

Transnational Journal of Business



Reflections on the COVID Crisis—
Transitions from Classrooms to Quarantine.





Transnational
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Business

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Transnational Journal of Business

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LETTER FROM THE MANAGING EDITOR

Dear Reader,

Welcome to our first and I hope, last Special COVID-19 Issue, of *the Transnational Journal of Business*. By way of background, in early May of this year I went to the Scholar-Practitioner Publications Committee with the basic idea of putting out a special call for papers given the events and significant impact COVID-19 was having on all of our faculty, students and institutions. By design, the call for papers was meant to capture the myriad feelings, challenges and victories we were all experiencing. The call for papers was released as follows:

Special Call for Papers: The TJB Solicits Essays on the Theme, Reflections on the COVID Crisis—Transitions from Classrooms to Quarantine. Selected essays will become part of a special issue of the *Transnational Journal of Business* (TJB) to be published in Fall 2020. Possible topics include technology challenges and solutions; pedagogical strategies; student challenges and perspectives; emotions and adjustments.

I think one can see this call for papers cast a very wide net and the results speak to this. In this issue you will find purely quantitative research presented, personal essays and what might best be called case studies of best practices. Let's all hope that through the sharing of these personal experiences we all regain a bit more comfort in knowing that we are not alone and that this new normal, while challenging, will not defeat us. The spirit, tenacity and emotion that comes across in these pages will speak to that. As always, I want to thank our authors, readers, and reviewers for all of their hard work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Justin Matus', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Justin Matus

Student Experiences During the COVID-19 Pandemic: An Exploratory Survey of Park University Students

Alla Adams, MHA, MPH, Ph.D. and James Vanderleeuw, Ph.D. — Park University

INTRODUCTION

In January 2019, a novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV2) outbreak started in Wuhan, China, and quickly spread around the world. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared a public health emergency of international concern on January 30, 2020 and announced it as the COVID-19 pandemic on March 11, 2020 (World Health Organization, 2020a). According to WHO's Situation Report 103, the global total number of COVID-19-positive cases reached 3,267,184 by May 2, 2020, with 229,971 reported deaths (World Health Organization, 2020b). A global health and economic threat, COVID-19 has brought extraordinary disruption to higher education, forcing campus closures and rapid transition to remote teaching. Many faculty and students had to learn on-the-fly how to use novel technologies. It has become, therefore, imperative to examine how students experienced this transition.

A GROWING BODY OF EMPIRICAL RESEARCH is emerging from Asia, Australia, and Europe, perhaps because the COVID-19 outbreak came there first. In China, long-term isolation policy in response to COVID-19 had a complex influence on the mental health of college students (N=992), specifically on the symptoms of obsessive-compulsive disorder, hypochondria, depression, and neurasthenia (Chen, Sun, Fend, 2020). A study with two online surveys of college students (N=555) before and after their COVID-19 confinement in China found factors such as having inadequate supplies of hand sanitizers and a higher year of study to be predictors of increased anxiety and depression (Li, Cao, Leung, & Mak, 2020). Zhang, Zhang, Ma, & Di (2020) – in several longitudinal surveys of college

students in China (N=66) to determine the dose-response relationships between the COVID-19 death count, physical activity, and negative emotions – found the severity of the COVID-19 outbreak had an indirect effect on negative emotions by affecting sleep quality.

In Australia, isolation was found to be related to a higher caloric diet intake in female students and a decrease in physical activity in both sexes among undergraduate students (N=509) (Gallo, Gallo, Young, Moritz, & Akison, 2020). In Italy, the lockdown caused a significant decrease in physical activity among undergraduate students (N=384) (Galle, Sabella, Da Molin, et al., 2020). In Ukraine, a survey of undergraduate students and lecturers (N=2,789) found numerous psychological issues in students related to lack of live communication, inability

ity to retake missed practical classes, increase in tasks, lack of time to complete tasks, obligations to carry out family, limited access to computers, and parents transferred to remote work (Prokopenko & Berezna, 2020).

Methods

This current survey was designed to investigate Park University student experiences relative to personal life and educational factors during transition to COVID-19 lockdown. Park University is a private, nonprofit, liberal arts institution with more than 16,000 students, 77 degree programs, 31 certificates, and 41 campus centers in the United States (Park University, 2020). Thus, student experiences will broadly reflect university student experiences related to the COVID-19 epidemic generally, and can serve as reference to guide institutions of higher education in planning educational interventions to support the students.

Undergraduate and graduate students taking classes in the Spring term at Park University were invited via email to participate in an online Campus Labs survey during the lockdown period (April 23 – May 11, 2020). Respondents were informed that it was not mandatory to respond to all questions and that the responses will be kept confidential.

Results

Demographics and Background

A total of 566 valid responses were received by the end of May 11, 2020. The modal age range was 18-22 (39%,

n=196); age categories ranged from under 18 years (0.2%, n=1) to over 57 years (1%, n=6). The majority were female (n=339/510), and respondents reflected a range in status: 14% freshmen, 15% sophomores, 24% juniors, 28% seniors, and 19% graduate students (n=72, 75, 120, 145, and 99 respectively, out of 511).

Effect of COVID-19 Lockdown on Students' Personal Life

When asked how much stress the students are feeling about the potential consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, 46% felt “a great deal;” 40% felt “some” stress; and 14% responded “little or none” (n=236, 208, and 73 respectively, out of 517). Eighty-four percent reported they did not become ill as a result of the coronavirus, 2% responded that they became ill and 14% responded that they did not know whether or not they became ill (n=476, 11, 77 respectively, out of 564). However, 27% (151/565) had a friend, family member or coworker who became ill with COVID-19. Among this group, 22% spent up to 20 hours per week or more, and 37% spent up to 10 hours per week taking care of, or providing, emotional support to them (n=28 and 47 respectively, out of 127).

Thirty-one percent of students (n=179) had their employment adversely impacted as a result of the pandemic – 14% had work hours reduced, 5% exited their job, and 14% were let go from their job and were unemployed at the time of the survey (n=76, 26, and 77 respectively, out of 563). Among those who remained employed, 49% could reliably engage in social distancing at work, but many could not. In response to

the question whether they are able to engage in social distancing at work, 18% responded “sometimes,” 15% responded “almost never,” and 18% responded “not sure” (n=216, 80, 68, and 81 respectively, out of 445).

In response to a question regarding what they worried about, given the changes at the university caused by the epidemic, 69% identified “doing well in my studies now that my classes are online;” 47% noted “paying my bills, e.g., tuition, loans, rent, Internet access, medical bills;” 35% reported “losing friendships and social connections now that classes are online;” 28% responded “accessing the technology needed for my online classes;” 14% noted “having access to health care;” 10% indicated “having enough to eat day-to-day;” 8% reported “having a safe and secure place to sleep every night (n=311, 212, 156, 126, 61, 44, and 25 respectively, out of 450).

Effect of COVID-19 Lockdown on Students' Educational Factors

Among the 68% of students enrolled in a face-to-face or blended course that transitioned to online (349/517) – for 34% (119/348) the transition was not easy. Students were asked about the challenges they faced in their courses during the pandemic. Fifty-four percent felt they did not have enough time to submit assignments, given other responsibilities caused by the pandemic; 34% reported insufficient consideration given by the instructor to changed circumstances caused by

the pandemic; 34% felt unclear about how their face-to-face or blended course would transition to online; 28% noted too much noise and distraction due to their children staying home; 28% worried whether the university would cancel the term (n=276, 176, 173, 142, and 142 respectively, out of 514). Students were also asked about any technical issues that they experienced with online learning due to social distancing: 54% had an issue with reliable Internet access; 31% had a communication issue with the instructor; 22% had a technical issue taking a quiz or an exam; 19% had an issue with access to a computer with necessary software; 18% had an issue with access to textbooks and required coursework materials (n=190, 108, 79, 67, and 64 respectively, out of 353).

Students were further asked what the faculty or the university as a whole might do to assist in continuing their education: 66% wanted more flexibility regarding when assignments are due; 44% favored face-to-face and blended courses be reinstated when possible; 33% wanted improved communication from instructors to students; 33% wanted the availability of courses increased; 31% favored increased access to financial aid; 24% sought improved communication from the university to students; 23% wanted all courses kept online; 23% favored an increase in the availability and ease of advising; and 18% wanted courses online but with synchronous activities (n=328, 219, 167, 165, 154, 121, 114, 114, and 90 respectively, out of 497).

Discussion and Conclusion

These results reflect one survey at a given point in time. Cross-cultural comparative studies will augment the findings presented here as will longitudinal studies that will enhance our understanding of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on levels of stress related to personal life and educational factors in university students. This said, survey results reveal students are facing financial, personal, and educational challenges as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The outcome is high stress levels, physical illness in relatives, increased time commitment taking care of ill family members or friends, and adverse employment effects. These findings are consistent with the empirical studies conducted in Asia, Australia, and Europe.

Regarding their education, students' main concern is doing well in their studies in the online environment. Flexibility regarding when assignments are due is important, as are technical issues and time availability. Students need time to become familiar with online learning, and synchronous activities should be included to provide a bridge to the more familiar face-to-face environment. The institution and instructors need to ensure timely communication with students. University leaders should take the responsibility of supporting the students financially so that they can stay on track to their degree completion. Proper counseling services and advising should be available to support the mental health and well-being of students.

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The Ship in a Storm: What Kind of Scholarship in a Time of Crisis?

Richard Barnes — Western Governors University

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC has touched humanity more rapidly and more seriously than any other major disaster of the modern era. For the first time since World War II, a major global crisis has centered itself in the west, killing hundreds of thousands and sickening millions just in Europe and North America. At the same time, the pandemic has combined with generational political forces to stretch democratic and economic systems and threatens the American perspective of entrepreneurial capitalism that has become dominate over the last century. Across the west, and particularly in the United States, major institutions, including universities, are creaking under stress; some are cracking, and some will break.

Universities all over the United States are under pressure. Some of the pressures were created by COVID-19, but many of them represent major, systemic flaws that have plagued American higher education for decades. These flaws were brought to the forefront of educational discussions when COVID-19 closed campuses, threatened revenue streams, trimmed federal and state tax revenues, and forced higher education, much of it unwillingly, into a brave, new virtual world. One of the major questions confronting higher education today,

as many institutions prepare for their first planned semester of all-online or mostly online delivery, is what is to become of the traditional faculty balance of teaching, research, and service? This article attempts to address that question and argues that, in these unusual times, faculty must pivot from a primary focus on field-specific research to focus instead on pedagogical research and particularly on the pedagogy of teaching online.

Tension exists between the different facets of the academic persona, but none is greater than the tension between scholarship and teaching. Both have tremendous rewards, but each demands tremendous amounts of academics' most precious resource: their time. A generation ago, Ernest Boyer¹ famously redefined scholarship to relieve that tension to include the scholarship of teaching and learning.² Boyer's model rapidly became dominate across academe, particularly in the United States. Over time, the scholarship of teaching and learning, as Boyer defined it, has struggled to gain ground on an equal basis with its counterparts.³ Some have even attempted to redefine the scholarship of teaching as an integrative component expressing other components of Boyer's scholarship model, instead

1 Ernest Boyer was an educational thought leader and practice academic of his time serving as Chancellor of the State University of New York, United States' Commissioner of Education, and President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

2 Boyer, E. *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*, Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (1990).

3 Glassick, C., *Boyer's Expanded Definitions of Scholarship, the Standards for Assessing Scholarship, and the Elusiveness of the Scholarship of Teaching*, 75 *Acad. Med.* 877 (2000).

of an independent research focus.⁴ Richlin ultimately separated the scholarship of teaching into two components—the act of scholarly teaching and the pure scholarship that reports those results.⁵ There are significant impediments to an academic career built in the space of the scholarship of teaching learning. First among them is the challenge that there are very few well-rated journals that publish teaching and learning scholarship;⁶ comparatively, there are numerous A+ rated journals in each business subdiscipline. Most business disciplines (accounting, human resources, marketing, and others) do not have access to an A+ rated journal focusing on teaching and learning scholarship in their discipline.⁷ The lack of a publishing home, for tenure-track faculty who must publish or perish, guides faculty away from teaching and learning and towards the scholarship of discovery. Despite three decades of further refinement of the scholarship of teaching and learning, teaching and learning scholarship remains a lower tier form of scholarship than the more traditional scholarship of discovery.

Within this context of teaching and learning, a somewhat neglected discipline within academe, in general, and business, in particular, we insert the coronavirus pandemic. Suddenly, society writ large and universities need the scholarship of teaching and learning and need it in a big way. The traditional lecture and

Socratic modes of education are largely ineffective in a virtual environment. Teaching faculty have an immediate need to tap into novel methods of engaging students and provoking the most difficult types of student skill and knowledge development. This need creates an incredible opportunity for faculty to pivot out of their more traditional scholarship activities and into the scholarship of teaching and learning. The professoriate needs to redefine teaching and then retrain itself how to teach. That is a major societal problem, and for decades, academics have contended that scholarship is the best solution to the biggest problems of society.

Another great opportunity for academics is the natural experiment created by coronavirus. By forcing higher education online and using fall 2019 as a control, fall 2020 provides an opportunity to study online teaching and learning in a way that has simply never existed. Hundreds of thousands of faculty will teach online in fall 2020, most of them for the first time. Unlike their spring 2020 experience, for most faculty this will be an intentional and planned experience with the full benefit of the summer months to properly prepare. Faculty will implement new and exciting pedagogical techniques and the natural experiment will allow those results to be compared to previous terms in a direct and coherent way without the biases that have traditionally afflicted teaching online (such as a preference to put

4 Hill, P., *Twenty Years On: Ernest Boyer, Scholarship and the Scholarship of Teaching*, unpublished (2009), available at <https://bit.ly/2Y29NuM>.

5 Richlin, L., *Scholarship Reconsidered*, 86 *New Directions for Teaching and Learning* 57 (2001).

6 Currie, R. & Pandher, G., *Management Education Journals' Rank and Tier by Active Scholars*, 12 *Acad. Of Management Learning & Education* 194, 204 (2013) (determining through survey that there are only three A+ and only eight A- or greater journals that publish teaching and learning scholarship in all of business).

7 *Id.*

the best and most experienced faculty in classrooms and relegate online teaching to the least experienced or weakest faculty or *vice versa*).

