session helped them feel more comfortable starting class
  - 98% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "the session will contribute to my success in this course"
  - 97% indicated they would be interested in attending other live sessions
  - Wednesday was the most popular selection for ideal day for a live session (classes start on Tuesdays)
- Of the 88 students who attended a live session, 85 successfully completed GEN/201 (97%).

Performance Indicator (factor that will be changed)	Measurement Mechanism (how will this factor be measured)	Baseline Value	Target Value (Goal)	Measured Value (Actual)	Notes
Live Session Participation	Track live session attendance to calculate % student participation	N/A	30%	33%	33% of all 1Y students attended a live session (88/268). 24% of all rostered students 88/373).
Student Surveys	Quantitative Likert rating and qualitative feedback to measure student sentiment as related to Live Session value	N/A	Positive Likert Rating/ overall positive sentiment	See notes	- 98% agreed or strongly agreed that the session helped them feel more comfortable starting class - 98% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "the session will contribute to my success in this course" - 97% indicated they would be interested in attending other live sessions
Course W/F Rates	PowerBI>Course & Assignment Analysis>W+F Analysis ❖ Incudes all student types in GEN/201, including re-entry and NDE	FY20 (Sep-Jun) W/F Rate: 23.4%. Count: 24,961. Data Pulled 8/13/20. FTF Control Groups: W/F Rate: 24.2%. Count: 620. Custom Data Pulled by BI Team after 7/31/20.	1-2% improvement for W/F rate of 19-20%.	FTF Test Groups: W/F Rate: 19.03%. Count: 268. Custom Data Pulled by BI Team after 7/31/20. 5.17% lower W/F rate than FTF control groups. 4.37% lower than non-FTF control groups.	Updated baseline data to use W+F Analysis versus PSS, which does not allow you to filter by Group ID.
Avg. Weekly Assignment Grades (test group compared to control)	Assignment Grades: PowerBI>Course and Assignment Analysis>Assignment Self-Service>Student Assignment. Data pulled 8-13-20.	FY20 (Sep-Jun20) Avg. of Assignment Grades (weeks 1-5): 86.42%.	N/A	June 2020 Avg. of Assignment Grades (weeks 1-5) Test Pop: 84.25% June 2020 Avg. of Assignment Grades (weeks 1-5) Control Pop: 81.86%	We did not anticipate grade improvements from this treatment, and we cannot make inferences to the population because this metric was not part of our power analysis.

Table 3 | Round I Test.

A subsequent test was launched in February of 2021, wherein Associate Faculty teaching GEN/201 on 2/21/21 were asked to volunteer to participate in a test where they would be asked to conduct one synchronous live session with their students in week one of their class. Faculty were trained on the use of Collaborate and provided detailed instructions for how to conduct a live session, including class announcements, a live session presentation deck, and guidelines for increasing student participation.

Round II Test, February 2021 (GEN/201, Associate Faculty Volunteers). N=688 Students, 25 Course Sections:

- Live sessions all ran as planned the week of 2/21/21
- Target Section Count: 22, Actual Section Count: 25
- 688 pilot students posted positive attendance in GEN/201
- 113 attended an optional live session (16%)
- Of the 113 students who attended a live session, 105 or 93% successfully completed GEN/201 (excludes F&W grades)
- Pilot Groups W/F Rate 2/16/21: 18.3%. 6.5% lower W/F rate than control groups on same start date (not controlled for faculty).
- 375 students completed a feedback survey about Live Sessions (55% response rate)
  - 96% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "attending the Live Session helped me feel more comfortable starting class."
  - 98% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "the session will contribute to my success in this course"

faculty sentiment about live sessions. The test also allowed us to evaluate a full-scale implementation of a live session requirement to understand the quality of our processes and support materials and any gaps we need to close. The College is in the process of analyzing results. If results from the May test are positive, the College intends to move forward with implementation of a live session requirement for any faculty who teach GEN/201. Live sessions will remain optional for online students, and we will continue to explore different ways to incentivize students to attend so they can benefit from this important connection with their instructor and fellow students.

The College of General Studies is in the process of analyzing results from the test that ran in May of 2022 and will be compiling findings from all rounds of testing to determine next steps. Based on analysis of the results from all rounds of testing, the College will make a strategy recommendation to the university for use of Collaborate to improve student retention and success.

Performance Indicator (factor that will be changed)	Measurement Mechanism (how will this factor be measured)	Baseline Values	Target Value (Goal)	Measured Value (Actual)	Notes
Live Session Participation	Track live session attendance to calculate % student participation	N/A	15%	16%	16% of 1Y students attended a live session (113/688).
Student Surveys	Quantitative Likert rating and qualitative feedback to measure student sentiment as related to Live Session value	N/A	Positive Likert Rating/ overall positive sentiment	109/113 or 96% of students who attended a Live Session agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "attending the Live Session helped me feel more comfortable starting class." 111/113 or 98% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "attending the Live Session will contribute to my success in the course."	Overall student sentiment was very positive! See Appendix for sample student and faculty comments.
Course W/F Rates	PowerBI>Course & Assignment Analysis>W+F Analysis ❖ Incudes all student types in GEN/201, including re-entry and NDE	All faculty historical (Sep20-Jan21) W/F rate: 24.2%. Count: 11,919. Data pulled 4/12/21. Pilot faculty historical (Sep20-Jan21) W/F rate: 25.3%. Count: 9,044. Data pulled 5.10.21. Control faculty W/F Rate 2/16/21 CSD: 24.8%. Count: 1,392. Data Pulled: 3/31/21.	1-2% improvement in W/F rate.	Count: 688. Data Pulled 3/31/21. 6.5% lower W/F rate than control groups on same start date. 7% lower W/F rate than pilot faculty historical (Sep20-Jan21). *Non-pilot starts in Feb included when present	5

Table 4 | Round II Test.

Next Steps

In May of 2022, a third round of tests ran which required any Associate Faculty member teaching GEN/201 on 5/31/22 to conduct one live session during week one of their course. This test was intended to continue to explore the impact of live sessions on student retention, as well as gather feedback around

Education, Curriculum Resourcing, and Navigating the Pandemic: An Interview with Pam Roggeman, Ed.D.

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Interviewer: Rodney Luster, Ph.D., LPC
Senior Director of Research Strategy, Innovation and Development
Chair for the Center for Leadership Studies
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RODNEY LUSTER:

Pam, thank you for being here today for this Phoenix Scholar interview. I appreciate you taking the time out.

PAM ROGGEMAN:

Absolutely, no problem!

RODNEY LUSTER:

I would like to talk about a few things with you today. As the Dean of Education, instruction is a full on awareness I am sure your attenuated to in your professional role. Today were talking about impact on the classroom and you can't help but bring in some of the social aggressions such as the pandemic that occurred over the past few years and really impacted faculty and students in so many ways so I know will probably touch on that subject a bit more. As well, some of the things that have risen even more so in prominent such as diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging and simply the process of what we're seeing in K-12 and kids going to school and teachers creating a classroom culture and how that finds its way into perhaps much of what you do in training teachers who are going into public school classrooms and the like.

PAM ROGGEMAN:

Sounds good. Let's go ahead and start off with that experience we have all endured which is been the pandemic of course. One of the big words that we heard all throughout the beginning of COVID was "empathy." I think one of the big things that I heard as we were grappling with some of this is a university was that University of Phoenix really knew how to demonstrate empathy in the classroom through the practices that occurred and much of what was a seamless transition based on what we were already doing as an institution during this time. It wasn't without some challenges but I think it was definitely better in so many ways than what other people were struggling with as institutions and perhaps their dispositions may have come off as less than empathic in some instances that we may have read about across the country. There were definitely decisions being made at other institutions that may have been less than amenable, and for students at those institutions, such decisions may have felt as though they were not truly taken into consideration when being called back into classrooms during the time where safety should have been a high priority. So, in this, certainly we knew how to deliver curriculum in an in an online virtual environment but one of the things that we also knew is that we had great faculty, and what these great faculty were doing along the way, and maybe some of those things didn't even show up on their CPR feedback, but they were being talked about in such positive reflections of students in secondhand conversations with staff. So, because of this, we knew as a college we could count on our faculty to help. Like when we were trying to transition a lot of stuff that we still needed to transition, so, for

example, for us, it was "clinical practice." That one was a big one because we relied heavily on face-to-face interactions so the question became how do we simulate clinical practice? And we leaned on those really great faculty to help us, because they were the ones that already got it, and their innovation and creativity could be tapped during this time where we really needed that.

RODNEY LUSTER:

I think it's interesting how you guys looked at the nuances of faculty in this instance where you were hearing about these great instances of empathy as part of their creative existence in the classroom and leaned into it to tap some of that for a very hard proposition as you dealt with the pandemic and transitioning perhaps that functional aspect of clinical practice that heretofore was perhaps more face-to-face to something virtual and simulated that could help in this instance?

PAM ROGGEMAN:

Most definitely! I remember another example where we had an opportunity to gather more information occurred one day as we reached out to all of our faculty supervisors, who are university faculty supervisors assigned to our traditional teacher prep processes. So, that's the university supervisor who goes out to the actual classrooms. That very day we had like three meetings to accommodate different time slots and had over 150 faculty members that met with us. And I remember we talked to them at length to find out more about what was happening and that day we just really connected with them. They told us the kinds of things that students were going through. And many questions came up such as how do I address this? How do I address that? Do I have permission to do this? I want to do this, can I? And so, we had many face-to-face, in-person, discussions with them on ways that we could creatively and innovatively accommodate students. And I think this was an imperative during the pandemic. It was important to flex these kinds of intellectual muscles to address urgent needs.

PAM ROGGEMAN:

And as we were trying to do all of these things I remember thinking, oh man, that was such a deep and strong connection between what our faculty see with our students in the classroom! It was simply just a powerful feeling to see that kind of connectivity

happening. This was so much more than us sitting here, the college, simply making unilateral decisions. We knew that just to send out an email and say, oh, faculty members, please remember whatever it is that now that we need you to do was not going to be the way. In this instance, we knew that faculty would need to feel supported and that some faculty would need us to say, we give you permission to do this and not to do this. We need to be able to give our faculty that permission to say, I have a really weird situation and I need to talk about it, or I think we've made too many allowances and we need to dial it back. It was an inherence to our commitment for being there and for guidance and support for the faculty.

I think that from the pandemic one of the best things we have held onto as far as classroom practices is strengthening the lines of communication and really reaching out to the faculty, having those discussions, but also deploying that deep understanding of what our students are going through.

And I feel it's kind of like we're perhaps parenting the second child, if you will. In this, we know what to take seriously and what to address because we are attenuated to the importance of growth and nurturing in this relationship. And we know where we need to hold firm and just say, this is a part of the student's higher education and academic growth. I feel as though in this pandemic I've gained a lifetime of experience, whereas before, if somebody would bring something up that was even on a smaller scale, sort of in anecdotal kind of thing, then, you know, we may have responded with more of a subtle knee jerk responsiveness, like, oh, we need to create a policy to address that without really seeing it from all sides. Or perhaps we may have come at it with the perspective that, oh, we need to change this or we need to have a meeting. And it's like, no, no. This is just the normal thing, perhaps like a child pushing back just a bit trying to find their space. Sorry to keep on using the parent mode. I'm knee deep in parent thought because it kind of resonates here. But I see our reflections on these kinds of things having actualized themselves over the course of the past few years in the growth that we have made as a college.

RODNEY LUSTER:

I think that's a good metaphor though Pam, because it's kind of like, you know, we think of parents as a stabilizing force when were kids, a nurturing entity, right? And so that analogy makes sense here. You

know, you're trying to steward these faculty who have a professional relationship with students and their own conversations probably translate into a lot of dynamic factors that go up and down between, the student to the faculty, to you guys, and back from you guys to the faculty, and from them to the student. So, there's all this inter-dynamic and even concentric communication that is happening. I think that idea of the caring parent works here.

PAM ROGGEMAN:

Well, it has evolved but I would also like to think, that at the beginning of COVID, we were also very connected as well. Marc Booker, our Vice Provost of Strategy, would hold these meetings and he would have every representative there from the student services lens. This was very important because we were connecting various departments who might otherwise fill a bit disparate. In this we got much more connected and if I can refer back to the parent analogy, a better co-parenting partner in many ways. And I think what we're going to see much more of this deeper communication come through in FY 23 because we've all learned quite a bit from the experience of the pandemic.

RODNEY LUSTER:

It sounds like there were much deeper connections made?

PAM ROGGEMAN:

I feel like many connections are better than ever. And I will tell you, we started invoking more of this practice in the college of ed that in the student teaching meetings. We wanted much of that conductivity apparent during that hour and a half. And so we would have our faculty team together with our regulatory team. We'd also have our assessment team present, and we'd have our education support team there, in addition to the curriculum team. We had everybody at every meeting because everything that we were doing was changing, and it affected all those pieces.

And that is something that we realize we should have been doing all along. It's so much more efficient to incorporate others in these decisions because there are other roles that are so critical and important in this feedback loop so I would never make a decision that doesn't have the deeper roots with those who perhaps understand a connection more intimately such as the student support specialist. They are, in this example,

the ones that know what the students are going through inside the classroom as well as out in the field as a student teacher.

RODNEY LUSTER:

It sounds like during the inertia of the pandemic, a much richer dialogic interaction with everyone was occurring?

PAM ROGGEMAN:

Exactly! I would say I feel better connected to my faculty than I ever have. For instance, using the example of something like student issues, whereas before, if student issues arose then some faculty may have felt like, oh, I don't want to bother Pam with this. And now I'm like, no, I need to know how many times we're seeing this, how deeply it affects them. And so, I, I have gotten more student issues in the last two and a half years than I have in all the eight years that I've been here. That's a good thing because it means we're talking and that they want to talk and don't feel constrained in the process.

I do however feel like I'm more of a guide on the side, allowing staff and faculty to explore their own potentials even more so and learning along the way. I think it's also important to sometimes allow those explorations rather than over correct. And to really say, okay, there's a difference between handholding and having empathy. And we know that empathy is what our students need and handholding is only going to further inhibit their growth, you know? These are the deeper explorations. So that's a big deal. Yeah, I think it's a direct result of moving through the pandemic even though we've always been student-centric and student first, but this is an expanded and enhanced and perhaps more self-aware process than it has ever been.

But it was tough at the beginning because I remember literally working like 14-hour days. I would have meetings that started at 7:00 AM and ended at 7:00 PM. And although that's not too important, it's simply highlighting that we were attempting to make ourselves readily available. That's what we felt the situation called for. We realized that we were in danger being so close to the end of our semester, you know, for student teaching, that we were managing the issues because of the pandemic with around 350 or 400 students so we were addressing this is a sense of urgency that we had never felt before. And now we recognize that sense of urgency all the time because it

brought out some important things. Interestingly, we doubled our number of students who were, at that time being allowed to student teach that very next semester when it was the trickiest semester of all to navigate. This was in the midst of everything when some schools were opening, and some were, you know, hybrid, operating a couple days a week. Some were 100%, and amidst all of this, suddenly our student teachers were dealing with a curriculum that hadn't prepared them to create a full-on 100% online situation. We were, you know, having to do that, building the engine while it was running sort of speak. And we were relying on our faculty to really help us with that. Because many of them as professionals were already in the school systems, they had the unique and valued perspective we needed.

RODNEY LUSTER:

Yeah. I think when I reflect on the beginning and onset of the pandemic, we saw many examples in the news of some of the desperate measures to accommodate and deal with school issues around the country. And for many, it was tough questions that needed to be addressed such as, how do we navigate this? How are we going to keep everything together? As a result, in the middle of all everything you have these student teachers encountering a phenomenon unlike any other, and also trying to figure it out in the classroom. It sounds like you guys went through quite a bit?

PAM ROGGEMAN:

You know what? It was tough Rodney, but, and I know this sounds a bit weird, but it was also kind of energizing and inspiring because I feel like what we did in that moment was to lean into our aspirational potentials to address a hard situation, and to do so in a creative and productive way. It was definitely some great human spirit arising out of the challenges we were encountering. I mean, we were forced in the moment to think creatively because we had high stakes if we didn't. And so, you know, we were listening to every voice. We had people that were coming up with ideas. We're like, wow, that's fantastic. And we were problem solving in meetings. Weren't just like, oh, let's just go down our agenda, make sure you all get this information but it was more like we have this problem to solve, and it's important. And what do you have to help solve it? Because you know, we're all doing this for the first time. We're all driving blind. And that was really kind of exciting and super rewarding. Most

especially in that first onset of COVID because, you know, we shut down March 15th, the Ides of March to quote Julius Caesar. And then by the end of May, we had all but two students that were able to complete their field experience.

PAM ROGGEMAN:

I feel like, if I could be so humble, I feel like, we, that would be nursing, counseling, and ed, we had something important to teach the rest of the university. So, Marc Booker would hold these meetings with all the stakeholders, such as including Kelly Herman who was there representing accessibility and other college deans who had folks in the field were in these meetings, as well as the registrar and others who had to give a daily report. And I think we brought part of our empathic understanding because of our locations to these meetings. I would also like to think that they learned a little bit from us as far as the creative problem solving because these three groups were some of the hardest hit because they were on the front lines of the pandemic as it was happening. And I think we learned something from all of them as well. Strategy was important. These kinds of conversations were so different because when I reflect on my time at ASU, I felt like there I never talked to our regulatory people. This is where I think we are so much better because we don't have that kind of bureaucratic admin. It is so communicative here where you can reach out if you need to.