In order to accomplish the rehabilitation of the scholarship of teaching and learning as an equivalent discipline, universities must adjust faculty research expectations either to focus on the scholarship of teaching and learning or to provide and explicitly require a certain amount of scholarship in the teaching and learning space. Some institutions have already taken this step. For example, the strategic plan for the University of North Carolina at Pembroke School of Business indicates value for scholarship that benefits students.⁸ Within the Boyer model of scholarship, the only type of scholarship that can be expected to benefit students with any degree of urgency is the scholarship of teaching and learning. There are numerous ways to put preferences of this type into action. First, institutions can reduce the amount of teaching and learning publications that are needed for tenure relative to other types of research. For example, an institution operating on a tenure policy requiring three major publications over five years could allow three publications of any type or two publications in the teaching and learning space. Second, considering the lack of A-rated journals in the teaching and learning space,⁹ institutions could allow teaching and learning publications to count toward tenure even if they are in a B or B+ rated journal that

would not be otherwise permitted. Third, and most interestingly, an institution could waive a required publication for research projects that are unpublished but demonstrate specific, sustained improvement in teaching (as measured by student, peer, and/or department head teaching evaluations). To an extent, this represents a merging of the teaching and scholarship components of faculty evaluation, but such a merger is consistent with the literature.¹⁰ As Boyer, Glassick, and Richlin all agree, the scholarship of teaching has two unique components – the act of teaching itself and the publication of the methods and outcomes of that teaching.¹¹ Both activities are the scholarship of teaching and learning, so a partial merging of the teaching and scholarship components of the faculty role is reasonable.

COVID-19 presents unusual challenges and opportunities for higher education. Most important is the opportunity to rehabilitate the scholarship of teaching and learning as a valuable and impactful scholarship space for tenure-track faculty. Additionally, there is the opportunity to take advantage of the natural experiment created by the sudden transition to predominantly virtual teaching. Finally, there is the opportunity for institutions to encourage additional scholarship in the area of teaching and learning by building incentives within the tenure-track promotion model that encourage scholarship of teaching and learning over other types of more traditional scholarship.

⁸ The University of North Carolina at Pembroke School of Business, *Strategic Plan*, last accessed June 15, 2020, available at <https://www.uncp.edu/academics/colleges-schools/school-business/about-us/mission-strategic-plan>.

⁹ *Supra* n 6.

¹⁰ *Supra* n 2, 3, & 5.

¹¹ *Id.*

The Best Laid Plans: One Professor's Response to the COVID-19 Global Crisis

Julianna Browning, PhD, CPA, CMA, CGMA — California Baptist University

DURING THE SPRING 2020 SEMESTER, I was teaching undergraduate accounting courses in hybrid format to a traditional, main campus student population. The semester was progressing well and we were preparing for spring break. Then, the world seemed to stop. On March 12, 2020, my institution announced its first step in responding to the COVID-19 crisis: spring break would start early and span more than two weeks.

The plan was for campus-based classes to resume on March 30, but we would not come back to campus. Instead, we, the faculty, were to transition all face-to-face and hybrid classes to Remote Instruction to complete the rest of the semester.

Having taught fully online courses in our Division of Online and Professional Studies, I had significant experience teaching online and hybrid courses. I actually set up the Learning Management System, Blackboard, for my hybrid courses very similar to a fully online course. From Day 1 of the semester in January, I supplied my students with all of the course material in Blackboard including chapter PowerPoints, fill-in lecture handouts, and my personal step-by-step lecture videos on YouTube to accompany those handouts.

Since I had already set up the course in Blackboard to use all of the online tools, materials, and resources that I would have included in an online course, students were familiar with the Blackboard course layout and comfortable with navigating the system to get course material and information.

Since I laid the foundation for the online material in my courses up front, I thought it would be straightforward to “flip the switch” and convert the course from a hybrid to a fully online format. After all, the technological components of the course were already in place, ready to go, and familiar to the students. This meant the technology component of the transition was seamless. I taught extensively online and knew how to navigate online learning so the teaching component of the transition was seamless for me. The learning component of the transition, though, was not fully seamless.

In fact, students had varying degrees of engagement and success with the transition to Remote Instruction. Some students had no problem with the transition and continued to learn the material, complete assignments, email questions, and perform well. On the opposite end of the spectrum, other students did not log in to Blackboard after March 12, did not complete assign-

ments, and did not respond to emails. These were the students that needed extra help and support.

Going into the first few days of our response to the pandemic, I quickly realized that this was not simply about flipping the switch to change the learning modality for my students. My students were experiencing substantial trauma and I needed to provide help, assistance, and support well beyond the course material.

Some students had housing difficulties because the dorms and student housing were shut down. Some students did not have compatible devices to access coursework at home. Other students were frozen by fear and anxiety and could not bring themselves to focus on course material. Still other students worked 40 plus hours a week as front line workers to support their household when their family members were laid off or furloughed. My students were experiencing substantial stress and uncertainty.

Even though I am a very engaged professor under normal circumstances, I felt compelled to go above and beyond the norm. My students were silently hurting. I needed to help them. My driving force during the semester was to truly meet my students at their needs.

I reached into my online teaching toolkit and got started. I knew I needed to provide more substantial personal outreach to help my students during this unprecedented time. To do that, I employed five themes for outreach and strategic intervention.

My first method of outreach was extra course communication. Not only did I communicate more

frequently with my students via Blackboard announcements, but I also provided different types of communication. My announcements were not just about instructions, assignments, and due dates pertaining to the course. I also offered more heartfelt thoughts and feelings including my personal experiences and inspirational passages to encourage them.

Second, I scheduled several virtual meetings each week to answer students' course-related questions on specific theoretical concepts, assignment instructions, and specific homework problems. I wanted them to know that I was still there to help them and they were not alone in the transition, in the course, or in the pandemic. I had a varying degree of attendance at these scheduled meetings, but I recorded them and distributed links to the videos so everyone could access to the information when it worked within their own schedules. I also let them know that I was open and available to schedule individual phone calls or meetings if they did not feel comfortable asking questions in a group setting or if the designated meeting time did not work for their specific schedule. This let students know that I was available for them and flexible to meet them on their terms.

Third, I reached out to students regularly as individuals beyond the course-wide communication. When I saw a student's homework scores go down week-on-week, I sent a personal email. I let the student know the impact on their grade but, more importantly, I offered help with the course and asked how I could support them, thereby leaving the door open for more

communication. When students responded to my emails, more often than not, the student understood the material. The issue was personal in nature. Once I knew how to help them, I did.

Another important email I sent out regularly was to acknowledge and praise students for doing well or improving their performance from the prior week. Especially during the uncertainty of the pandemic, students were reassured by this positive affirmation and saw that I was (still) an actual person on the other end of the computer who noticed their hard work, effort, and progress and, more importantly, who cared about them as people not just as students.

Fourth, I wielded abundant grace and patience. As an accounting professor, neither of those characteristics come naturally. I am usually quite strict with homework due dates. This is important not only because the course material builds upon itself throughout the semester, but I am also very aware of the professional implications of being able to meet deadlines in the workplace. During this semester, I was much more lenient on due dates. If students communicated that they needed an extension for any reason, I gave them extra time. If they still had issues, I gave them more time. I essentially took the stance that students could get as many extensions as they needed for any assignment during the semester but I always offered them a phone call or virtual meeting so I could personally help them work through any conceptual issues they had. This flexibility provided a bit of relief during uncertain times

and allowed students to reduce their stress, at least as it related to this particular course.

Finally, all of this goes hand-in-hand with understanding and empathy. I knew this semester was going to be unique and the status quo was not going to work. Some students had personal tragedies and did not have an outlet or any way to process their trauma, pain, and grief. Other students just needed an ear and a shoulder to vent or process their experiences. While many media outlets and celebrities touted, "We're all in this together," it was important for me to acknowledge that we all go through difficult circumstances differently. I wanted my students to know that I was there for them and committed to help them through their course and the pandemic as much as I could and in any way I could.

Regardless of whether it was subconscious or deliberate, I believe many professors used one or more of these strategies in some form to engage their students. For me, these techniques are not new or novel. They are staples in my teaching toolkit and I use them in every course. The main difference was the degree to which I used them and the intensity of my intentionality.

These students did not intend to take an online accounting course when they enrolled for the semester. Because of that, I felt a greater responsibility to shepherd them in their journey. I monitored every student every day. I reached out to students daily. I created a virtual open door policy for students to get the help they needed. Anecdotally, I saw a very positive relationship between these strategic interventions and student

outcomes during the pandemic. My students learned a lot despite the pandemic and so did I. Moving forward, I plan to use and expand on these strategies. My hope is that I can show students how much I care for them as people and not just as students.

Student Reactions in Asynchronous Online Learning in the COVID-19 Emergency Crisis in Higher Education

Bonnie Covelli, Ed.D.; Carol Lindee, Ph.D.; Maribel Valle, Ph.D.; Richard Vaughan, D.M.; Robert Behling, Ph.D.; and Orlando Griego, Ph.D. — University of St. Francis

Background

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC moved into the United States in January 2020 and by March, it had gained momentum (CDC, 2020; WHO, 2020). Over a very short time span, organizations were forced to respond to changing public health conditions.

In Illinois, the first COVID-19 stay-at-home order became effective on March 21 (Pritzker, 2020). This effective date hit either during or near the time that many higher education institutions had spring break. Therefore, after the break, most classes in all modalities were mandated to take place in a virtual setting. The research in this pandemic is quickly evolving as our colleagues in education seek to share value-added information to the field and to measure the impact of the switch from face-to-face to online learning.

During February-May, there was an onslaught of industry-written content posted to online periodicals and industry associations suggesting best practices for online learning. As institutions quickly switched from their traditional methods of teaching to an all virtual platform, there was much advice from industry experts and non-experts on how to teach online; how

to post lecture materials; and more. Much of the early advice was about how to transition real-time, in-person teaching to real-time, virtual teaching (Darby, 2020). It soon became clear that “emergency remote learning” was not the same as online learning (Shisley, 2020). Experienced online instructors know there are other ways to successfully teach online, and the asynchronous model is one that has been adopted and researched for decades by many institutions of higher education (Darby, 2020).

The students in this study were asynchronous online students before and after spring break, so their modality of instruction did not change due to the COVID-19 crisis. Studying students’ challenges in courses built for online learning provided a unique opportunity to view the students’ needs in crisis without the added factor of changing instructional modality.

It is conjectured that most individuals at this time experienced some changes in circumstances. This research is supported with data about students’ barriers and challenges to success in learning. Researchers also reviewed data on how the institution can support students during and following the crisis. The data are

presented to provide insight for institutions to use to support students in the future as the COVID-19 crisis develops into new stages or for future unknown crisis situations.

Methodology

This research-based approach reviewed secondary data from course evaluations for asynchronous online courses taught in the spring 2020 semester at a small, liberal arts institution located in Illinois. The six graduate and six undergraduate courses were chosen by professors teaching asynchronously, online for the entire semester (pre- and post-COVID-19 emergency switch to online). The courses were in the areas of healthcare administration and business. Five full-time faculty members with extensive experience in the online asynchronous learning environment voluntarily added three questions related to the COVID-19 emergency to their course evaluations.

The research questions were: What were the students' biggest challenge during the crisis semester? What could the institution do going forward to help the students during the crisis? What barriers to success did students' experience?

The qualitative data were reviewed using IBM's Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Text Analysis software. The software provides coding capability and uses advanced linguistic technologies to organize the data into categories and links associations between the constructs. After an initial coding of

terms, the researcher then attributes a coding analysis to like-terms.

Results

First, students were asked about their biggest challenge during the semester. There were 75 total responses reviewed in this data set. The strongest relationships were in the areas of academics and work. In the second tier of challenges with academics and work were time and family/friends. Weaker challenges were financial, health, changes, and external issues. Stress and concern also ranked in the lower half of the data sample for this research question.

The figures presented provide a visual web view of the categorical relationships. Stronger relationships are indicated by a dark thick line and weaker relationships have a thin line. No line indicates little to no relationship. The tables provide the text analysis categories ranked highest to lowest. The selection percentage is the percentage of respondents who were coded in a particular category.

Figure 1: Text Analytics of the Biggest Challenge

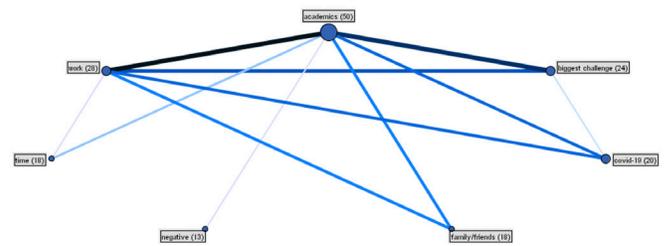


Table 3: Text Analytics of Supporting Students

| Category | Bar | Selection % | Respondents |
|------------------|-----|-------------|-------------|
| psychological | | 41.3 | 31 |
| academics | | 41.3 | 31 |
| work/employment | | 38.7 | 29 |
| negative | | 26.7 | 20 |
| time | | 25.3 | 19 |
| family/friends | | 24.0 | 18 |
| challenge | | 14.7 | 11 |
| positive | | 12.0 | 9 |
| help/care | | 10.7 | 8 |
| focus/motivation | | 9.3 | 7 |
| technology | | 9.3 | 7 |
| stay | | 5.3 | 4 |
| none - N/A | | 4.0 | 3 |
| financial | | 4.0 | 3 |
| external factors | | 4.0 | 3 |
| COVID-19 | | 2.7 | 2 |
| activities | | 1.3 | 1 |
| health | | 1.3 | 1 |

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that for these asynchronous online students, there were challenges due to COVID-19 in the areas of academics and work. Surprising to the researchers was that both financial and health concerns ranked in the lowest categories. One of the comments in this category stated:

- My biggest challenge has been balancing work, school, the kids, and their remote learning due to COVID-19. I am currently trying to find time to teach my second grader all things rainforest and cursive (along with all other subjects) in the few hours I have before their bedtime.