RODNEY LUSTER:

I actually came from a state university as well too. And I can definitely relate to that bureaucratic process. I remember it felt very distant and remote there, in fact, you could entertain having a conversation beyond department chair, as it was frowned upon and you were made to feel as though you would get into trouble for say, talking to the provost. It really was quite a rude awakening for me as a young professor and shattered my glass house in so many ways. But when I came here, I mean, it is very communicative. I mean, I've not seen a place where you can actually email the president of the university or communicate with them on perhaps a platform like LinkedIn and actually have them respond. I thought that was amazing.

So, Pam, what were some of your takeaways having gone through all of this that perhaps we haven't talked about?

PAM ROGGEMAN:

Well, there were of course other aspects that I can think of in hindsight because I think situations like that really underscore perhaps some of the things, we take for granted, or highlight the things we feel we should have been doing all along. There are however things that came along that we may not have engaged otherwise which is something we can move forward in a productive way through all of this.

As an example, when COVID hit, we had students who were not allowed to go onto a K-12 campus, but still had to get their clinical experience hours. One of the things that we did is we worked with our faculty to revamp this process. Now we're calling it our "simulated school." And now it's gone through a 2.0 this summer, which will probably hear about in the other interviews with our staff. So, when COVID first hit in Spring of 2020, what we did was we said, okay, we need to give our students a place to go that will seem like a "real" school. So, we began building this simulated environment and we beefed it up. We put updated lesson plans in there and we would describe the context of an individual in an early elementary school class and have a management plan in there and we'd have students. We incorporated a curriculum resource called Educational Impact. Within this resource there are hundreds of real classroom videos, like, here's a good example of a differentiated lesson plan happening in a special ed classroom. It's just hours of great uncut footage. And so, because our students couldn't go in and do observing or suggest lesson planning, what we did was to revamp all that communicating with state departments of ed so we could use something as beneficial as this to fill the gap and have our students accrue some of their clinical hours in that unique curriculum resource environment.

PAM ROGGEMAN:

And as I mentioned earlier, what we've done this summer is we did a 2.0 version of it. And it's really cool. It is now our official simulated school with all the context in aspects of the school such as the administrative strands you would find like a district budget and much more. What we've done here has actually got noticed and we were recently accepted to present at the Online Learning Consortium2022 conference about a curriculum resource that captures 100's of hours of video from actual classrooms to bring

the 'live' experience to the virtual environment. We are very excited about this. In fact, in our simulated school, what you'll see as well is we'll have a special area for teaching diverse populations. So, student teachers will get to know a version of that experience. And, according to Utah state standards and Arizona state standards, that is an experience that our students have to have. They have to have experience meeting the needs of diverse populations. So how would you otherwise do that? It would become complicated because not every school is as diverse as it could be. Each school really comes with its own set of socioeconomic differences and things like that, so having this really opens up some opportunity.

RODNEY LUSTER:

I think for teachers, when they interact classroom it's like being dropped on the moon, you know, you just never know what to expect, but it sounds like this has been missing in education when it comes to student teachers. Having that simulated environment where you could realistically have the opportunity to re-correct and not worry so much about dealing with a real face-to-face situation, I would imagine would really help build that self-efficacy component that you want in student teachers. That simulated environment is a world where you can try things, learn from mistakes, and build some resiliency here, so that's really cool. I think that's an awesome missing link.

PAM ROGGEMAN:

Thank you for picking up on that piece. Yes! It's a place where you can try things and learn from them.

RODNEY LUSTER:

I know we now see this sort of simulated environment happening in medical schools these days. I was on an airplane flight not too long ago, and I was talking to a med student who was actually in a simulated operating room on his iPad. And he was working communicating with a sim-patient. And I was like, wow, that's really cool, is that what you guys are doing these days? And he said, yeah, we're doing this now. We're able to create these sorts of simulations where a patient comes to you with a series of symptoms that you must learn to diagnose. And he told me himself, that such a tool really does build into that self-efficacy and confidence portion because it removes the inherent fear of doing the wrong thing and making a mistake that cannot be corrected.

PAM ROGGEMAN:

Yeah. Yeah. And I think that's the same thing within education too and this EI. What's involved can be so complex where you have a student teacher who's coming in and that transition means that they have to still acquire the experience and the wisdom of the classroom, because a lot of that isn't necessarily taught or can be taught. In this way you give them a chance to flex some of their own creativity and response to those kinds of environments. So I love it. I think it's a cool idea. It's neat to see that taking off here.

RODNEY LUSTER:

Pam, thanks so much for your willingness to engage this interview and some of the unique things that you guys are doing in education. I think anyone who reads this will be extremely interested to see how you guys rolled through such a crisis and what you were able to do as a result. Thanks again for contributing to this unique addition of the Phoenix Scholar.

PAM ROGGEMAN:

You are most welcome!

Meeting Demands for Marriage and Family Therapists in California amidst Declining Enrollment

Michelle Crawford-Morrison, LMFT, LPCC, NCC

Program Manager
College of Social and Behavioral Sciences
University of Phoenix

Marriage and family therapy (MFT) has a strong professional identify in the State of California, which has been licensing MFT's since the 1960's. A large percent of the LMFT's in the United States are located in California and historically the University of Phoenix (UOPX) has been one of the largest producers of marriage and family therapists nationally. In recent years the number of new enrollments in the MSC/MFCT program has declined along with university enrollment in general. At the same time, the demand by consumers for more mental health professionals has increased and the recent pandemic has amplified that demand. Increases in depression, anxiety, panic attacks, agoraphobia, suicidal ideation and eating disorders are only some of the mental health problems facing our communities. As with the health care profession, mental health professionals are overwhelmed, burned-out and in need of new

colleagues to help reduce the burden of long hours, limited resources and the inability to provide services to new clients. The call for more MFT's is loud.

Intervention and Implementation

The UOPX master's in counseling, marriage, family and child therapy (MSC/MFCT) program has been very popular in California local campuses. Since the last program revision in 2012, the MSC/MFCT program has been approved by the California Board of Behavioral Sciences (BBS) for meeting the license requirements of both the LMFT and LPCC (licensed professional clinical counselor), a significant advantage for the university and graduates. When UOPX announced the teach out of local campuses in 2021 the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences began to explore the feasibility of revising and launching the MSC/MFCT program

online. A market analysis determined a likely increase in demand for online MFT programs in CA and to that end the revision and launch for MSC/MFCT v11 was approved to meet the needs of California students and the communities where they will serve.

Findings

According to O*Net (2022) the outlook for the marriage and family therapy profession is bright. O*Net (2022) reports that the LMFT profession is "expected to grow rapidly in the next several years, will have large numbers of job openings". The projection is for a faster than average industry growth with 100,000 minimum new jobs nationally. In a 2015 survey the California Association of Marriage and Family Therapist (CAMFT) concluded that the average age of LMFT is 50+ years old, female and many are in second careers. Most LMFT's are master level prepared with very few pursuing doctorate degrees in marriage and family therapy. Racially there are more Caucasians LMFT's but there is more diversity in registered associates and trainees. According to CAMFT (2015) "Over 34% of the Pre-licensed membership identifies as Black, Hispanic, Asian, or multiracial, compared with 16% of the clinical membership" (p. 57).

The 2019 demographics for UOPX was similar to the Pre-licensed CAMFT membership. The average UOPX student is probably the first generation from their family to attend college; they are somewhere between 23 and 49 years-old; most of students have dependents, most are female and racially over 33% identify as African American, nearly 18% identify as Hispanic and 39.5% identify as Caucasian. There appears to be a fit between the population seeking MFT licensure and UOPX student demographics.

Next Steps

In the fall of 2021, the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, under the leadership of Dean Dr. Christina Neider began the process of mapping curriculum for MSC/MFCT v11 to align with the CA BBS licensing criteria for marriage and family therapy and professional clinical counselor. Like MSC/MFCT version 10, version 11 will provide graduates with dual pathways for professional licensing. The team includes Bryan Vallance, Assistant Dean of Operations and Faculty, Amanda Frei, College Curriculum Manager and Mary Jo Trombley, PhD, Barbara Burt, PsyD and Michelle Crawford-Morrison, LMFT, LPCC as subject matter experts. After mapping was completed, taxonomy and course development began. SME's worked with Learning Mate Instructional Designers to develop courses needed by the program launch date of June 2022.

To meet the expected demand for the program, 23 local campus faculty were invited to start online mentorship. As that process continues a lead faculty area chair (LFAC) was selected who had been in the role at a local CA campus. Training for enrollment and advisors was conducted to help prepare for questions about the program and career paths.

The first cohort in the MSC/MFCT v11 online program started MFCC/502 Portfolio I on June 6, 2022, with 20 students enrolled. Portfolio I is an admission readiness assessment that samples and evaluates the student's cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills for a career in professional psychotherapy and counseling. Students are evaluated in professional disposition, basic interviewing skills, and writing mechanics. In three of six weeks, students participate in two-hour virtual synchronous sessions with faculty and peers. In the first MFCC 502 Portfolio I cohort 18 students progressed into the program to begin the second course, MFCC/504 in July. Currently there are 47 students registered for the next MFCC/502 start date on September 13, 2022. Interest in the program continues to grow. At the current level of interest there is every reason to believe that the MSC/MFCT online program will be successful in meeting the needs of UOPX students in CA. It is yet to be determined if the program will be offered in other states.

In conclusion, the need for professional mental health providers continues to grow and interest in the UOPX dual license MSC/MFCT program provides an excellent educational and career opportunity for students in California. As the demand for online education leading to LMFT continues to grow the UOPX program is in an excellent position to meet the needs of students and the local community. The diversity of UOPX student demographics corresponds to the Pre-licensed membership in CAMFT. Existing UOPX MSC/MFCT faculty are currently preparing and training to shift from local campus to the online environment. The outlook is indeed bright!

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Facing Challenges in Online Academic Programs

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Academic programs in the helping professions such as Social Work and Counseling have significant challenges to overcome maintaining quality educational experiences in the online environment, particularly due to these programs requiring field-based internships across state boundaries.

Effectively managing the complex processes of field placement is a priority and requires a significant amount of administrative activity to maintain compliance and manage experiences for a variety of stakeholders, including students, university administrators, community agencies, and institutional and programmatic accreditors (Samuels, Hitchcock, & Sage, 2020). There are countless administrative tasks and educational requirements that are managed by a Field Education office, and systematically tracking and monitoring these responsibilities are critical to a program's health and accreditation.

This raises a significant need to innovate and streamline processes that can scale quickly as programs continue to grow in the online environment (Morris, Ivancheva, Coop, Mogliacci, & Swinnerton, 2020). Utilizing a third-party placement software vendor can help streamline and automate processes from multiple stakeholder viewpoints, providing significant value in reducing administrative burden so time can be reallocated to direct student contact, which research indicated students are seeking (Samuels, Hitchcock, & Sage, 2020). A centralized field placement software program can help provide access for students, field instructors, and administrators to gather and store information, submit documentation,

and obtain reportable data, among other functionalities (Samuels, Hitchcock & Sage, 2020).

Of particular interest to students is the ability to store documents critical to their success during the program and after graduation, such as their resume, liability insurance, time logs, and evaluations, which can be utilized during post-graduate employment verification or graduate school applications.

Research was conducted within the institution to determine how to best support student progression towards graduation, gathering data from various stakeholders and resources to ensure that all voices were considered in identifying a solution. There were many competing demands across academic programs, stakeholders, and across the institution, however, the student and community partner experience in field-related activities was paramount. For instance, data from recorded student phone calls, in-depth interviews with academic counselors, and end of course surveys revealed themes of students' confusion, frustration, anxiety, and a desire for centralized communication and resources.

A significant finding in the research was student interest in wanting to speak to a dedicated representative who could assist them one-on-one to answer their questions and concerns. With complicated processes, multiple student-facing roles (field placement, academic advising, faculty, etc.), complex state regulations, and individual arrangements like personal schedules and childcare needs, it was easy to become overwhelmed and confused in the coordination of field placement.
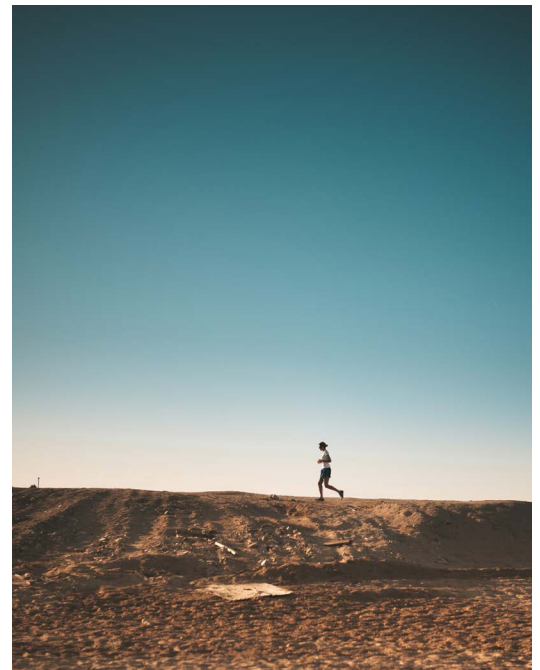
Although manuals and resources are available to support students in a self-service manner, these were found to be dense and similarly overwhelming. For example, a robust and interactive resource hub was developed within one department as a "one stop shop" for all placement information, but research revealed that students spent only a few seconds viewing the page, meaning it was not digestible and students were not extracting much value out of this type of resource. From this information, it was determined that investing more time in self-service tools was not the best course of action.

The research also revealed that a significant portion of the field placement staff's time was spent on manual processes within antiquated systems, and less time on direct voice to voice conversations with students and community partners. In reducing the administrative burden on field placement team members by streamlining technical processes in software, we proposed this time could be re-allocated to the relational components of field education which are critical to the health of the program.

This collection of data, and a rigorous review of what is truly going on with the field placement process from multiple angles, helped justify the need to explore or invest in software to streamline and automate processes. By investing in field placement software, programs can automate time-intensive manual processes associated with field placement and re-allocate this staff time to relationship building activities which are critical to a program's health. Students can also benefit from having centralized and life-long access to documents necessary for their success during the program and after graduation.

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Skills on the Rise - Career Focused Education: A Brave Response to Employers' Skills Gap

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University of Phoenix, like many higher educational institutions, has been challenged to overcome the workforce skills gap and the de-valuing of the college degree. Negative noise and varying opinions around this issue have continued to increase consistently over the past several years. This has put pressure on higher education institutions to provide a solution and close the gap. Employers have been clear that they are looking for skills and they need people who can communicate effectively, solve problems, and think critically yet creatively amongst numerous other skills. To continue and drive the mission of the university, we set out to address why current students and college graduates are not demonstrating these skills to employers.

> **University of Phoenix Mission and Purpose**
>
> University of Phoenix provides access to higher education opportunities that enable students to develop knowledge and skills necessary to achieve their professional goals, improve the performance of their organizations, and provide leadership and service to their communities.

In February of 2019, University of Phoenix teams dug into the issue. Research was conducted by our internal marketing research, academic and career teams. We found collectively that other universities were talking about skills, but the more we researched the more found other universities were only approaching skills at the surface level. The common theme in the research, course descriptions and course syllabi had key words that were found in job postings. This skill scraping process identified matching skills but did not show how that skill was taught to the student. The difficult part was not identifying skills. The difficult part was threading and integrating skills throughout the program and courses with validity and clarity. We needed to ensure that our students could clearly articulate what they learned by making a clear and direct connection between curriculum, assessment, and skills.
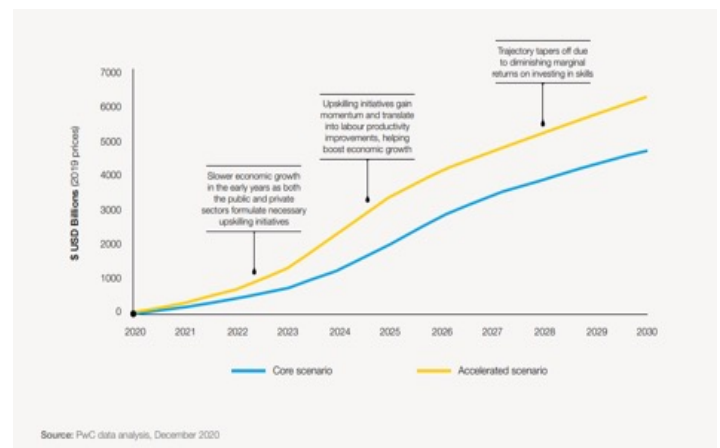

Table 2 | PwC Data Analsyis. Moritz, R., & Zahidi, S. (January 2021).

The alarming gap, no one had defined skills, and no one really knew exactly what this term meant.