Perhaps financial and health concerns were not as critical since the need to balance work and home consumed extra time. The students' job type may have fallen into one that was critical during this timeframe. Frontline workers during the COVID-19 pandemic included individuals who could not work from home, many of

whom also lost childcare support services (Blau, Koebe, Meyerhofer, 2020). This included "healthcare workers, protective service workers (police and EMTs), cashiers in grocery and general merchandise stores, production and food processing workers, janitors and maintenance workers, agricultural workers, and truck drivers" (Blau, Koebe, Meyerhofer, 2020). These job categories may have matched the students involved in this study.

The findings also link challenges, academics, work with time and family/friends. Even though these students did not change modalities in their academic studies, the impact of time and family/friends was clear. One of the comments in this category stated:

- My biggest challenge this semester was getting through the semester with all that is happening in the world, with home & family and work.

Again, the idea of balance is a theme that impacted students' ability to focus on academics.

In the area of help and support, the data demonstrated that academics was the strongest relationship for areas of support. In general, the students had positive comments about the support they received, but this could be an area of continued focus as institutions proactively plan for future semesters that may continue to be impacted by new public health policies and procedures. One of the comments in this category stated:

- I was thankful to [the institution] for working with our class, for being accommodating and to our Professor who was very helpful and informative.

The students point to the idea of flexibility in the area of support. Another student used the word “lenience” when “dealing with unexpected transitions” and attributed this to the idea of comfort.

The data also support the important role of faculty in the area of help and support. The faculty members were on the front line in the academic online classroom, so it is quite possible that students looked to the faculty members for the areas where they were in need. Surprising to the researchers was that focus, imbalance, and feelings were not ranked highly by the students. In addition, while mental health was mentioned in the results for challenges, it is not ranked in the top categories for this question. However, when reviewing the data for barriers to success, students listed various psychological and academics as the two top categories.

This may be a result of students experiencing these barriers, but finding other resources to support them rather than feeling the need to seek these resources from the university.

Conclusions and Implications to Practice

While this study was limited in scope, it does provide critical insight and data to demonstrate the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on a body of students. As institutions make plans for future semesters where COVID-19 issues will likely still be present, additional emphasis could be placed on student support for asynchronous online courses. Faculty can offer flexibility, presence, and compassion. Institutional resources such as libraries, academic support, and counseling can also support student learning.

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Marketing During Mayhem: Educating Students on Marketing Automation and Crisis Management Communication During the COVID-19 Pandemic

D. Ashley Elmore — Georgian Court University

FORMULATING LONG-TERM marketing plans is an integral part of branding and corporate communication. The strategic plan guides all marketing initiatives to ensure a shared vision and consistent branding. However, companies encounter internal and external events that disrupt their previous planned promotions. The COVID-19 pandemic is an example of an incident that required reevaluating pre-established advertising materials and provided an opportunity to formulate new coronavirus-appropriate campaigns. Being flexible, redesigning marketing, and embarking upon crisis management marketing becomes essential. As such, educating students on best practices in marketing during mayhem is crucial.

This paper will outline new learning goals that were integrated into the course BU346: Social Media Marketing to educate students on crisis management marketing communications during the COVID-19 pandemic, the adaption of previously scheduled marketing, and the creation of new campaigns. Table 1 lists the newly formulated learning objectives.

Table 1

COVID-19 BU346: Learning Objectives

| Topic | Learning Objective |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Changing and Creating COVID Campaigns | Examine current marketing plans and evaluate need for modification to automated/prescheduled advertising |
| Heroes and Zeros: Case Studies | Analyze case studies to identify themes and effectiveness of COVID-19 marketing |

Examine current marketing plans and evaluate need for modifications to automated/prescheduled advertising

Once a marketing plan is established and content has been created, many companies utilize marketing automation to pre-schedule their digital media posts, ensuring materials are posted on a specified date. Hubspot 2020 defined marketing automation as using software to automate repetitive marketing activities such as email marketing, social media posting, and even ad campaigns. Additionally, automation is utilized not just for the sake of efficiency, but also for a more personalized customer experience. Anthony (2015) summarized marketing automation as the use of software to automate marketing processes, such as customer segmentation, customer data integration and campaign management.

The utilization of technology to implement marketing and forge deeper consumer relations is widespread and continues to increase in use. Murphy (2018) suggested that there are 292 platforms to facilitate marketing automation to serve more than 2.5 million websites worldwide. Sweeney (2018) estimated that spending on marketing automation will reach \$25 billion by 2023.

While many benefits arise from this technology based preplanned marketing communications, content must be reevaluated based on current events or crisis situations. McDonald (2020) emphasized the important of internal teams and agencies reviewing the content across all communication channels to evaluate or edit the automated or pre-scheduled emails, mobile communications, social posts, and advertisements during the COVID-19 pandemic. McDonald (2020) warned that previously scheduled content can come off as tone deaf or irrelevant during periods of crisis such as the coronavirus. Similarly, Daniel 2018 stated, “When relevant and timely content is not immediately implemented, it can set a business back years in their engagement with prospective and current customers.” p.1.

Students debated the positive and negative aspects of automation marketing and were asked to locate case studies or examples of companies who failed to modify their marketing during the virus and assess potential negative branding implications. Table 2 outlines examples marketing mishaps of companies that did not edit previously scheduled marketing efforts during COVID-19.

Table 2

COVID-19 Marketing Mishaps

| Company | Media Platform | Ad Contents |
|------------------------|----------------|---|
| Spirit Airlines | Email | Campaign “never been a better time to fly,” amid coronavirus pandemic |
| KFC | Television | Finger Linkin Good campaign “customers licking their own fingers and the fingers of their friends” during time of social distancing (Liffreing, 2020) |
| Norwegian Cruise Lines | Television | Norwegian Cruise Line commercial on CNN during a commercial break from coverage about coronavirus on the Grand Princess Cruise Ship |
| Hershey | Television | Featured people handing out Hershey bars with hugs and handshakes |

While the cases listed above made marketing mistakes, many companies adjusted their advertising initiatives. A survey by the Advertisers Perceptions Company sampled 203 of the Ad Pros affiliate companies to gather data on modifying marketing campaigns during the COVID-19 pandemic. Table 3 illustrated how the coronavirus has impacted advertising efforts of the sample. See Table 3.

Table 3

Marketing Modification Due to COVID-19

| Type of Marketing Modification | Percentage of Companies |
|---|-------------------------|
| Held back a campaign from launching until later in the year | 49% |
| Adjusted media type usage or shifted budget among media types | 48% |
| Stopped or pulled a campaign mid-flight | 45% |
| Paused all new advertising efforts until later in the year | 38% |
| Cancelled a campaign completely (pre-launch) | 34% |

Advertisers Perception (2020)

Analyze case studies to identify themes and effectiveness of COVID-19 marketing

Next, students were asked to conduct research to locate examples of COVID-19 marketing campaigns to identify common themes that were utilized. Students investigated hundreds of digital advertising campaigns on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter and email to identify commonalities throughout. After collecting this data, students classified the advertising campaigns into common groups or themes entailing: gratitude, cause/charitable marketing, humor, and entertainment/education.

Gratitude campaigns conveyed appreciation towards COVID-19 front line workers who potentially exposed themselves to harm in order to protect the larger population. This type of marketing took the form of email blasts and social media posts.

Next, cause/charitable marketing occurs when companies collaborate with a charity to raise funds to donate or enhance awareness. During the virus, this was frequently done in conjunction with gratitude campaigns. Francisca, Keith, Lilian, & Milton (2008) suggested that firms are increasingly engaging in cause marketing (CM), i.e., joining with charities or social causes to market a product or service. Cause marketing is embarked upon not only to serve a company's mission to serve or passion towards a charitable cause, but it is also a sales or public relations function. Krishna & Rajan (2009) attested that consumers obtain both a direct utility benefit from purchasing a product linked to a cause, and also obtain a spillover utility benefit from purchasing other non-cause-marketed products in the CM firm's portfolio.

The next theme identified was the use of humor in advertising. Mainer (2017) found that humor is a powerful marketing tool because it stimulates a level of cooperation towards a brand, awakens the parts of the brain which are responsible for memorizing the information, and assists a campaign in going viral. Stanley (2020) attested that during the first few weeks of COVID-19, companies were nervous about appearing insensitive and inappropriate in response to cancelled events and mounting numbers of cases. Stanley continued to suggest that now advertisers are entering a second phase in response to the global coronavirus pandemic and it's one that will include more jokes.

Entertainment/Education themed COVID-19 campaigns attempted to capitalize on the boredom,

newly found free time, or the desire to grow/learn during the pandemic of potential customers and target markets. Such campaigns educated consumers on everything from bartending, to building, to complimentary courses offered by prestigious universities. See Table 4 for examples of companies who utilized these commonly identified themes.

Table 4

| <i>Common Themes of COVID-19 Marketing</i> | |
|--|---|
| Theme | Company |
| Gratitude | -Hershey's: Created Super Hero Milk Chocolate bars and donated to front-line workers. -Mattel: Debuted a new collection of play figures designed to honor those front-line workers. |
| Cause Marketing / Charitable | -Lay's raises money for Feeding America by highlighting 'JoyGivers' fundraising campaign -PepsiCo & Food Network Nacho Showdown to raise awareness of and donations for the Restaurant Employee Relief Fund -Hush Puppies donating pairs of Power Walker shoes to lonely elders |
| Humor | -Coors Light uses comedy for Clone Machine Campaign -Bud Light reenacts funny Wasp Campaign |
| Entertainment / Education | -Wendy's virtual 'where's the beef?' treasure hunt - Chick-fil virtual band kids at-home musical project -Tostitos "Salsa For Cinco" an online Salsa dancing lessons -Patrón's Instagram Live event featuring 20 bartenders giving tips on at-home margarita making - Corona: #CincoAtHome Corona Beer Benefit Concert with Dillon Francis and Diplo - McDonalds in Belgium created a burger puzzle and delivered to fans who posted about them on social media -Harvard University offered 67 free online courses for those who want to expand their knowledge and master new skills during self-quarantine. |

Conclusions

In conclusion, the COVID-19 pandemic was used as a teaching moment for BU346 Social Media Marketing Students. Specifically, students compared the positive and negative aspects of automation marketing and the importance of modifying prescheduled communications. Additionally, students analyzed the corporate communications of well-known companies' television and social media platforms and identified common themes employed throughout COVID-19 Marketing. It was concluded that most companies integrated gratitude, cause marketing, humor, and education/entertainment into their COVID-19 branding strategy.

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Self-Efficacy and Improved Information Technology Skills: A Quantitative Essay of Skill Development During the COVID-19 Crisis

Michael T. Geier, Kristin Stowe, and Lisa A. Schwartz — Wingate University

INTRODUCTION

The recent COVID-19 crisis forced university students to leave a structured learning environment for an unstructured one. In a structured learning environment, students shape their skills after their instructors' skills (Dynam et al., 2008). In an unstructured environment, students have to practice their own self-directed skills with less support from the instructor. This change to an unstructured learning environment may affect skills students develop during a semester.

FORTUNE 500 TRAINING and development executives strongly recommend information technology (IT) skills for business graduates (Zhao & Alexander, 2002). In an effort to increase students' IT skills, universities integrate computers into their programs (Davis & Shade, 1994). This can be in two ways, via a computer lab or by placing computers into the classroom. Research shows that IT skill development is more effective in a computer lab than computers placed in a classroom (Rule et al., 2002).

For classes taught in a computer lab, students are expected to acquire IT skills. When the crisis removed the students from the structured computer lab, placing them in an unstructured home environment, it changed the overall learning environment. How this change impacted students is an important question to address. The effect may not be the same for every stu-

dent due to individual characteristics. During a crisis, individuals who have high levels of self-efficacy (i.e., believe in their abilities and competence) persist during challenging tasks (Avey et al., 2008).

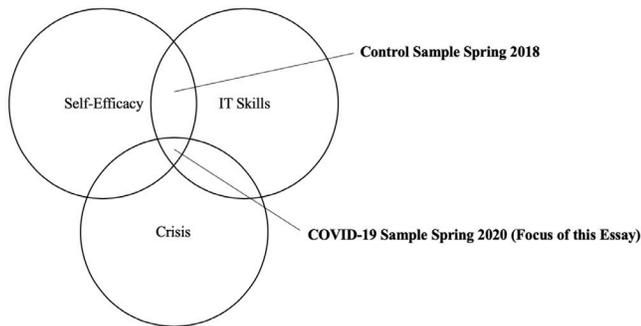
The aim of this essay is to explore if students who completed the spring 2020 semester during the COVID-19 crisis and have high levels of perceived self-efficacy assess their IT skills to be higher. In other words, there may be a direct relationship between self-efficacy and IT skills during a crisis. The COVID-19 crisis sample will be compared to a spring 2018 control sample.

Theoretical Framework on Self-Efficacy and Improved IT Skills During Crisis

The theoretical framework was constructed based on the Venn diagram shown in Figure 1. We sug-

gest that students with higher self-efficacy are more effective learners in an unstructured environment, such as it was created by the COVID-19 crisis. Therefore, higher self-efficacy leads to higher skill development during crisis.

Figure 1



Perceived self-efficacy is defined as people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance (Bandura, 1994). Businesses need people with a high sense of self-efficacy (Sun et al., 2016). Self-efficacy operates as an essential contributor to academic development (Bandura, 1993). High levels of self-efficacy help students to master academic activities to determine their aspirations, level of motivation, and academic accomplishments (Schunk, 1991). Furthermore, students with heightened self-efficacy have a higher motivation to acquire skills (Schunk, 1985). According to Bandura (1993), students' beliefs in their efficacy help them to regulate their own learning and be more self-directed, which is essential in an unstructured learning environment (Dyanan et al., 2008). There can be a gender difference concerning self-efficacy (He & Freeman, 2010).

Self-efficacy is seen as a critical resource during a crisis that attenuates the extremity of a crisis (Hannah et al., 2009; Kovoov-Misra, 2020). This may be, in part, because high levels of self-efficacy can lead to deeper self-reflection and facilitate stress, and other emotive responses to fear (Hannah et al., 2009). Furthermore, individuals with high levels of self-efficacy believe that they can positively influence their environment (Hobfoll, 2002). During a crisis, individuals with high levels of self-efficacy improvise and are resilient. Therefore, students with high levels of self-efficacy may have higher skill development during a crisis.