Depending on the varied factors such as industry, position, or employer needs, one skill could be defined in an infinite number of ways. Before we could do anything, we had to stop and take inventory of our current processes and practices. Because University of Phoenix program development and review processes are well established through the University Program Lifecycle (UPL) process. Market research and at that time, Lightcast (formally known as EMSI) a well-established labor market and economic modeling organization already an established as part of the standard process. Our academic program portfolio is mapped to government standards, including Classification of Instructional Program (CIP), Standard Occupational Codes (SOC) and recognized occupations (JOBS). Student assessment of learning is measured at the program and university level with learning goals. University programs are aligned to student learning goals and to programmatic and professional standards. University courses included topics and objectives, practitioner faculty facilitating courses, industry councils providing feedback, and academic activities focused on real world situations. University of Phoenix acknowledged what we were doing consistently and well but identified there was a possibility to do more for university students. The one thing we were missing was the one thing employers have been focused on: SKILLS! With half of all employees (excluding those unemployed) around the world needing reskilling by 2025 (January 2021, World Economic Forum). We knew that we needed to find a way to bridge the gap between education and careers using the common language of skills.

University of Phoenix has always been unique in the industry and generally held to standards with higher social/political expectations as a consistent disruptor to the industry. This hyper-focus has driven us to improve continuously and relentlessly!

University of Phoenix's commitment to annual validation of CIP/SOC/JOB mapping has ensured our programs are aligned to government standards. It also meant that we had a solid structure to create and integrate a skill taxonomy. Lightcast, who the University has partnered with since 2015, allows a real-time view of new and emerging roles in the workforce. This is unlike BLS and O*Net which only provide a historical view. Lightcast opened the door to identifying gaps in job titles or differences between O*Net and the real world. Each job posting is further enriched with value-add processes including, job

title and company standardization, skill extraction and tagging, SOC and North American Industry Classification systems (NAICS) code determination and assignment, education, and experience determination.

In April 2020, we met with EMSI (now known as Lightcast) to present our proposed approach to bridging the gap between skills employers are seeking and what is taught in the classroom, this being the foundation of curriculum and careers. EMSI was intrigued by our approach and provided a first step in our testing. EMSI adjusted their Skillabi report to meet our specific needs. University of Phoenix's approach differed from what EMSI had seen before and what others were doing in the market.; University of Phoenix did not just want skills scraping from the surface, we wanted an intentional measurement to be able to see if students were in fact learning and were able to demonstrate these skills. Additionally, we wanted to ensure our students **knew** exactly what skills they were demonstrating. To achieve this, University of Phoenix had to be brave and be willing to be the first to "define" what a skill meant at the University of Phoenix.

> "Helping students understand how their learning connects to desired employee skills is the new frontier in higher education. University of Phoenix was among the very first universities to adopt the use of EMSI data early in the program development process back in 2015. TOday, they are at the forefront of developing programs which focus program curriculum outcomes and student assessment specifically on desired job skills. This kind of 'skillification' of curriculum will transform the higher education landscape."
>
> - Bob Hieronymus, vice president of partnerships at EMSI

University of Phoenix took the stance that as a higher education institution, what we taught is in the courses, objectives and assignments by using the Lightcast Analyst Job Posting Analytics (JPA), we could use our unique program codes to identify the skills employers are seeking. Each University of Phoenix program has courses specifically focused on that industry, and the skills would be sourced from there! Restructuring courses to a consistent model to measure learning, creating authentic assessments tied to skills sourced from Lightcast, practitioner faculty, programmatic

accreditation standards and industry advisory boards. We started with incorporating the JPA into the core parts of program lifecycle, program viability and program evaluation processes. Each new program submission, a JPA was provided based on the program selected SOC, JOB, degree level outcome. The focus on the skills section (Specialized and Common) provides a glossary of key skills employers are seeking. The dedicated academic dean uses the skill glossary, Faculty, Industry Council and SMEs to thoughtfully develop the program and course outcomes with skills clearly identified to link curriculum to careers. This further solidifies program vision, and further prepares the program for curriculum development and skills alignment.

> "While skill-level market insight is essential, it's connecting that insight back to existing courses and curriculum that really unlocks the door to agile program responses."
>
> - Verougstraete, R. (2021)

Curriculum to careers was more than a component of program development, but it was also a new way of thinking about programs and courses. University of Phoenix wanted to be able to tell the story of the program through skills and outcomes. Now with curriculum mapped into excel templates as a framework the University went to work plugging skills in both programs and courses to find the right fit. After numerous attempts (failures as some say) we found clues to make the skill infrastructure work. University of Phoenix found the formula to identify skills being taught with authentic assessments to measure learning and skills sources from employers, faculty, industry, and accreditation requirements. and now we had to test it.

In August 2020, with the University eager to pilot the new skills model in action, would now be able to see results when the newly refreshed Master of Business Administration (MBA) program went live. Skills tagged, each skill with an authentic assessment and description, processes built and new students starting to enter. At this point in time, Enrollment Representative and Academic Advisor teams were trained and excited to be able to speak to the skills employers seek and how students will be exposed to and assessed on career relevant skills in university courses. Alongside the skills in the curriculum, our careers team worked hand-in-hand with our academic

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- Decision Making

leads to design the first ever, student skills dashboard. The pilot group of students could now see skills taught by accessing their skills dashboard and seeing the skill, week and assessment in the course measuring their learning and demonstration of the skill. Early results showed students who engaged in the dashboard were more motivated and confident about what they learned. We had to quickly get to work on other programs. Starting with the most popular programs, University Academic Deans began to analyze active programs and courses. As this work took place, key findings emerged, and we found that many program outcomes already aligned to meet skill and employer needs. It was just a matter of restructuring the current course curriculum and adding the proper skill to the appropriate outcome. The academic teams started with the highest and most common skills sought at the program level as a proving ground and worked from there to build out all course skills in the program. Some of the specialized skills fit well into the course outcomes but did not fill all of the needs tied to the taxonomy that was being used. It was found that not all skills that accreditors or employers needed where found in Lightcast, such as new and emerging skills and required skills for programmatic accreditation. As an academic team there was confidence that the combination of JPA skills along with alignment to programmatic requirements were enough to substantiate and support what skills were mapped into programs. With University of Phoenix generally being at a level for higher scrutiny, University legal and regulatory teams pressure tested this skills taxonomy when an Lightcast match did not exist. The University found the new approach not only allowed for skills to be threaded throughout, but it also provided a new level of quality, learning, assessment, and data to be leveraged when creating content and building new courses.

It is important to acknowledge that there are still gaps

outside of the University's control. There is a gap in the skills listed in job postings and what hiring managers are seeking. This internal communication will continue add to skills found in job postings. As skills continue to evolve, the university skill infrastructure is able to continue to review and integrate skills being sought with those being taught.

Today, University of Phoenix has almost fully transitioned its academic portfolio to this new skill alignment model. The unbundling and repackaging of existing courses have reinforced targeted certificates or stackable credentials based on how the skills taught in those courses align with learner needs and workforce opportunities. Programs, such as the MBA, have been through the annual review cycle reviewing updated job posting analytics and skills. Validating skills found outside of EMSI/Lightcast through faculty, industry and accreditor feedback and standards are showing up in job postings, validating that in order to stay relevant, we had to allow for external voice and input. As the University continues its progression and learning it will continue to partner with faculty to revamp or expand curriculum by including additional in-demand skills related to the ones they are teaching in the classroom. The University is also looking to improve marketing and search engine optimization efforts by using skill-level insight to better describe what University of Phoenix already teach in language that resonates with prospective learners and employers. University of Phoenix plans are to use this report to evaluate a programs skill over specific time periods, to quickly see and address skill changes in job markets. Additional opportunities to leverage data in this report will be used to gain insight into skill trends and how this can be addressed through future Badging and micro credentials offerings.

The term "skills" may be a well-known term tossed around in conversations but is not, yet a commonly defined and finite term used in the language for students and employers. To allow for a common skill language between students and employers, the University will continue to enhance and develop methods in which students acquire, experience and speak to skills.

In conclusion, University of Phoenix took action to close the skills gap between education and careers. The approach built with the intent to show students the skills they are learning, applying and demonstrating each step of the way to graduation. Providing clarity to

how each course applies to the needs employers are seeking. Students can use artifacts from the classroom to articulate details specific to skills sought. The work it took to implement curriculum to careers across the academic organization was possible because of the consistent willingness to continuously improve. Lightcast/Burning glass provided valuable employer analytics and skill taxonomy which feeds the data/insights on the skills gap and common skill terms. As we continue to move forward with the University's mission, it is believed we have taken the proper steps in closing the skills gap and preparing our students with the skills they need to achieve their professional goals and beyond.

> "Skills have become an essential element to labor market analytics and strategy development in higher education, talent acquistion, and workforce and economic development. At EMSI Burning Glass, we believe skills are the current and future language of the economy. Skills are what jobseekers, educaiton, and employers use when communicating with each other."
>
> - Laney, C., & Repp, D. (2022)

Creating a robust and refined skills language is only in the beginning stages at University of Phoenix and we are still identifying its true capabilities, but the University is proud to be leading the way as we continue to define different value streams for students and employers in higher education.

To view the Skills Marketing Video please visit this page.