Non-Crisis Situation (Control Sample)

In spring 2018, two undergraduate computer lab courses were surveyed at a small private university located in the southeastern United States: a 100-level course (Excel business applications) and a 400-level finance course. The computer lab consists of 28 computers. At the end of the semester, students voluntarily provided an assessment of their improved IT skills and completed a self-efficacy survey (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995). All measures were on a Likert scale from 1 to 5.

The sample from spring 2018 had 51 participants (64.7% 100-level class, 35.3% 400-level class), and consisted of 74.5% males. All students were in the traditional 18- to 23-year-old range. Data analysis revealed that there was no gender difference for self-efficacy or IT skills. Linear regression was performed (Cohen et al.,

2003, R Core Team, 2020) and did not produce a significant relationship between self-efficacy and improved IT skills, indicating that during a non-crisis situation, self-efficacy does not directly affect IT skill development. Previous research established that self-efficacy influences academic performance and the motivation to acquire skills (e.g., Schunk, 1985; Schunk, 1991). Therefore, it can be assumed that another variable mediates the relationship between self-efficacy and IT skills (i.e., that there is an indirect relationship between self-efficacy and IT skills). For instance, Chen (2017) showed that learning engagement mediates the link between self-efficacy and learning performance.

Crisis Situation (COVID-19 Sample)

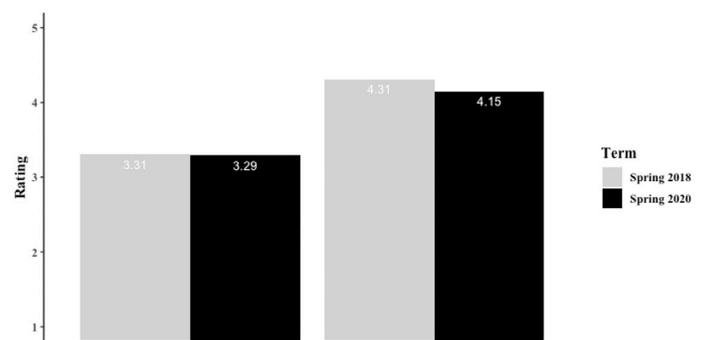
The spring 2020 courses were virtually identical to the courses in spring 2018 (100-level Excel business applications, and 400-level finance). The same instructors taught them with no change in the class curriculum. However, the courses during the crisis were moved online as of March 23, 2020 (week 12), and students had to use their personal computers in a home setting. The computer lab courses were changed to asynchronous online courses, providing a less structured environment.

The survey used for data collection at the end of the spring 2020 semester was the same as in spring 2018, and the order in which the measures were presented remained the same across all participants. The only change was that in spring 2018, paper surveys were used, where-

as online surveys were used in spring 2020.

The crisis sample had 48 participants (58.3% 100-level class, 41.7% 400-level class), and 60.4 % males. All data analysis was performed in R (R Core Team, 2020). No gender difference was identified during data analysis. An independent t-test was performed to compare students' self-efficacy in spring 2018 versus spring 2020. No statistical mean difference was found. The same was performed for IT skills and there was also no statistical mean difference. Figure 2 shows the mean comparison.

Figure 2



Note. Values shown are the mean.

The sample size needed for linear regression was calculated using a medium to large effect using *G*Power*, resulting in $N = 41$ (Faul et al., 2009). With one predictor, the sample size of 48 is sufficient to perform a linear regression. Linear regression was performed according to Cohen et al. (2003). Self-efficacy predicted improved technology skills for the crisis sample ($\beta = .31$, $F(1, 46) = 4.787$, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .10$) providing evidence that during a crisis there is a direct effect between self-efficacy and IT skills.

Discussion

Students experienced a change from a structured to an unstructured environment. There was concern that overall skill development would be the same as previously in a structure computer lab setting. The results show that even though their assessment of improving IT skills was lower in 2020 than 2018, the difference was not significant. However, the results show that the effect is not the same for every student. The positive and significant relationship between self-efficacy and IT skills may indicate that students with higher reported self-efficacy assess significantly higher gains in technology skills than their peers with lower self-efficacy during crisis.

According to Dynan et al. (2008), students have a greater opportunity to shape their work in an unstructured environment. Students with higher levels of self-efficacy may be more capable of engaging in self-directed learning (Bandura, 1993). Students with self-directed learning skills do well in an unstructured environment as they are better in problem-solving, creativity, and handling change (Guglielmino & Klatt, 1993). There may be even positive long-term effects on the experience of an unstructured learning environment, as self-directed learning is the basis of lifelong learning (Dynan et al., 2008).

The finding provides various implications on a theoretical and practical level. There is additional evidence that self-efficacy is vital during a crisis, as indicated by Hannah et al. (2009) and Kovoov-Misra (2020). The positive and direct relationship to IT skills is support for the resilience of individuals with high levels of self-efficacy, as stated by Hobfoll (2002). According to Sun et al. (2016) instructors are the primary drivers of learning and the technology related methods (e.g., online learning) they use are still relatively new. During times of crisis, like the COVID-19 pandemic, personal attributes like self-efficacy become even more important for students. Instructors should focus on activities that may help students increase their self-efficacy. For example, giving students a positive outlook about the future will positively influence self-efficacy (Whetten & Cameron, 2011). Furthermore, self-efficacy is increased when students are provided with frequent and immediate positive feedback while working on academic tasks (Schunk, 1983). The feedback needs to be framed that the students attribute this feedback to their own effort (Schunk, 1987). Receiving effort-based feedback will lead students to work harder, experience stronger motivation, and report greater efficacy for further learning.

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The Impact of COVID-19 in the African American Community

Lillie M. Hibbler-Britt, Ph.D. — University of Phoenix

INTRODUCTION

In the United States, communities have evaluated and implemented the closing of their local libraries as a means of saving taxpayer dollars. The argument is that the information available at a library can be easily obtained from online resources. Furthermore, books, magazines, and videos can be digitally downloaded that people can read and view at their leisure. What these arguments fail to realize is the role that libraries play in allowing economically disadvantaged patrons to have access to the internet and other resources such as a free place to go and socialize without the expectation of having to buy something. Schools and libraries that provide essential services during the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed a trifecta of weaknesses in education, economic, and emotional issues that plague communities in the United States and the world.

Background

Two African American young men sitting under an old oak tree in rural South Carolina appear to be something out of “Where the Crawdads Sing.” However, in these unprecedented times, the young men have laptops, books, paper, and pencils. Their objective was not to spend a leisurely afternoon playing video games or posting on Instagram. These are high school students who are using their neighbors’ internet service, so that they can successfully complete the school year. With low internet access, students are reduced to using neighbors’ service, going to the library, or sitting outside of the local Wal-Mart or other businesses that offer free internet access. To alleviate the issue, South Carolina deployed 300 school buses

to rural areas that are equipped to function as a Wi-Fi hotspot. Although buses were already equipped with Wi-Fi, the use of buses as a hotspot was a new and necessary change to allow students to complete online course work (Harris, 2020). The culprit in all these situations is the lack of internet service and the availability of technology and use of technology in minority communities.

This article looks at the disparity that has been exposed by COVID-19 as it relates to education, economic, an emotional issues (mental health) among the African American community. The lack of stability in these three key areas demonstrates that minority communities are at a severe disadvantage and may be falling significantly behind due to the pandemic.

Educational Disparity

The current pandemic has caused the school district in Orangeburg County to disperse school buses with Wi-Fi to rural areas to provide services to students who do not have access to the internet. This service will hopefully allow students to complete assignments and advance to the next grade level. Although the buses were provided primarily for high school, middle school, and elementary school students, college students can also benefit from the hot spots. COVID-19 has shown the disparity that exists in this country and the needs that exist among lower income students. Students who are progressing due to having technology available at the local campus, who now don't have these resources available to them, are less likely to be successful unless colleges and universities are willing to be flexible as it relates to assignment submission.

At first glance, one would erroneously assume that the lack of internet access is a rural or small-town problem. However, as described by Reilly (2020), low-income students across the United States, from New York, Philadelphia, Oregon and on various Native American reservations, also struggle with having appropriate access to the internet and the needed technology to successfully attend classes online. Not only should institutions of higher learning be concerned with the availability of the internet for students, they must consider other inequities that exist, such as the technology and software that students have access to. These inequities are also a by-product of economic

status. As a faculty member, I have observed students attempting to complete assignments using their smart phones. Often the software needed cannot be accessed from a smart phone and students can only complete a portion of their assignments. Per Bach, Wolfson and Crowell (2018), the migration of core services to online has shifted "the ability of dial-up services and cell-phone-based internet access offer an inadequate level of access to the sheer mass of modern webtexts and the array of societal services that have shifted to online platforms make high-speed Internet access, or broadband access, the new basic standard (pg.25)." COVID-19 has exposed how little has been done to decrease the digital divide in this country. Students who lack the appropriate resources will continue to lag academically and this gap has only been accelerated due to the virus. Furthermore, this gap/lag will increase the economic gap between the haves and have nots, as stated by Bach, Wolfson and Crowell (2018) the relationship between inequality and information technology is much more complicated than stating the divide between these two groups."

Economic Disparity

The current pandemic has also highlighted the economic disparity that exists. While many white-collar workers were able to shelter in-place, frontline blue-collar workers were forced to return to work as communities pressured governments to reopen the economy. Returning to work also meant that low-income families could once again receive a paycheck to

help with expenses; but it also meant that these frontline employees were more at risk to contract COVID-19. Rho, Brown, and Fremstad (2020) states that “people of color overrepresent in many of the frontline industries, 41.2% of frontline workers are Black, Hispanic, Asian-American/Pacific Islanders (pg. 3).” The research goes on to explain that more than a third of workers in the frontline occupations live in low-income families. These occupations include such jobs as postal workers, grocery store, convenience stores, and drug store workers, trucking and warehouse workers, building, cleaning, and child-care workers Rho, Brown, and Fremstad (2020).

These occupations typically employ persons without a college degree, occupations where education is not a primary factor for employment. The fact that low-income workers had to return to work also meant that they were unable to remain at home and help ensure that their school-age children were completing assignments and attending school.

These low paying jobs mean that workers earn an income that does not allow wealth accumulation. This, in turn, means that funds were not available to help in emergency situations such as being unemployed without a paycheck or the payment of medical bills due to contracting the coronavirus. Although the government has issued stimulus checks to help during the economic crisis caused by the pandemic, loans to help small business owners seem to have eluded minority business owners. Mizota (2020) postulates that this lack of providing stimulus loans to minority busi-

ness may be the result of not being current clients of the banks, and the fact that banks can earn more from providing stimulus loans to larger corporations.

Given the impact economically on minority families and businesses, it may be generations before minority businesses are able to recover. This recognition may be the catalyst for the next issue that COVID-19 has brought to the forefront: the gap in emotional health that of societal that exist for minorities.

Emotional Disparity: Mental Health

The final observation of the impact of COVID-19 in the workplace is the effect on mental health. A recent *CBS This Morning* segment explored this issue and it became apparent that social isolation, along with pressures associated with the economic impact of being furloughed—sometimes without pay—has impacted the mental health of the United States population. Galea, Merchant, and Lurie (2020), argue that “COVID-19 will cause a substantial impact on anxiety, depression, substance abuse, loneliness, and domestic violence, (pg. 817).”

The impact of social isolation is particularly impactful in the African American community since it is built on the interaction with family and social gatherings. One of the biggest disruptions for most African American families is the inability to attend church services and receive guidance from the sermon and interaction with other believers. Social isolation means that avenues to relieve stress have been taken away and persons are left to internalize issues.

The effects of COVID-19 can be correlated with PTSD which is already higher among African Americans (Novacek, Hampton-Anderson, Ebor, etc. 2020). The study also states that Blacks are vulnerable to negative mental health consequences during natural crisis, such as natural disasters, terrorist attacks, and large-scale pandemics (Novacek, Hampton-Anderson, Ebor, etc. 2020). However, due to a distrust of healthcare providers, discrimination, and income restrictions, Blacks are less likely to seek the help needed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conclusion

The coronavirus pandemic has impacted the global economy. The final impact has yet to be determined since daily the number of persons being affected is increasing. What has been determined is that persons of color seem to be impacted at a greater rate than non-persons of color. There is much work that must be done to minimize the effect within these communities since the disparity as it relates to education, economics and mental health already exist. COVID-19 will make the gap in society even greater unless protocols are put in place to lessen the impact.

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The Sounds of Silence...Reflections of One Student's Journey Through the COVID Pandemic Via the DBA HR Program at Northcentral University Online

Thomas Hotz, M.P.A. — NorthCentral University

I'M TOLD THAT PURSUING a doctoral degree involves an individual journey, fraught with promises and pitfalls that are unique to the individual experience of the student. To a large degree, this advice is very true. What they don't tell you, however, is that this is more like a Jack Kerouac "On the Road" experience without sex and drugs (unless the intellectual high you get from academic collaboration and critical thinking through writing parallels the same feelings you'd get from the Kerouac experience).

I find that meandering through the subject matter and academic bureaucracy are necessary means (and sometimes evils) to achieving the ends of high grades and higher degrees. But assigning your professional imprimatur to the work, and knowing that you make a positive difference to knowledge, is what it's all about, in my humble opinion. It is Maslow's self-actualization in practice. Epistemology is everything. If you don't aspire to that, there are a lot of things in this world you can do that will give you a sense of accomplishment, but not this route.

For those left that have the passion and persistence, you are in the right place. But it is not an easy

place to be in. You remain a student beyond your formative years for one thing, and for better or worse, there appears to be a societal stigma to this. A certain degree of psychological dependence develops towards your professors, your advisors, and your family which parallels that which you had when you were a child going through school. It can be annoying to those who don't understand, and who moved away from academe to the working world where grades don't count, and interrelationships do. "It's not what you know, it's who you know." My answer to that is that it is BOTH. Otherwise, what are we all doing here?

To that end, it is advisable in my opinion to do this later rather than earlier, when you can back your return to academe with real-life work, and (if you are lucky enough) family experiences that you can draw upon to balance the teacher's pet expectations that positive pedagogic and andragogic experiences bring naturally to the fore.