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Perceptions of Tutoring Services in an Online Doctoral Course and Its Effect on Student Outcomes

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Entry-level students in online doctoral programs at the University of Phoenix (UOP) are not fully meeting our academic writing learning outcomes. Prior research in this area identified a need to provide opportunities to support student skill development through social support and mentoring (Boone et al., 2020). UOP should identify how to best address the intense need for academic writing skill development of these entry-level doctoral students.

Tutor.com is a writing review service that offers both synchronous and asynchronous tutoring services to review and refine the academic writing of students. Utilizing Tutor.com may address the academic writing performance gap by allowing students to implement suggested feedback and improvements to their writing within their courses. In viewing vendors as an extension of UOP, Tutor.com can help facilitate a sense of belonging and community that encourages students to persist through the challenges of pursuing a doctoral degree. The purpose of this study is to determine if Tutor.com meaningfully influences student withdraw rates and assignment performance in an entry level doctoral course: Leadership Theory and Practice. It also evaluated student and faculty perceptions of the tutoring service.

Intervention and Implementation

This study examined if there were differences between doctoral student course outcomes with and without Tutor.com through a comparison design. The independent variable of this study was the presence or absence of Tutor.com support in an eight-week online course: Leadership Theory and Practice. Tutor.com was absent in the control group and present in the treatment group. The dependent variables of this study include assignment performance, overall course performance, course drop rate, course fail rate, non-withdraw/fail rate, and the timing of student withdraws (weeks 1-2, week 3, or weeks 4-8). The course assignment dependent variable was a major assessment submitted in week 3 of the course. Students in the treatment group were required to make at least 1 preliminary submission to the Tutor.com service. Additionally, students in the treatment group were offered access to up to 60 minutes of

synchronous tutoring. In both courses, students were allowed to submit the week 3 assessment up to 2 times. The same eight faculty members taught both the control and treatment group courses. Student and faculty surveys were administered through Qualtrics at the conclusion of the courses.

Findings

Descriptive statistics, two-sample z-tests, a thematic analysis of student responses, and faculty responses are displayed below.

Group	Sample Size	F Grade	W Grade	Non W & F Grade	Assignment Performance	Course Performance
No Tutor.com	357	7	59	291	88.83%	89.82%
Tutor.com	225	2	41	182	92.12%	92.77%

Group	Sample Size	Total Drop	Week 1-2 Drop Rate	Week 3 Drop Rate	Week 4-8 Drop Rate
No Tutor.com	357	59	10.36%	2.81%	4.18%
Tutor.com	225	41	7.56%	4.81%	7.07%

		Did you use the synchronous (one-on-one) live tutor.com session?			
			Yes	No	Total
Did you use the asynchronous (paper drop-off) required submission for your Week 3 assignment?	Yes	Count	45	107	152
		% of Total	27.3%	64.8%	92.1%
	No	Count	5	8	13
		% of Total	3%	4.8%	7.9%
	Total	Count	50	115	165
		% of Total	30.3%	69.7%	100%

How many times did you submit the paper drop-off for your Week 3 assignment?		
Sample Size	One	Two
152	87.5%	12.5%

How many minutes did you use the one-on-one live tutor.com session?				
Sample Size	Less than 20	20-39	40-59	60-80
50	42%	36%	12%	10%

KPI	Treatment	Control	Difference	Statistic	P Value
Week 1-2 Drop Withdrawals	.0756	.1036	2.81%	1.137	0.128
Week 3 Drop Withdrawals	.0481	.0281	-2.00%	-1.203	0.885
Week 4-8 Drop Withdrawals	.0707	.0418	-2.89%	-1.419	0.922

KPI	Treatment	Control	Difference	Statistic	P Value
Course Drop Rate	.1822	.1653	-1.70%	-0.528	0.701
Course Fail Rate	.0089	.0196	1.07%	1.021	0.154
Non WF Rate	.8089	.8151	-0.62%	-0.188	0.574
Assignment Performance	.9212	.8883	3.29%	-2.955	0.001
Course Performance	.9277	.8982	2.95%	-3.981	0.000

If you used both the asynchronous (paper drop off) and synchronous (one-on-one live session) options, which did you prefer? Please explain your preference.		
Sample Size	**Paper drop off**	**One-on-one live**
134	83.6%	16.4%

Paper Drop Off Feedback	
Theme	**Count**
Meaningful feedback	12
Convenient/easy to use	8
Time-efficient	8
Flexible (asynchronous)	7
Can keep and revisit feedback in future	2
Did not use one-on-one but plans to in future	2
Prefers visual aspect of written feedback	2
Allows tutor time to review paper	1
Easier to understand written feedback	1
Impressed with the service	1
Less intimidating than live session	1
Mixed experience, used multiple times and quality of feedback was polarized	1
More effective than live session	1
Prefers drop off to one-on-one	1
Response time was slow	1
Synchronous option jeopardizes confidentiality	1
Unimpressed with service	1

One-on-One Live Feedback	
Theme	**Count**
Likes immediate feedback	3
Live session offers better explanation	2
Likes both one-on-one and drop off	1
Likes interactive element	1
More efficient process than drop off	1
Prefers back and forth dialogue and live process of reviewing paper	1

Please rate your agreement with the following statements	Sample Size	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I found the Tutor.com platform easy to use.	165	61.2%	24.8%	9.1%	3%	1.8%
The feedback (report) from the Tutor.com submission helped my focus on areas I needed to improve.	165	55.8%	29.7%	7.9%	3.6%	3%
Using the Tutor.com feedback in my writing helps me feel more confident in my writing.	164	54.3%	25%	13.4%	4.9%	2.4%

Because of the Tutor.com opportunity, by the end of the course I felt:	Sample Size	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Eager to start my next course	163	44.2%	34.4%	17.8%	1.8%	1.8%
A strong desire to complete my program	162	56.2%	23.5%	16.7%	1.9%	1.9%

Faculty Feedback: Please rate your agreement with the following statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I noticed overall improvement to student writing after students completed the week 3 tutor.com assignment	1	2	1	0	0
This is an effective tool to have in the doctoral program	2	2	0	0	0
I feel all doctoral courses should contain tutor.com	0	4	0	0	0
I found the student reports helpful when providing feedback for students	0	4	0	0	0

Next Steps

The results of this study suggest implementing Tutor.com will not meaningfully influence course withdraw rates but will improve the academic performance of doctoral students. Regardless of the study's limitations, this appears to be a promising tool with the potential to enhance the academic success of UOPX doctoral students. Note that students were required to utilize the service in this study, so it may not yield a positive outcome on academic performance if it is not implemented as a mandatory component of the course in the future. The most seamless integration and promotion of the tool may come through its direct integration into the curriculum as an assignment revision step with a small point value.

Students and faculty both agree the service is a useful addition to the course, which may positively influence their overall perceptions of the program. More specifically, the service may contribute to the student perception that there are a variety of supports in place to augment their development while enhancing their sense of connection to the UOPX community. Student survey responses showed most students agreed it should be included in all courses and positively influenced their intention to continue in the program: eagerness to begin their next course and desire to complete the program. As such, Tutor.com could have encouraging long-term effects on student retention even though they were not observed in LDR/711A. With the presence of Tutor.com, faculty may feel their efforts are being reinforced and there is a clear commitment to the success of students and the program. Tutor.com is an effective way to provide valuable support and guidance to students while minimizing strain on the limited resources of faculty. While most students used the asynchronous paper drop off tool, which is more likely to fit into the nontraditional student lifestyle per their comments, there is a small cadre of students who preferred the live support services as well as some who used both. If there is limited or no financial cost to offering the live sessions beyond the drop off services, absorbing it would more comprehensively satisfy the range of student preferences. Lastly, it is possible this service could offer a pathway to reduce faculty workload or shift their attention to other areas of the class while maintaining a rigorous academic process.

There are a few limitations of this study to consider. First, it is possible that faculty perceptions of student performance were implicitly biased in thinking student work was better in the treatment than the control group since they taught both courses and were aware of the extra support students received in the treatment condition. However, the applicability of this limitation is diminished by the quantitative data suggesting there was a significant improvement in academic performance. Second, similarly to the limitation above, it is possible faculty graded students more favorably in the pilot for the same reason. Third, the sections of the pilot were offered during different seasons of the year, which can introduce unique environmental effects that influence their performance.

The results of this study are promising and introduce new areas for further examination. First, if it is not cost prohibitive, it could be worthwhile to evaluate if adding the tutoring service to other or potentially all courses in the doctoral curriculum to see if it renders similar effects in individual courses as well as a cumulative effect on programmatic grade point average and retention. Second, continuing to follow this cohort of students to compare their subsequent course performance and retention to students in the control group would illuminate potential long-term effects of the service. Third, while a process

of revision is an inherent element of the Tutor.com service, adding revision steps throughout the doctoral curriculum where possible may have a similar effect on academic performance at no cost. Mindfulness of faculty workload should be a top priority, but perhaps this could be accomplished in a fluid manner by examining the curriculum and structuring it so course assignments are interconnected through an iterative process wherever possible as opposed to isolated submissions. In other words, an intentional process of reflection and revision may lead to enhanced learning achievement.

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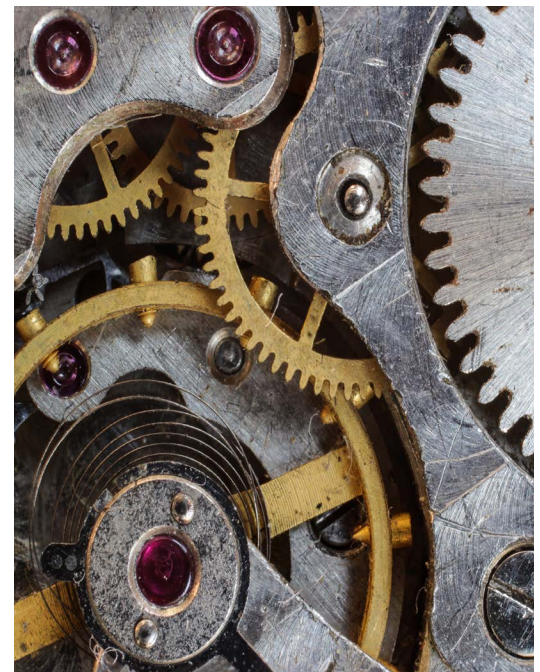
Increasing Engagement of Faculty in Assessment

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University of Phoenix has always involved its faculty in assessment. Historically, that involvement was limited to faculty who taught courses at the end of a student's program, because faculty feedback was primarily sought at the mastery level of program outcomes. This meant that the majority of faculty, those who taught courses that introduced and reinforced student learning, didn't have an opportunity to share feedback on student learning.

Along with the limited number of faculty who were invited to share their experience with student learning, faculty also expressed that their insights weren't used to make meaningful changes at the program or course level. An example from an archived Faculty End of Course Survey (FEOCS) shows this sentiment: "I do not feel...that some of my ideas are listened to because further questions were not asked on the rationale behind these suggestions." This was due, in part, to the length of time it took the University to adjust programs and courses and the lack of communication with faculty once these changes were made.

Intervention and Implementation

In September of 2020, the Assessment team implemented a new assessment model that reflects our forward movement and two processes to address the lack of faculty engagement and communication about program and course changes.

The University's Assessment Model reflects a research

based continuous quality improvement model applied to the University's assessment efforts at the programmatic and course levels. It defines activities and reporting at four stages: 1) Plan, 2) Do, 3) Check, and 4) Act.

The model is implemented through a regular schedule of reporting (plan), data collection (do), processes that share student learning data with faculty and other university stakeholders and collect their recommendations on ways to improve student learning (check), and resulting changes to course sequence, curriculum, faculty expectations, or other variables identified through the assessment process to be addressed (act).
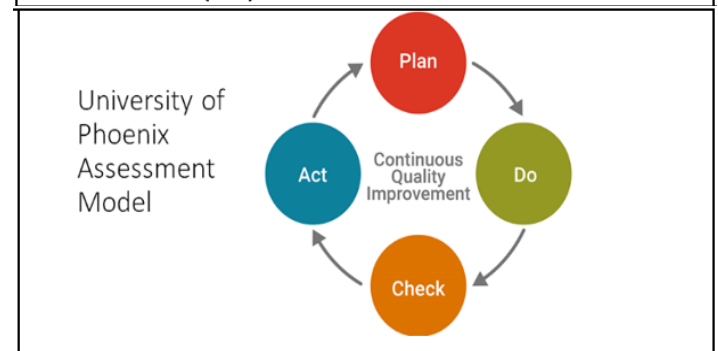
The two processes help colleges glean student learning assessment information at the program and course levels, stewarded by dedicated faculty with a specific part of their work for the university dedicated to assessment, the Faculty Assessment Liaisons.

The **Comprehensive Assessment Process (CAP)** is part of the University's 5-year program evaluation

process, the Academic Program Review. All faculty teaching in a program receive an assessment survey that asks them to share feedback on student learning related to the Program Student Learning Outcomes of the program under review. This survey is used to make program level changes. Faculty are notified of these changes via the Closing the Loop email – which details steps forward for the program based on their feedback.

The **Rapid Assessment Process (RAP)** is an iterative process that allows the colleges to make quick changes to courses based in-part on faculty feedback from assessment surveys or ad hoc communication. These changes have a direct impact on student learning at the course level. Faculty are notified of these changes via an official communication from the Assessment team called Closing the Loop – which details steps forward for the course based on their feedback in addition to data from other assessment mechanisms.

The University has had **Faculty Assessment Liaisons (FALs)** since 2013. Their roles have evolved through the years, but they have continually acted as a conduit between faculty and the assessment team and colleges. With the implementation of the new model and processes, the FAL role changed yet again. FALs are now responsible for communicating survey requests to faculty, answering faculty questions about assessment, analyzing faculty responses to assessment surveys, conveying this analysis to the colleges, and then sending closing the loop communications to faculty when changes are determined. This faculty-to-faculty communication strategy further strengthens faculty's role in assessment.

Findings

The University currently has around 2,700 active faculty, 2,550 of whom are classified as associate (adjunct) faculty.

From September 2020 through February 2022, approximately 1,900 faculty were invited to complete an assessment survey. The response rate was calculated at a whopping 52%.

In the spring and summer of 2022, the assessment team surveyed college staff and FALs about the new processes and pulled comments from the Faculty End of Course Surveys (FEOCS). In addition, there were personal communications with several faculty and FALs where the assessment team specifically asked how they felt about their involvement in assessment, how results from the RAPs were further shared, and the effectiveness of faculty voice through assessment surveys. The results were overwhelmingly positive. Following are a sampling of comments.

College Staff:

> "The RAP is a great process that yields excellent input to courses and their content," (Assessment and Institutional Research, 2022a).

> "These results are shared in course kickoffs with CTL and is also shared with faculty through various communication channels (newsletter, faculty CAMs, faculty GFMs, faculty CACs, faculty council, etc.)," (Assessment and Institutional Research, 2022a).

Faculty Assessment Liaison:

> "I absolutely love working with my colleagues on assessments and improvements. I have been around a while at UoP but I feel like the best is yet to come! We are building it!" (Assessment and Institutional Research, 2022b).

Faculty member:

> "As a faculty member in an online environment, it is important to have tools that allow faculty to understand course changes and help manage updates to the curriculum. The University of Phoenix staff and support group work to continually improve this process. They keep in touch by sending out surveys and informational emails that provide faculty with the ability to interact with and understand curriculum changes. I have been involved in the development of several course curriculums over the years and have enjoyed the interaction with wonderful curriculum and assessment personnel at the University. Using digital tools and electronic communication, the University helps faculty participate in important class decisions as well as informing us of changes and updates in an efficient manner," (L. Nichols, personal communication, August 16, 2022).

> "The changes in NSG/512 were interesting and positive. Placing the literature review in Week 4 allowed time for the students to learn how to access the literature," (NSG/512 Faculty End of Course Survey, 2002, January 31).

The comments indicate the Assessment team's marked progress in faculty engagement in assessment and the

use of faculty feedback to make changes in courses and programs. The implementation of the assessment model, both assessment processes, and a re-frame of the FAL role has been effective in involving more faculty in assessment activities and implementing their feedback to change courses and programs. However, under the continuous quality improvement model, the Assessment Team will continue to make iterative changes.

Next Steps

The Assessment team will continue to use both assessment processes to involve faculty with the goal giving every faculty member at the institution the opportunity to complete an assessment survey sharing their feedback on student learning in a course they teach.

In addition, the Assessment team will continue to work with academic leadership to refine communication avenues with the goal of ensuring every faculty member is aware that faculty are involved in assessment through course and program assessment surveys and that their insights are used to make specific course and program changes.

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The Novel Initiative: Building Empathy Competence in UOPX Graduate Health Administration Students

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We wanted to do something entirely different – to engage our learners in an unexpected, affective way. Triangulating with what academe and the health and healing sectors were asking for, engaged human-centric learners with competence in empathy, we set out to build the Novel Initiative in the Master of Health Administration Program, the first of its kind in a program like this.

Background

Storytelling is experiencing a renaissance of sorts in all sectors. Granted, this renaissance was identified in a New York Times editorial over 40 years ago (see Johnson, 1986) and cited the first gathering of the National Storytelling Festival in 1979 in Jonesboro, TN, as the formal beginning of this renaissance which perhaps isn't a renaissance at all but more the appearance of storytelling in the public eye.