Whether this track is commenced earlier or later, however, the isolation that is encouraged by faculty who have gone through their own personal austerity measures in completing their studies to their students

results in what I call the “Sounds of Silence” syndrome, with apologies to Simon & Garfunkel. The student is truly alone with his or her thoughts during this process. Some will call the feelings that result loneliness, but one should never forget that self-isolation brings these effects on. Professors are very well-meaning when advising their students to self-isolate and let their families know that blocks of time should be established for self-study in order to succeed with a doctoral program. This has become a rite of passage as a rationale for faculty espousing this, who also wish to discourage the practice of the application to one’s doctoral studies as a hobby rather than the rigorous devotion to the craft that they feel is necessary to succeed.

But I posit that in doing so, this advice, while again well-meaning and with the best of intentions, puts the student on the road to hell. Outreach for emotional, and when necessary, financial support (something graduate programs could devote more attention to in general) is vital to persistence.

That being said, self-isolation, and the “Sounds of Silence” syndrome in general has been particularly exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting “stay-at-home” orders since March of 2020. It is fortunate that online technology has progressed to the point where the planet can function alternatively via telecommuting, telehealth, and online education in the face of this onslaught. One can only imagine the paralysis that would have resulted without it.

Online education, once thought of as the step-

child of traditional academe by higher education faculty not familiar with the technology, is no longer seen this way in view of what the pandemic has done. They must either adapt, retire, or move to another career, which would be daunting even under normal circumstances. Ivy League institutions well known for traditional instruction have to move online, and curriculum development of schools should to be altered to accommodate asynchronous instruction. While they still have their reputation, sustaining competitive advantage to maintain matriculation and stay financially afloat now will become more important in the future for them. Other schools may fold under both the financial pressures and, more basically, the lack of preparation to transition effectively under these conditions.

Moreover, and most importantly, however, the student now has the difficult choice of selecting the right school to accommodate his/her needs during this transition, or transfer to one that has already adapted successfully. With the probability of a second wave of SARS-COVID 2-a mutation of the annual flu with another strain of COVID hitting the U.S. in the fall-going back to classrooms without significant restrictions, (if this happens at all), seems unlikely for the foreseeable future.

I was fortunate enough to select Northcentral University (NCU) Online for this reason. As discussed earlier, faculty and advisor support are necessary enough under normal circumstances for persistence in attainment of higher educational degrees. I found that NCU was in the main able to provide this and more. In deal-

ing with the pandemic, they were not just transactional—they were and remain transformational. They have accomplished this simply because online education is all they do, 100% of the time. Thus, they were positioned to do business as usual in the face of this global catastrophe.

Since their opening in 1996, NCU now boasts a student complement of 10,000, and offers over 40 undergraduate and graduate programs at all levels. In the 24 years of its existence, it appears that NCU has become the first online university to offer over 40 undergraduate and graduate programs at all levels. On March 12, 2020, contact was first made with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (C.D.C.) to keep abreast of the developing situation. In-person events such as their Dissertation Boot Camp and Intensive Pathway program were cancelled; other events were moved to virtual presentations.

The school then recommended that students with face-to-face Institutional Review Board (IRB) interviews concerning their dissertations transition them to online data collection without having to request this formally. Online presentations by CNN and NPR were included on the NCU website, and caution regarding stigma allegations against inappropriate associations between Asians and COVID-19 were recommended. Internships in the Marriage & Family Therapy (MFT) moved to telehealth interventions, and NCU offered assistance in this regard thru appropriate faculty and advisement. Information was then put online regarding appropriate medical precautions to take against the virus, including hand-washing and other measures.

Offices of the President and Provost assured the NCU Community of frequent online updates.

On March 26, the first of two live online one-hour presentations was presented to anybody in the entire NCU community who wished to attend. The President, Provost, Director of Financial Aid, and the Deans of all the schools were present to make their own presentations and then answer chat questions. Among many issues discussed, assignment due dates normally expected on Sunday midnight MST would be extended if necessary to account for the pandemic, as well as relaxation of course extension requirements and Leaves of Absence if necessary. Pass-Fail options would be granted for the duration of the pandemic to assist students with academic hardship in completing courses. The gathering was assured that due to continuance of U.S. Department of Education functioning as well as reserves that the school had for one academic semester if necessary, no reduction in force in any area was therefore expected. There were allowances made for students to carry small financial balances forward in the event of hardship in this area. Students were encouraged to continue in school, however, notwithstanding these accommodations, as persistence issues could hurt them in the long run. Dr. David Harpool, Ph.D., J.D., and President of the University, also emphasized that the school could not subsidize employment, pay for rent, or handle personal student loans, as this would not epitomize best practice standards aside from having legal repercussions.

The second video presentation held in April con-

tinued to expand upon accommodations made. It was also revealed that a fund of approximately \$250,000 had been established by donations in order to help students under certain circumstances who were either afflicted with COVID-19 or had family issues in that arena. That fund was expanded to \$700,000, and though exhausted in June, may be revisited. This reach out to the entire student body virtually is notable. Rarely, if at all,

do top officers of any higher educational system meet with students to discuss emergent situations. These two events uniquely bonded their educational community with synergistic effects. I did not intend this recitation of NCU's efforts to be an elevator pitch, but in forming a virtual bridge, they have indeed brought sounds to the "Sounds of Silence."

Students Are Not the Only Ones In Higher Education Affected by Covid-19

A. Dale King, Ph.D. — Lenoir-Rhyne University

WALKING INTO THE MAUNEY 115 classroom on Thursday, March 12, 2020, for my 8 a.m. class, I believed I was about to experience something that I had never felt in my four-decades plus college teaching career. Much trepidation was looming in the air, though it appeared the students weren't sure what was to come to fruition. Many times I had closed out a term, semester, or academic year by virtually skipping into class as I, and the students, prepared for some much needed time off. But this was different. My gut feeling told me it was possibly the last time I would see many of these students, even though we still had more than half of the semester remaining leading up to the planned graduation date – but I didn't believe there would be any graduation festivities on the planned date, May 8.

While the conversations on campus had somewhat prepared faculty to be ready to shift seat-based classes to an outside-the-classroom course delivery, I found that students rejected the idea that there would be any need to change. They were ready for planned spring break trips and dismissed the concerns about a virus that could bring the campus, the state, and even the world to a screeching halt. The conversations I heard as I walked into class that morning were all about which beach, ski resort, or hometown they were about to visit.

But a sense of nervousness was in the air and the excitement was a bit subdued and stifled because students learned that the Japan Global Business Study Tour had been shifted to Europe just weeks ago, and then cancelled altogether. So there were palatable inklings of foreboding as students were aware some of their classmates' trips were being affected. But equally evident was denial as the majority of conversations were still focusing upon the beach attire or snowboard purchases that had been made for scheduled spring break exits.

One young man was getting married on Saturday, in just two days, and his planned honeymoon to Puerto Rico was tenuous. International students were hearing from parents and friends that they needed to come home and that if they did, travel between countries was unstable at best because borders were being shuttered due to the virus that had started just a couple of months before in China.

I had been indicating in each of my classes that with spring break beginning on Friday, March 13, how appropriate that it was Friday the 13th by the way, that we may have to shift to a remote/online/distance platform for course delivery if COVID-19 continued to wreak havoc. But the air was still receptive that we

would go away for a week and then reassemble with tales of “what I did on my spring break.”

But alas, my gut intuition was right; that what I feared on the near horizon would come to be and I would not see these students again except on my 13” Dell laptop screen. We not only didn’t reassemble in one week, spring break was extended an additional week, though the faculty soon discovered that it was an extra week off for students, not faculty. Faculty were being asked to establish remote/distance/online course assignments, discussions, etc. that met the Student Learning Outcomes for the course with appropriate metrics that would be ready to roll out through Canvas, our Learning Management System, in just one week. For those of us in the Charles M. Snipes School of Business & Economics, we had very few issues with the shift because most had already taught online, streamed, or hybrid classes. But that was not the case for others on campus. My classes were ready to go in Canvas once the elongated spring break concluded and the spring semester resumed, but I soon discovered there was one piece of the educational experience that was missing.

The dynamic that was missing was my direct contact with my students, as the majority of my classes through the 43 years of being a professor were in brick and mortar, seat-based classes. I am not ashamed to admit that **I Missed My Students**. I missed seeing them, reading their body language when they didn’t “get it,” and I missed the comfortable, face-to-face debates we would have for the “what ifs” and “whys” as I

challenge my students to build defenses for their positions, not to provide lame, unsubstantiated opinions that had no firm foundations in statistics, facts, or research. I missed the direct contact with them; I realized that the pandemic was robbing me of that chemistry that teaching had provided to me through the years. While it wasn’t stunning to realize this, as I had long prided myself on connecting with my students whether through virtual or seat-based classes, I realized that the immediate interactions with these 80+ students were being taken away by an unseen interloper. I grasped that the COVID-19 virus was robbing me of the seat-based motivators for me over the last eight weeks with my students and I also soon realized that my students missed being in class as well.

For all classes, graduate as well as undergraduate courses, I assigned the first Forum Discussion post-spring break to be one where they could share how their lives were changing because of COVID-19. What I found in their reflections were candid revelations that they missed being in class; but more than that they shared that they were scared. The campus cocoon was no longer a protective coating for them, and they realized that while the extra week of spring break sounded exciting, they realized it came with a massive price.

The mechanics of the class had changed and that wasn’t all for the students but for me as well. I was a tool in their learning process as I set out to creatively and innovatively meet Student Learning Outcomes in a completely different modality than what was first posi-

tioned in January when classes began. Just two months earlier seemed like eons ago and yet it was only weeks ago. Campus looked like a ghost town and students were literally spread around the world as they dispersed to their homes across the globe. But again, I realized that I still was only a tool in student learning, as I also found myself taxed by the pandemic. With Zoom class meetings, advising sessions, or student consultations, I found that though I had my “Zoom half-suit” at the ready, students would Zoom into the sessions in their pajamas and literally in one instance, still under the covers. I found that some were not truly prepared for what remote learning would entail. And when I reached out to them, I also found that my ability to help them had to take different avenues and abilities. As an example, I asked for their addresses if they wished to share it and mailed each of them a personalized card with two balloons in the card. Why you may ask? To demonstrate that we can all lift each other up and share in what the pandemic has presented to us as students and as faculty. Many students noted this small gesture in their evaluations of the course for the Spring, which was somewhat surprising.

As we are now getting ready for fall in a few short weeks, we are also finding some anxiety and apprehension about what is before us. While remote learning is still an optional mode, the university is targeting for a full return to campus with adjusted interactions with students in amended class schedules. While I would find that I will be re-energized to see my stu-

dents again, I also have found that the pandemic has reshaped the landscape of me as a linchpin, a nexus, in the educational process. It has restructured the conduit between the students and me, as well as how the verve which feeds my soul in my calling as a teacher is executed. However, I have found that what is needed in the instructional mechanics is the ability to develop and create cognizance, resolution, and kindness with vigor so that my students recognize I am upholding the integrity and tenets of my commitment to business higher education.

In that vein, I wrote a tribute to our graduates and posted it on my LinkedIn page. I wanted to share that, as suspected, they would not graduate on May 8 since the ceremony was cancelled. I shared in this tribute that the regalia we are accustomed to seeing in graduation ceremonies was actually replaced with the regalia of their skillsets they were equipped to take into the world of work. The dynamic between faculty and students is a two-way street; COVID-19 has taken a great deal from each of us in the higher education arena. But more than that, it has demonstrated that faculty and students both have a commitment to uphold the principles and objectives of quality business education.

Keeping Academic Quality First in an Online COVID-19 World

Niccole A. Kopit and David C. Marker — Colorado Technical University

ON DECEMBER 31, 2019, China reported to the World Health Organization a cluster of cases of pneumonia in people associated with the Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market in Wuhan, Hubei Province (World Health Organization. Pneumonia of unknown cause — China. 2020). On January 7, 2020, Chinese health authorities confirmed that this cluster was associated with a novel coronavirus, 2019-nCoV (Novel Coronavirus – China 2020).

Then, on January 19, 2020, a 35-year-old man went to an urgent care clinic in Snohomish County, Washington with a persistent cough and other symptoms. This person became the first confirmed case of the novel corona virus in the United States (Holshue et al., 2020). On February 11, 2020, the World Health Organization announced “COVID-19” as the name of disease caused by the novel corona virus (Naming the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the virus that causes it). Then on March 11, 2020, the Novel Coronavirus Disease, COVID-19, was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization.

On March 13, 2020, a national emergency was declared in the United States concerning the COVID-19 Outbreak (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020). However, days earlier, on the sixth

of March 2020, corresponding with the beginning of spring breaks, many American universities were beginning to move to remote classes in response to the outbreak (Baker, Hartocollis, & Weise, 2020). Even in a pandemic, the importance of quality teaching does not change. In this essay as many universities and colleges turn to online learning due to COVID-19, faculty and administrators frequently pose the question: “How do we teach this course online and maintain academic quality?” We proffer three essential activities that respond to this question.

All institutions of higher education, and colleges, schools, or departments of business, must have three organizational elements: leadership/administration, student support (financial aid, advising, tutoring), and of course, academic. In every case, the quality of online curriculum depends on the following (in no particular order): technology, instruction and curriculum mapping. We look at these one at a time. So, the question is, what practices can be modified or created to ensure academic quality in this forced online learning environment?

First, technology and access to technology are essential to online learning. From the student perspective, access to technology – including internet access

and access to appropriate devices – is an issue experienced with the move online due to COVID-19. Ashley Clark, a researcher affiliated with Higher Learning Advocates reports that, “Twelve percent of respondents aged 24 and younger reported that they did not have internet at home, and 41 percent of respondents in this age group reported at least one problem accessing course content” (Clark, 2020). This same study reveals that 37.50 percent of students do at least some of their online course work using a smartphone and 15.41 percent using a tablet (Clark, 2020).

Access to technology is not limited to students. Technology issues for the institution include review and selection of a learning platform, its maintenance, and support to users. In order to foster a successful learning environment, it is important to create a consistent technology experience between courses and within the courses. This serves to decrease the orientation time required at the start of each new class and reduce ambiguity that students are already facing in a new environment.

Online education faces several technology-related issues not associated with face-to-face instruction. These include ensuring student identity (student verification protocols) and refining policies and protocols for plagiarism and academic honesty. Options include issuing camera-verifiable IDs, implementing stringent login practices, and building verification services (e.g., Turn-It-In or SafeAssign) into the classrooms.