For those in the discipline of healthcare, stories about care, practice, patients, and the realities of health and healing stretch far back – a cursory list could include Anton Chekov and William Carlos Williams to the present day of Oliver Saks, Atul Gawande, Katherine Mannix, and their contemporaries. Storytelling as a practice has not slowed down in its original form and

continues to diversify through iterations of practice like digital storytelling (Rieger, West, Kenny et al, 2018) and marketing's brand storytelling (Da Costa, 2019).

Indeed, a google NGram view of the frequency of use of the word "storytelling" in literature gives us a clue to the formalization of its popularity and examination.
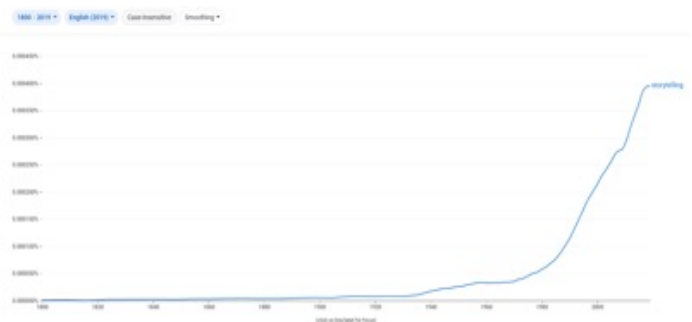
Use of stories and storytelling in healthcare is situated within the larger context of Health Humanities, an

academic discipline investigating forms of narrative, art, poetry and music in cultivating affective competencies in healthcare practitioners. Germane to the conversation as well is the discipline of narrative medicine, the practice of soliciting and hearing individuals' stories in the context of health and healing within clinical practice (see Charon's 2001 overview in JAMA).

Stories and Empathy are connected. Hsu (2008) describes storytelling as "a human universal" that appeal[s] to our capacity for empathy" (para. 1). Emerging neuroscience scholarship shows storytelling produces an empathy response in the physical sense, demonstrated by a synthesis of oxytocin in the listener's brain (Zak, 2015).

Empathy was heralded in Forbes recently as the most important leadership competency (Brower, 2021). (See the recent assertion by Mejia and Aronstein (2020) that empathy is a tool to deal with complexity, uncertainty, and ambiguity). Data from Lightcast (formerly EMSI Burninglass), the labor analytics company that mines job descriptions for in-demand skills in the workplace, showcases empathy's continued rise.

Research highlights the significance of empathy in clinical curricula (Laughey, Atkinson, Craig, et al, 2021) but a gap exists in the literature regarding empathy's utility as a skillset in healthcare administration and leadership. Studies assert that health leaders can benefit in the same ways that clinical professionals can and do from this training (Saffran, 2014; Crawford, Brown, Tischler, & Baker, 2010.

Treatment

The novel initiative was a two-pronged approach to building empathy competence in graduate students in the University of Phoenix Master of Health Administration. It launched across 2017 and 2018. First, the project included the embedding of two novels (narrative non-fiction) in the MHA, *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot in the program's regulatory and compliance course and *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down* by Anne Fadiman in the health policy course. The program received accreditation from the Commission on the Accreditation of Healthcare Management Education (CAHME) in 2019 and the novels remain in the program, a testament to their value and alignment

with best practice. Data from the year following the launch demonstrated a reduction in withdrawal and failure rates in both courses as well as an increase in positive student sentiment regarding faculty teaching in these courses.

Second, to test industry alignment of the initiative during the 2017 launch, a grant from the American College of Healthcare Executives was secured to mirror and track the engagement of healthcare leaders with the novels, specifically the Arizona Chapter of ACHE, Arizona Healthcare Executives (AHE). Using the Literature in Medicine Program from the Maine Humanities Council as the model, eight facilitated book discussion groups focused on empathy development for AHE healthcare leaders to help them develop a more foundational understanding of empathy and how it can be applied in a healthcare setting from a leadership perspective. Before and after Likert scales showed an 85% increase in participants' ability to understand empathy and a 90% increase in participants' appreciation of empathy's value in healthcare. Feedback from discussion group participants informed future decisions about experience with the novels and what books to include in the MHA program going forward that would be well-aligned to what industry needs and healthcare leadership could best use.

Conclusion

Iterating on a foundational strength of the University of Phoenix, the Novel Initiative sought to bring new research, industry needs, and best practice to the Master of Health Administration program. Students continue to benefit from engagement with these stories in the program, building an empathy competency that facilitates their personal growth, increases their employment value, sets them apart as leaders in their current or desired workplace, and empowers them to make a difference in their communities.

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Knowledge Without Boundaries Research Summit Schedule Released

The College of Doctoral Studies is hosting the 2022 Knowledge Without Boundaries Summit on October 13,14, and 15. Important information about the summit can be found on this page on the Research Hub (along with links to each day's schedule). Registration information will appear on that page in the coming weeks. The current schedule can be found on these pages on the Research Hub:

- Day 1
- Day 2
- Day 3

Upcoming Events and Workshops

The College of Doctoral Studies offers a variety of events and workshops for students, faculty, and alumni. Below, you will find inforamtion for upcoming events and workshops; to access the full calendar please visit the **Workshop Calendar** on the Research Hub. All events are in the Arizona time zome, which does not observe daylight savings time. Feel free to reach out to us if you have an idea for a future event or workshop.

Date	Time	Title	Description & Presenter	Details
09/22/22	4 PM (MST)	**Positive Delphi Method** Dr. Phil Davidson	This workshop provides an overview of conducting Positive Delphi method. Effective practices, issues, and challenges related to this design will be discussed.	Via Collaborate
09/24/22	10 AM (MST)	**Business and Leadership Network**	Network and development event for DBA and DM Students. Hosts: Drs. Herman van Niekerk, Brett Gordon, and Les Huffman	Via Zoom
10/01/22	10 AM (MST)	**Ed.D. Essentials**	Ed.D. Program Overview Hosted by Drs. Lilia Santiague and Josh Valk	Via Zoom
10/06/22	4 PM (MST)	**The Art of Academic Writing: Writing Like a Scholar**	This session is designed to introduce students to the practice of writing for academic purposes. It will prepare students for work in doctoral courses in which research writing is a requirement and introduces basic research writing skills including synthesizing, paraphrase, summarizing, direct quotations, and critical thinking. The CDS Writing Support Team	Register Via Google Form
10/08/22	9 AM (MST)	**DHA Networking Call**	Opportunity for DHA students to exchange insights of the doctoral journey and receive feedback.	Via Microsoft Teams

Date	Time	Title	Description & Presenter	Details
10/27/22	4 PM (MST)	**Case Studies and Triangulation**	Explanation of finishing step of bringing together all the types of data analysis for a conclusion in a case study. Host: Dr. Mansureh Kebritchi Focus: Research Design	Via Collaborate
11/03/22	4 PM (MST)	**Deep Dive: Academic Writing 101**	Writing in the academic environment requires an attention to grammar and precision. The mechanics of style in writing are the rules that must be followed when preparing written documents in the academic environment. An attention to the mechanics of style allows research strategies and formatting to become systematic and consistent across all written work. Host: CDS Writing Support Team	Register Via Google Forms
11/05/22	10 AM (MST)	**Ed.D. Essentials**	Theory to Practice in Educational Leadership Hosts: Drs. Nickie Bell and Roxanne Jordan	Via Zoom
11/10/22	5 PM (MST)	**Humility Receiving Feedback, Progressing Through Dissertation Process**	Explanation of how to accept and incorporate feedback for dissertation enhancement. Host: Dr. Karen Johnson Focus: Research Data Management	Via Collaborate
11/12/22	9 AM (MST)	**DHA Networking Call**	Discussion on Dissertation Journey for DHA students.	Via Microsoft Teams
11/14/22	5 PM (MST)	**Curtailing Bias in Research**	This webinar provides an overview of identifying and mitigating research biases. Host: Dr. Erik Bean	Via Collaborate
11/17/22	5 PM (MST)	**Dean John Ramirez, CDS Operations, and Director Chris Celauro, Alumni & Career Experience**	Co-Presenters Ramirez and Celauro will highlight University of Phoenix/College of Doctoral Studies support and services for alumni. Host: Dr. Louise Underdahl Focus: Alumni/Student Professional Development	Via Collaborate
11/19/22	10 AM (MST)	**CDS Coffee Chat**	The College of Doctoral Studies Student Coffee Chat (SCC) is a virtual, bi-monthly event aimed at fostering student success. Each session includes a lively discussion, with like-minded people, for inspiration and guidance as you advance within your program and beyond. SCC topics are announced approximately two weeks beforehand, so please visit the Student Coffee Chat page.	Register Via Research Hub

Join us on the Research Hub for all Center activities, KWBA dates, and new research information!

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