Second, instruction is faculty presence in the

online classroom where they engage with students and content. Engaging, effective faculty provide timely and personalized feedback to students. Key to this is the realization that, much like face-to-face classes, student engagement depends on faculty engagement – not the inverse. Faculty who wait for students to engage will not be successful in this environment. Further, faculty infuse the classroom with their professional or academic expertise promoting understanding and integration of course topics beyond the classroom. It is noted that institutions with an online presence frequently tap well-credentialed faculty from all over the world in that a large percentage of their faculty are part-time, adjunct faculty.

Finally, curriculum mapping ensures the foundation of online instruction is sound, teaches to the course outcomes, and supports the program learning outcomes bringing the process into the full scope of the degree program. Curriculum mapping is the process of laying out how all academic activities and assignments correspond to course outcomes. These are then plotted to program learning outcomes. Academic activities within courses must be designed to provide opportunities for engaging in critical thinking, acquiring and displaying topical knowledge, and communication with peers and faculty. These activities are then the basis for the artifacts used in assessing programmatic outcomes.

Curriculum mapping includes linking direct and indirect assessment measures to particular course academic activities. Direct and indirect assessments in-

clude normed, summative assessment exams, simulations, capstone papers, alumni surveys, and/or student end of course surveys. Subject matter experts, usually faculty members, develop curriculum and courses are built with the assistance of instructional designers. Focus on curriculum design contributes to the consistency of course content across all course sections.

In online settings, several systems are used to ensure quality. Data are readily available providing timely insight into quality of instruction and curriculum. Data are easy to access throughout online course offerings to enhance student experience and learning – even while classes are “live.” Another advantage exists in the areas of course and programmatic assessment and faculty/student engagement. These can be measured using artifacts found in courses that are uploaded to the online platform.

Quality in higher education has evolved from reviewing course content and learning outcomes to assessing student needs. The use of data and information for decision-making enhances our ability to access real-time data collection reporting course completion rates, student persistence, retention, graduation, and other standard measures.

The online platform does not eliminate a faculty member’s ability to engage with students and respond to their call to teach. Moore (1989) outlined three types of interaction for online courses: 1) student-to-student interaction, 2) student-to-content interaction, and 3) student-to-faculty interaction. We argue that the most

important of these three is student-to-faculty interaction. Studies conducted by Durrington et al., (2006) and Bernard et al., (2009) found that faculty engagement has been shown to have a direct impact on student satisfaction, student achievement, and learning outcomes. Faculty are able to (and expected to) bring relevant content and their own experience into the online classroom. Faculty engagement standards may include real-time observations, data gathering including course completion rates, grade distributions, classroom activity, and end-of-course surveys. Even the U.S. Department of Education in 2006 stated that there is no assumption of student learning in the absence of an effective facilitator.

At this time, in the midst of global pandemic, there is great uncertainty including uncertainty about when or if our daily lives will return to pre-pandemic normalcy. This uncertainty affects all facets of life including our academic lives. In this essay, we have proposed that adapting to the online classroom environment requires addressing three major areas: technology, instruction and curriculum mapping. It is our proposition that by addressing these three areas, universities will be in position to deliver high-level academic programs in an online setting. The capacity to do so will greatly enhance an academic institution’s ability to adapt to new and emerging exigencies.

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A Shift to Online Learning in Bangladesh Universities Post Pandemic Effect of COVID 19: A Blessing or Curse?

Naheem Mahtab — Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB)

INTRODUCTION

Almost all universities in Bangladesh, as elsewhere within the world, are moving courses online to prevent the potential spread of COVID-19. This includes lectures and tutorials, which are ready to likely be delivered via the university learning management systems like Moodle or Blackboard and google classrooms, etc. Some students believe universities are waiting until the census date (the date students can withdraw from the course without incurring a fee) before the transition, so they're locked into an inferior online experience while paying money for what they believe is also a superior mode of teaching.

WHEN DONE RIGHT, online learning can actually be as effective as face-to-face education. But if not all, most Bangladeshi universities haven't upskilled their staff to deliver this kind of quality online education. If universities across Bangladesh don't provide intensive upskilling to lecturers to deliver online classes and support effectively, they might see many students disengaging and throwing in the towel early.

How to Prepare for Teaching Online: Setting up the Course

Dedicated Online Development Team Preps and Set Up Courses are Designed and Updated by Faculty. It is important to understand that the students are not physically in front of the faculties and may not be even online at the same time due to various complica-

tions such as unavailability of internet in remote areas. As a result, a well organised plan is extremely important before the start of the online class and having a detailed syllabus and course materials prepared before class is extremely essential for successful outcomes. (Henderson, et al 1998). Planning is essential for an online classroom environment. This will give students an opportunity to see if the classroom (the deadlines, materials, and other requirements) can fit into their lives. The biggest challenge is to avoid surprises at all costs. Saying, "Surprise! Pop quiz" in a physical classroom is entirely different from posting "Surprise! Pop quiz! Due by midnight" in an online classroom.

Faculty/Staff with Adequate Technical Support and Know How's

Online course delivery essentials a sound technical finesse. First and foremost, it is important to invest in the right hardware and software like a reliable computer, a powerful internet connection, and therefore ensuring the best platform available for the requirements of both faculty and students. There are many options out there. Google classroom, for instance, is a web platform that leans toward the social and adaptable side of education. Conducting intensive research and really analysing along with the final choice - knowing the online classroom platform will facilitate in ensuring that the classroom is as effective as face-to-face delivery.

Working Environment

A great challenge faced by many faculties as the shift to online classes in this pandemic is inevitable, is the set-up of an appropriate environment for working remotely and teaching effectively. Without a proper environment and a decent amount of self-discipline, stay-at-home-jobs can become a nightmare. Proper planning can help in the creation of a dedicated workplace equipped with the essentials of conducting an effective online delivery.

Extensive Faculty Training and Development

It is important for the universities as well as the faculties themselves to realize that online delivery is very different from instructional face-to-face delivery. Hence both parties should support each other in availing and providing extensive training for successful

outcomes. It is essential that universities in Bangladesh provide extensive training to faculties otherwise if they are faced with too many roadblocks with the tools and platforms it may lead to long-term negative implications, which may hinder their decision to go for online classes as an alternate to face-to-face classes. (Wilson, 1998).

Faculties should be provided with online orientation and extensive training on web conferencing teaching. Several universities globally are developing manuals to assist faculties through eBooks and online videos about conducting classes online. It is to be noted that this training should not be only once, as faculties will require constant follow up and support for which the onus lies on university management to support them on a weekly basis.

Content of these training sessions may include but are not limited to:

- How to Access the Course Room and Navigate the Online Platform
- Syllabus, Course Assignments and Submission, Discussion Boards
- Course Materials, Library, Lectures, Rubrics, Communications

Engaging Students: Motivation and Simulation

It is vital to understand that online classrooms, as mentioned before, run differently than traditional classrooms. Often these classrooms have the poten-

tial to feel very mechanical and emotionless. Through proper planning and material preparations, faculties should initiate and inspire discussions that will ensure participation from students. (Wegner, et al 1999). There are many ways that faculties may involve the students through various simulations, online discussions on a weekly basis etc., and this will motivate the students and make them feel encouraged in ways they would not normally have led themselves if there was only a one-sided activity from the faculty just by delivering. This leads your students to urge more out of the class than just a grade. (McConnell, 1995).

Faculties in an online class should not forget, which often is the case in a traditional classroom set up, that student learning ability varies greatly across the class group and for this purpose extra care should always be adhered to the learning process and hence motivating the students can play a giant part in the learning process. (Doherty, 1998). It may be observed that the desire to explore online classes and learn something new out of the traditional will self-motivate some students, however there will be some who will be out of the group always. For these students assignments and online discussions will not hold any importance and they will usually participate in the class just for attendance or some rules of university. Faculties can motivate them by giving extra points for participating in online discussions or completing some additional assignments following a lecture. Deadlines may additionally help pelt along more unmotivated students. The

goal is to search out ways to assist students in getting the foremost out of the class without the benefit that a physical presence brings. (Ogborn, 1998)

Student Training

The key to vital success in online classes is extensive student training, student orientation and follow up development sessions. Trainings should be provided to students to ensure successful navigation of the on-line platform, posting assignments, and using the discussion board. (Bonk, et al. 1998). They should be encouraged to communicate with faculty and peers on a regular basis and should be showed the technical ways of doing that on the online class platform. Trainings should be further enhanced to support students complete group and individual projects effectively. Also during student training, it should be noted to remind them that to succeed in online classes it is important for them to communicate through messaging or video conference at least once a week and ensure online presence and visibility. (Bonk, et al. 1998)

Regular and Effective Communication

Effective and timely communication is one of the integral drivers of successful online classes. This is mainly because it acts as the ice breaker and gives the students the ease of mind that they are not left alone and someone is there for their support. It is absolutely essential for faculties to respond to student queries in a timely manner and provide them with ample support

and feedback and instruction. (Advaryu, et al 1999). Communication helps in introducing the humane factor and warmth which online classes, if not moderated with care, can often lack and result in failure of the system.

Feedback and Support

It is important for faculties to gather feedback from students that will assist in making this online environment and class more effective and outcome-based. As the current pandemic is forcing universities globally, and particularly for the first time in Bangladesh, it is important that students constantly share the positives and the negatives of their experience. Bangladeshi universities are used to traditional classrooms and a student pays a hefty amount to attend classes. It is important that students are therefore heard from regarding their experience in an online setup for the same tuitions they are paying. Also, not only gathering these feedbacks, it is important that students feedback is acted upon to improve the online learning experience so that students understand that the value for money is the same as in a traditional classroom. Education is a 'sharing' field and so these connections could prove invaluable to your online educator development.

Overall, online education is proving to have immense potential. The potential flexibility associated with online classes and shift to online education by universities is sheer profit in the long run. (Alexander, 1999). It's an emerging and developing marketplace for educators - and thus poses exciting career development

chances. However, online teaching is not something one should leap into. But, it conjointly extremely isn't as daring as it appears. If both faculties and students are duly trained and equipped it can pose to be extremely successful and fruitful, reaping better benefits at times than traditional face-to-face teaching. With some research and preparation, both faculties and students can find themselves on the forefront of the online educational movement.

Opportunities of Online Classes and Education

As for rest of the world, for universities in Bangladesh, the shift to a fully online experience will be completely new for both faculties and students. The current pandemic has forced this situation and the hope is that as more and more academics in Bangladesh start using and experiencing a decent experience of online spaces they will also be more amenable and more ready to consider full or partial adoption of online technologies in the future. (Cummings, et al. 1998) One must not rule out the argument that the same online space can result in academics having negative experiences, which can result in developing negative perception about online teaching methodologies, thus reducing the chances of their adoption to this mechanism.

Students should also be trained effectively as their roadblocks in using the technology can cause severe negative perceptions to online learning which they may also spread through word of mouth, social media and other forms of communication tools which may

cause severe detriment to a university's brand image. (Barros, et al. 1998)

So, this is a time of both opportunity and potential detriment and can be a critical time for the perception of online teaching and learning for institutions in Bangladesh, adopting this new technique for the very first time.

The past two months have seen that shift in global education from traditional and blended learning to online only learning. The same is the case for universities in Bangladesh. Faculties are busy endeavouring their times to the development of their lessons to online mode. This global shift to online learning follows the example set by universities in China, where the outbreak first began. Such rapid global adoption of online education is astonishing. When carefully planned and implemented, online learning can make university education more accessible, affordable, interactive and student-centered. However, the way that it is being presented as a simple and practical solution, capable of replacing face-to-face teaching for a significant period, is misleading.

One must remember as faculties that in order to have long-term success in online teaching, one requires resources and training and proper equipment. In these unprecedented times, most faculties are simply recording their lectures on webcams and using the same materials as they used in face-to-face set up. (Chan, 1999). In some universities in Bangladesh, faculties are simply required to log on to the online platforms during their

designated face-to-face class timings and simply deliver the class using the same old materials. Such simple "onlinification" of face-to-face lectures will not result in positive experiences for academics or students.

Students, nowadays are heavily reliant on smartphones. They attend all online classes using smartphones. Hence it is extremely important for faculties to ensure that they are not delivering the same materials as they would have done in face-to-face setup, rather customise and digitise to suit the displays of small, handheld devices. If not catered for, the materials lose their readability due to distortion of page ratios and font size in these smartphone displays. And this may lead to severe learning disruption and student dissatisfaction. (Hackman,1995). Dissatisfied students who find online learning inferior to face-to-face lectures may take action against universities. In Korea, students affected by the switch to online learning as a result of coronavirus measures are requesting a refund of their tuition payment.

When done right, online learning can actually be as effective as face-to-face education. But universities in Bangladesh need to ensure that faculties receive resources and sufficient training to upskill themselves with sound knowledge to deliver and provide support online. If this is not carried out meticulously, universities may face the challenge of seeing many students disengaging and dropping out early.

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The Other Side of the Monitor: Student Perceptions and Challenges from the COVID-19 Pandemic

Dr. Perry Glen Moore — Lipscomb University

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC SIGNIFICANTLY impacted my students this spring. I taught an upper-division required course (Principles of Auditing) to 22 students, of whom seven graduated. In the shift to a virtual platform for learning, I wondered how they were reacting. What was it like on the ‘other side of the monitor’?

One of the changes I made was to replace my class participation grade with Canvas discussion boards. Three of the discussions related to course topics. However, for one discussion I decided to get a sense of where my students were. I posed the following questions and asked each student to provide their answers and respond to the posts of two other students:

Discuss what has impacted you the most over the past month. Why do you say that? If you could go back in time to March 1, what advice would you give yourself?

How They Were Impacted

Student responses congregated around several main topics:

- Loss of their spring sport season
(two athletes were in the class)
- * Loss or lack of motivation
- Unknown timeline making it difficult to plan
- Realization that they would never attend an undergraduate class again; missing all of the ‘lasts’ that graduating seniors experience
- Having to move back in with their parents

The response from the athletes was expected, as was the response from the graduating seniors. The other responses challenged me to approach my students differently.

Lack of motivation. The motivation issue quickly became the top response. Students observed that they did not enjoy working on the computer all day and got distracted easier. They also noted the distractions from other individuals who they were living with, particularly if multiple people had virtual lessons/job responsi-

bilities simultaneously. One point struck home hard: a student observed that she felt unproductive even when she had been busy on the computer the majority of the day. She indicated that when she had places to go with a more structured schedule, she felt productive. Many students lamented the uncertainty of when the crisis would end. Beyond the obvious struggle to plan in a period of uncertainty, a few noted the absence of specific deadlines that also led to a lack of motivation.

Moving back home. Several students mentioned the fact that they had unexpectedly moved back home. A few noted that they had moved out of apartments to return home to save money. Each student making this point commented that they relished the 'extra' time with their families and knew they were receiving an unexpected bonus. Personally, my oldest son, a college freshman, moved back home at the commencement of spring break and never returned to his dorm room except to pick up the remaining items he had left behind. We've enjoyed having him home and enjoy the additional conversations we would otherwise have missed.

Their Response to Another Student's Post

Beyond expressing agreement with a peer's comments, several students expanded on the original post. Many expressed appreciation for the precious time that they had not expected to get with their families. Separately, one encouraged her peers to take advantage of the opportunity and try things not normally pursued.

Two comments seemed to resonate the most. One focused on the uncertainty of the situation. Students encouraged each other to "take a deep breath and focus on what you have control over."

The other comment focused on the absence of community. One student observed: "God did not create us to be isolated homebodies." Another stated that she looked forward to the day when she could be in a full classroom building and run up to friends without apprehension.

Student's Advice to Self, If They Were Able to Go Back in Time to March 1

Less variability was observed in their advice to self. Virtually all centered on the benefit of hindsight and the encouragement to appreciate every moment, to be present, and to spend quality time with others. Several said to 'go out and do more' or to 'get out of the dorm' and take advantage of being with others. Students clearly missed being around their friends and classmates in person. Many expressed the thought that virtual meetings just were not the same.

My Response

This discussion forum ran in mid-April, while students were completing a six-week group project, a role play of potential, fraudulent activity that students solve via email. The project had been introduced immediately prior to classes being moved online. Thus, while they were able to complete the introductory aspect in

person, the bulk of the actual work was completed after every student had returned home, and they were working virtually.

I found that two of the five groups appeared to be highly motivated initially. Two other groups exhibited no motivation at all. One of the groups with high motivation did hit a rough spot about halfway through the project. All students and groups appeared to be dealing with issues related to getting to the finish line. They appeared uncertain in how to move past the rough spots. They struggled to identify what their next steps needed to be.

I began to reach out to individual students via email and groups via email and Zoom meetings. We walked through where they were and what they thought they knew. In several instances, they did not realize what they already knew, which can lead to confusion over next steps. I asked them where they thought they could go next. Sometimes, I even used leading questions. I then encouraged them to submit those questions via email while everyone was on the Zoom conference. I quickly responded during the conference, and that brainstorming led to more engagement, better questions, and ultimately a better final product.

I became deliberate in my interactions with the students and would not allow them to 'duck out' on me. Frankly, I hounded them to get each group back on track. Several student evaluation comments support my methods of engagement:

"Dr. Moore always checks in with us and makes sure everything is going okay, keeps amazing office hours, and is incredibly helpful if you just ask for it. He encourages discussion in class."

"Dr. Moore did a tremendous job keeping the class engaged and interested."

"Dr. Moore really knows his stuff. He is passionate about the topic and that brings enthusiasm to the class. Dr. Moore has worked hard to perfect the class structure and schedule, and that shows."

"Dr. Moore is a professor that cares."

I am somewhat used to comments about my passionate teaching and active class engagement. However, while I obviously do care about them and their success, I rarely get evaluation responses about being a teacher who cares. That suggests to me that my changes were not only effective but appreciated.

Conclusion

The events of the past semester have been gut wrenching and dramatic to our students. My simple discussion board question, initially designed to see where they were and how they were coping, certainly opened up my eyes to their perceived reality and led to changes that enabled me to meet them where they were.

Certainly I have learned different teaching approaches that will be useful going forward. Their ob-

servations are still relevant, particularly if fall classes still involve some virtual aspect. The more I can do to communicate with them to foster increased motivation in a structured environment will demonstrate a faculty member who wants them to succeed.

In looking at that other side of the monitor, I discovered that my students were more resilient, yet perhaps more fragile, than I had expected.

Reflections on the COVID Crisis – Lessons from Transitioning MBA Finance and Economics Classes Online.

John Mulford, Ph.D. and Andrew Root, Ph.D. — Regent University

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 global pandemic of 2020 imposed a unique natural experiment on Regent University MBA students and professors. In this study we consider two research issues.

- First, the COVID -19 experience provided practical insight for professors teaching students directly affected by a crisis. We found all students, whether initially registered on campus or online, perform best online when provided focused instruction, minimal mid-course content enhancements and instructor- and administration-demonstrated compassion.
- Second, the COVID-19 event provides institutions an indication as to whether online courses can accommodate students who would have preferred to take the courses on campus. Student grades did not show any statistical difference between on-campus students in the prior two years and those who registered for on-campus in Spring 2020 but were transitioned to take corporate finance and managerial economics online. Student satisfaction survey scores for all students were higher in the COVID term than in previous years, suggesting that added effort and attention by professors was perceived and appreciated.

Insight for Teaching in a Crisis

Regent's School of Business and Leadership (SBL) fall, spring and summer terms include two eight-week sessions offered in series. The second spring term in 2020 began on March 16 and ended on May 9. Two core MBA program classes, managerial economics and corporate finance, were scheduled to be offered concurrently on campus and online in the second spring 2020 term. COVID-19 caused Regent to shift all cam-

pus classes to online. For the authors' two courses, that shift was accomplished by enrolling the 36 on-campus students as separate discussion groups, joining the 83 online students in the two courses.

Although Regent SBL professors were not faced with the challenge of developing new online courses for COVID or of teaching online when expecting to teach only on campus, they did face the challenge of satisfying on-campus, registered students who were tran-

sitioned to online courses. On-campus students prefer and expect face-to-face instruction and interaction. Professors were also sensitized to working with students as they and their families dealt with the impact of COVID. Some students in our classes lost jobs during the term. Others were forced to work from home and simultaneously learn to deal with family cooped up in the house and some with a sudden challenge of home schooling. A few students or their family members became ill with COVID. Stay-at-home orders prevented students from visiting sick relatives, some of whom died during the term.

Although Regent SBL online classes were already well-developed to deliver the stated learning objectives, we made several adjustments. The purpose was to address anxieties of students preferring on-campus course delivery and the anxieties of all students because of COVID-19. Five adjustments are notable:

- We provided more detailed instructions for on-campus managerial economics and corporate finance students. On-campus students can handle some ambiguous written directions because the instructor is present to answer questions and reassure them. Ambiguity is anathema to online students. We have made a habit of providing detailed, consistent directions to online students; however, we increased our attention to this issue for the COVID-19 term.

- Both classes added to their existing pre-recorded content and assignment explanations.
- We presented a step-by-step process for each week of the class, two weeks in advance.
- Corporate finance added seven additional live online class sessions to the usual four. In contrast, managerial economics maintained its usual eight weekly sessions.
- In managerial economics, rather than force a change in student Blackboard Collaborate habits we added voluntary Zoom calls with video. The purpose of the calls was more personalized, focusing on non-academic issues such as health, job, and family challenges.

The motivation of the five adjustments, which added content-oriented instruction and personal contact during the COVID-19 term, was to maintain or improve student outcomes.

H1: Additional professor contact and content during a crisis will enhance student outcomes.

Effectiveness of Online Delivery Historically

Regent University School of Business and Leadership's value proposition includes an outstanding asynchronous learning experience and faculty engagement. Technology is an important driver of asynchronous learning in general and at Regent in particular (Allen, Bourhis, Burrell & Mabry, 2002). Asynchronous MBA

learning is a high potential way to continue to grow the industry pie in the face of changing student demands (Goodman, Melkers & Pallais, 2016).

Regent SBL has 30 years of experience with MBA distance education. Over the decades we have fine-tuned our course design and delivery to produce the same learning outcomes regardless of online or on-campus delivery. Overall, on-campus student sections achieve slightly higher average grades (by 2 percentage points). This may be attributable to online sections ease of enrollment. The lower cost to enroll online may encourage program sampling rather than all-in commitment from day one. The actual difficulty for on-line students is high as professional MBA learners must juggle school, work, and other life challenges. Student evaluations indicate the satisfaction of online sections is slightly higher than for on-campus sections. On-campus students are sometimes less satisfied than online students, perhaps due to higher time cost of attending eight three-hour lectures and concomitant higher expectations. On-campus students are not shy about pointing out perceived deficiencies. Online students, whose expectations of instructor interaction time are lower, generally seem pleasantly surprised by the quality and touch of the Regent SBL online courses. H2: On-cam-

pus student outcomes are not negatively influenced by a COVID-19 crisis-induced switch to online.

Research Design, Results and Discussion

We collected grade and student survey data from Regent University corporate finance, managerial economics and data analysis classes. Each class is taught online and on campus by Dr. John Mulford or Dr. Andrew Root. The data is available from fall 2017 through spring 2020. In addition to student grades we consider student satisfaction ratings and qualitative data from one-on-one interaction with students and from open-ended responses on student surveys. Summary statistics are presented in table 1 (see below). Additional data is available in an electronic appendix upon request.

Hypothesis one is partly supported. During the COVID-19 term overall grades were slightly higher than during non-COVID terms. Although we don't put much weight on the statistically insignificant two percentage point difference, the fact that the grades did not drop suggest that our interventions helped students stay focused and learn the material despite challenges from the pandemic. Student satisfaction results also support H1. Overall satisfaction during the COVID-19

Table 1: Summary statistics of student outcomes. Outcomes measured by percent grade and by student survey average score (1 to 5 scale).

| | Total Students | Mean % Grade | Median % Grade | Mean Survey Score | Total Surveys Returned |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|-------------------|------------------------|
| Covid On Campus Term (sum or average) | 36 | 90.3 | 89.2 | 4.72 | 40 |
| Covid Off Campus Term | 83 | 90.1 | 90.9 | 4.85 | 32 |
| Covid On and Off Campus Term | 119 | 90.2 | 90.1 | 4.79 | 72 |
| Non-Covid On Campus Terms | 83 | 89.8 | 91.9 | 4.64 | 82 |
| Non-Covid Off Campus Terms | 429 | 87.3 | 88.4 | 4.58 | 182 |
| Non-Covid On and Off Campus Terms | 512 | 88.6 | 89.2 | 4.58 | 277 |
| All Terms | 631 | 88.9 | 89.4 | 4.59 | 336 |

term was slightly higher than during the previous two years.

Hypothesis two is partly supported. Before COVID-19, on campus students' grades averaged about 2.5 percentage points higher than those of online students. During the COVID-19 term, that difference narrowed to 0.2 percentage points—that is, the on-campus advantage disappeared. This is due entirely to a 1.5 percentage point underperformance of the on-campus section in managerial economics. In corporate finance, the on-campus outperformance remained constant at 2.1 percentage points. It is possible that on-campus students in managerial economics, which is typically taken near the beginning of a student's program, were less able to cope with the COVID-19 crisis than the corporate finance students who have been in the program longer, and are familiar with Regent University MBA course procedures.

Professor contact appeared to enhance student outcomes but not additional course content. Managerial economics student survey results increased. Although not statistically significant, the satisfaction data for the COVID-19 affected term was markedly higher—on-campus increased from 4.21 to 4.89 (out of 5); online increased from 4.53 to 4.82. By contrast, corpo-

rate finance on-campus section satisfaction declined in 2020, to 4.39 (out of 5) from an average of 4.82 in the prior two years. Qualitative feedback indicated that the almost tripling of live teaching sessions in corporate finance confused rather than clarified. For managerial economics, additional personal interaction with the professor through Zoom calls enhanced satisfaction.

Conclusions

Despite the data limitations in our study, the exogenous nature of the COVID-19 shock and Regent SBL long experience teaching simultaneously online and on-campus lead us to arrive at important conclusions. Students do not appear to benefit from more content in a crisis. Students benefit from more care, more personalized instruction and contact with the professor. We also believe the crisis showed educational institutions and MBA students can have confidence that learning outcomes will be consistent when taking classes online or on campus at an institution where professors regularly teach online. Said differently, experienced multi-modal MBA professors are able to teach online and on campus in such a way that students perform to their potential in either setting.

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The Future of Work is Virtual – Lessons from Online Higher Education

Dr. Sunil Ramlall and Dr. Ted Cross — Western Governors University

WHAT WILL WORK LOOK LIKE in the future? The COVID-19 pandemic has forced employees globally to work from home. As COVID-19 fades, will employees return to the office or prefer working virtually? To what extent will productivity, motivation, and engagement be impacted with more employees working virtually? How do organizations respond and facilitate such preferences by some employees?

Of course, it is not feasible for everyone to work from home. Healthcare employees, service industry, transportation, and others require employees to be at the office or other locations to perform their work. However, a study cited in Newswire (2020) highlighted that over half of U.S. employees (75 million workers) hold jobs and have responsibilities that could be performed, at least in part, from home. It is estimated that there are five million U.S. employees working from home prior to COVID-19. We are estimating that this can increase to more than 25 million even after COVID-19 fades. We believe that remote work is here to stay.

Consumers are seeking alternatives to the historical offerings. Individuals and families are finding significant benefits of working from home with no sacrifice in productivity. As an example, we at Western Governors University are in the business of preparing

students to be successful in the world of work. Our typical student is a working adult. As such we have created programs that not only prepare students for jobs but are flexible for students to complete online. We believe that some of our learnings, from running online programs, can be applied to industry. Even prior to COVID-19, academic institutions have been depending on online programs for growth.

At the heart of this transformation from office to working from home, is the opportunity and necessity for companies to stay viable and thrive in a rapidly changing environment. Strategies dictate that companies must be exceptional at anticipating what is next and reacting in real time. Online education has experienced massive growth over the past few years. Universities that are good at understanding such trends have adapted appropriately and are flourishing.

Online Higher Education as a Guide for Virtual Work

Why do students pursue their higher education online? Access to quality, relevant, and affordable education in a flexible structure is appealing to learners. Learners today are not seeking the historical classroom semester approach but value the flexibility and convenience of online education. Time is foremost among

considerations for learners. Like higher education, the future of work is virtual.

COVID-19 forced schools, universities, and companies to remote work, causing the explosion of online learning. This includes brick and mortar institutions that have been reluctant to offer full online degrees. At Western Governors University, we have been working in online higher ed for 23 years and have found that business education can be done well online. We currently have more than 120,000 students and enrolling steadily each month.

Many universities and colleges across the world have experienced fast development of technologies, changing needs of digital learners and other aspects of the digital era have had a major impact on universities and their learning management procedures (Tereseviciene, Trepule, Dauksiene, Tamoliune, & Costa, 2020). Online education forces students to adopt and practice technologies they will need to work from home and/or to participate in more digitally structured places of work.

Employee Motivation, Engagement, and Productivity in a Virtual Environment

Just as in online education, where students' individual stories and technology skills are considered and the need for acceptance and belonging within the online classroom community (Ratliff, 2018), companies have to ensure employees are engaged in a virtual environment and feel valued. Using a holistic approach to online education has enabled higher levels of student

engagement, satisfaction, and ultimately graduation from their respective universities (McDougall, 2019). Caring, genuine concern, supportive guidance, a focus of social and emotional learning, employee development, and building a sense of community will go a far way to ensure employees are motivated and are staying engaged in a virtual setting.

For us at WGU with more than 4,000 faculty members, technology plays a key role. Teams meet on a regular basis. Managers meet with employees using web-based meetings. There are constant interactions among employees all helping to create that sense of community. WGU has made it a priority to proactively build a positive culture using positive psychology and focusing on social and emotional learning. The sense of genuine care, compassion, forgiveness, and seeking happiness through work are evident.

Will productivity be impacted with more employees working from home? Neeley (2020) posited that productivity does not have to go down at all. It can be maintained, even enhanced, because commutes and office distractions are gone. Similarly, students have demonstrated that they can pursue their degrees online within similar time as face-to-face programs and even complete in shorter times without sacrificing quality (learning outcomes).

Challenges Working in a Virtual Environment

Companies such as Best Buy, Yahoo and Aetna all experimented with remote work in years past before tell-

ing employees to come back into the office; remote communication is just not the same (Semuels, 2020). Among the major challenges is effective communication or lack thereof in a virtual environment. Through deliberate strategies and utilizing relevant technology such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and others, employees have ample opportunities to minimize these communication challenges.

As more companies shift to remote work following the coronavirus pandemic, management may have to work harder to ensure that all employees are included and have equal opportunity. It's a problem most companies grapple with even in a normal in-person office environment, but the issue can quickly intensify with distance (Abril, 2020). Furthermore, workplace isolation can be challenging. Companies are embracing a diverse workforce and improving hiring practices to include multicultural talent. While some employees integrate well, others fall victim to Leader-Member Exchange Theory's "out-group" category and become estranged (Hunter & Chekwa, 2019). The concept of

creating a community of care and an inclusive culture will be critical to reducing these situations.

Conclusion

COVID-19 has revealed the need for corporate resilience and the ability to embrace virtual collaboration tools and practices (Hatfield & Jones, 2020). Companies that have previously embraced future of work practices are likely well positioned to sustain their operations. At the same time, adapting quickly and effectively to a virtual environment will likely enable companies to attract and retain the talent that is needed to drive competitiveness and enable them to win. Higher education has survived and flourished through the emphasis on online education. Universities and colleges understood the needs of the learners and adapted. Employees are seeking opportunities to work from home. It is the future. The future is now.

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“Cause and Effect” Mnemonic Frames COVID-19 Higher Education “After-Action Review”

J. Rudnick Ed.D., N. Hartman, MBA, and A. Schumacher Ph.D. — Thomas More University

“It was the best of times; it was the worst of times.”

—CHARLES DICKENS, *A Tale of Two Cities*

AN INDISPUTABLE TRUTH emerges when reflecting on the aftermath and responses catalyzed by the COVID-19 pandemic: this epoch disruption will change the landscape and trajectory of higher education for many years to come. Frustration, anxiety, unprepared, abrupt, isolation, uncertainty, unemployment, ruinous retirement and disastrous are among a litany of “keywords” that emerge when describing emotions surrounding this defining historical moment.

Charles Dickens captured a world of opposites in his classic, *Tale of Two Cities*, when he described “... the best of times...the worst of times.” The simultaneous blend of chaos, despair, and conflicts was also paradoxically laced with happiness and hope. Fast forward to the COVID-19 crisis that has arguably been a defining moment in history; and is aligned with much of the emotional state captured by Dickens when describing life in 1859.

This essay will share firsthand experiences of the authors with COVID-19 in higher education, identify issues and opportunities for improvement, and

share selected learning opportunities experienced from their front-line higher education experiences. Future mitigation considerations and recommended areas for future study are provided.

Thomas More University—Background

Thomas More University (TMU) is a Diocesan Catholic university located in the greater Cincinnati community of Crestview Hills, KY. The university boasts enrollment of some 2,000, comprised of resident and commuter students as well as a robust adult degree completion program for undergraduate and graduate offerings.

TMU adopted Canvas as a technology partner and employs two Instructional Designers. Distance learning, through fully online and hybrid/blended options, was active for roughly 30% of the classes and engaging faculty members when the pivoting measures required due to the COVID-19 pandemic were fully implemented. At the time of the national mitigation, suspension of face-to-face teaching that included

higher education engagement, varying levels of virtual teaching had been active. The pivot and conversion to full engagement for sustaining TMU learning operations was achieved within about two weeks of suspending the face-to-face teaching format.

Methodology

After Action Review/ “Root Cause” Analysis

The rationale and importance of a retrospective analysis can be linked to the lessons from historical events as asserted by nineteenth century Spanish-born American author George Santayana, paraphrased as follows: “Those who cannot remember the past are doomed to repeat it and understanding history is necessary to avoid preventable past mistakes.” (www.diction.com, 2020).

An After-Action Review (AAR) provides a “root cause analysis” tool to reflect on areas of challenge and opportunities that emerged after the first wave of change—in this instance, for Thomas More University (TMU). The AAR process, used by a team to capture the lessons learned from past successes and failures, has the goal of improving future performance. In a military context, the AAR is used as a process for learning quickly from those in the field. Critical lessons and knowledge are shared immediately through this basic and simple exercise to optimize the benefit of learning from the activity being studied.

The AAR “root cause” tool helped frame the

“what/why/how” effects of COVID-19—*what happened, why did this happen/how can we help prevent this from happening again?* The “6Ms of production requirements” was chosen from available business strategies to facilitate and complement this analysis. Selected “6Ms” – Manpower, Money, Methods, Machinery, Measurement, and Mother Nature – represent a mnemonic group of characteristic dimensions to consider when engaging in “cause and effect” brainstorming discussions and analyses. (The number and inclusion of “M’s” differ among contributors to the literature. The M’s selected for this analysis were those deemed most relevant for source considerations.) For the purposes of this summation, **Manpower** (human resources or human capital), **Money** (financial considerations/ implications), **Methods** (training, processes, policies and procedures), **Machinery** (technology, bricks and mortar), **Measurement** (industry benchmarks and measures for best practices), and **Mother Nature** (environmental forces outside the control of the enterprise/entity/organization) were the selected dimensions employed for the authors’ analysis. The structured process for TMU resulted in the following categorical outcomes:

Manpower

- Faculty members expressed skepticism concerning the effectiveness of purely virtual delivery. They expressed a hesitancy to fully embrace this teaching modality. (what)

- Several faculty members exhibited mild “cyberphobia,” fear of technology, with the tools associated within the virtual platforms such as screen. (what)
- Instructional Design manpower is needed to effectively design and implement written training protocols and be available for faculty and students. (how)
- Some faculty were fearful of potential contagion and spreading the virus: this fear seemingly incentivized many faculty members to accept, learn, and embrace online teaching delivery as a necessity. (why)
- Due to the vendor’s help desk support backlog due to the unilateral shift of all account institutions to full online delivery, wait times of several hours for faculty members required TMU to pivot and internalize and absorb the help function within the current TMU staff. (what)

Money

- A “digital divide” continues to exist in higher education. Smart phones, hardware (laptops), lack of broadband internet access, and restrictive data plans inhibit universal access for students. The closure of libraries surfaced this individual resource weakness. The “technology gap” continues to serve as a barrier to learning. (why, what)

- A limited budget for additional technology to support the swift ramp up to meet hardware and software needs hindered implementation expediency. (what)

Methods

- Written standard work processes for many protocols, policies, and procedures are lacking (why)
- Increased safety presents a positive for distance learning. There is less susceptibility to disease spread/contagion. (why)
- Training customers/stakeholders on the product can be tedious; and this is exacerbated by the lack of written standard work processes. (what, how)
- Because there are likely unknown issues that may require modifications after additional potential COVID-19 surface flexibility is needed to address the unknown. (what)
- Technology options for virtual teaching needed to shift away from the intended modality due to inability for training and ease of faculty member use. The lack of standardization prompted multiple systems to be used. (what)

Machinery

- Costs for Technology Investment need to be accounted for to improve distance learning from the classroom. These needs include more sophisticated audio-visual support. (how)

- Virtual learning is not as personal and engaging. (what)
- Training customers/stakeholders on the product can be tedious (what); further use of survey tools for stakeholder needs can assist with tailoring future training support. (how)

Measurement

- Resources for instructional design support are low for a 100% TMU class participation for at least a short-range ramp up (what); additional resources should be considered proportionate to increased participation. (how)

Mother Nature

- The uncertainty of a possible relapse from progress being made to ameliorate the virus outbreak may further tax resources and require different solutions to manage the disruption (what); refinement of mitigation strategies can help anticipate future potential “business disruption.” (how)

Considerations for Mitigation

Mitigation opportunities point toward the need for proactive education and team exercises to prepare for future unplanned crises. Considerations include the following:

- Evaluate appropriate change leadership strategies and crisis management theories for activation to frame proposed crisis/disaster mitigation.

- Evaluate and recommend proactive change management exercises for board, faculty members, students and staff members.
- Update disaster preparedness organizational structures and communication programs.
- Review all contracts and practices for services delivery with legal counsel to ensure that provisions are made for extenuating disruptive circumstances such as COVID-19. Consider whether *force majeure* clauses should be considered for stakeholder agreements.
- Consider appropriate delivery models and plan for increases in technology to increase self-reliance for unforeseen catastrophic events that affect services delivery. Include evaluation of the potential needs and relevancy of purposeful redundancies to help address “surprises” for technology.
- Engage in a structured process improvement system (e.g., Agile, Lean Six Sigma, Project Management) to reduce waste (expense) and optimize revenue for a beneficial return on investment (ROI)

*** Leading Change (Amplification)**

In normal circumstances, leading change can be difficult. Individuals become engrained in a specific way of doing things and feel that change is an attack on the current state of the organization, or the way individuals have been conducting business. During

COVID 19, change initiatives and their impact have been amplified. The approach taken by leaders significantly affects the response by followers in both normal and unprecedented times. The following are three effective ways to lead change:

1. Frequent communication
2. Obtain buy-in
3. Explain the financial or business needs for change

Communicating with stakeholders improves the likelihood of trust within the organization. Leaders who communicate early and often avoid the pitfalls that a lack of transparency bring, namely confusion and gossip. Communication at regular intervals shows followers that they are important and valued. Communication is a very inexpensive way to keep people informed and content. Emails, social media usage, and virtual meetings have shown to be effective forms of communication during COVID-19.

Every change initiative requires buy-in. Leaders who fail to gain buy-in are often short-term solutions. The damage they leave behind often outweighs any success that may have occurred. In order to obtain buy-in, leaders should hold sessions that resemble political town hall meetings. Voices need to be heard. During COVID-19, meetings held via virtual meeting software programs allowed for input. Leaders must listen and demonstrate empathy toward those whom the change will impact. Doing so builds trust and increases the

likelihood for buy-in.

Explaining the financial impact of the failure to change is another way to overcome resistance. Expressing the need for change in dollars and cents can awaken even the most ardent resisters. Simply lay out the impact of what happens if the organization fails to change. For example, if we do not implement plan A, we will lose x number of customers or dollars. If we lose those customers, the financial loss will impact the organization in the following ways. The impact could be in reduction of workforce, loss of matching retirement contributions, or failure to fulfill the organization's mission. During COVID-19, leaders who possessed a firm grip on the organization's financial standing and explained scenarios that could occur if change agility measures failed are the ones most likely to lead their organizations successfully through these unprecedented times.

Discussion

The COVID-19 pandemic can be described as an amorphic, catastrophic event that has not discriminated against what or who is affected. Effects of the pandemic have heightened an awareness of shortcomings; and through this analysis, brought further clarity to these issues, and helped identify and prioritize opportunities for amelioration.

Relevant and likely useful "recommendations for future study" are suggested as follows:

- A focus on refinement of current online delivery

to include the ramifications of “high-flex” options.

- An assessment of the ideal types of leadership (e.g., Autocratic, Situational, Transformational) to embrace for crisis scenarios. The full wake of the indiscriminate disruption created by the global coronavirus, COVID-19; forebodes a daunting future adjustment for higher education.
- A survey and examination of current faculty member knowledge. Variables such as age, and academic discipline likely affects online teaching acumen. Determining the level of faculty member familiarity, including adjunct faculty;

and effective modes of preferred training can prepare faculty members with requisite skills for effective online teaching.

The authors conclude that AAR and root cause analysis are useful tools from the “abundant quiver” of potential strategies from which leaders can discern and select. While admittedly not exhaustive for problem identification and solutions to manage all challenges, these simple and basic tools/methods should be considered to guide higher education process improvement initiatives.

How One Business School Used the COVID-19 Crisis to Keep Students Engaged While Practicing Social Distancing

Wanda L Rutledge, Ph.D., MBA and Leonard Williams, MBA — New Jersey City University

THE WORLD CHANGED in spring 2020. Most American universities closed their campuses and went to online instruction and student interaction for the better part of the semester, following state and federal guidelines in response to the COVID-19 virus. Overnight, daily work and learning patterns were disrupted. Face-to-face, peer-to-peer and student with faculty interaction was abruptly halted. Everyone scrambled to get class content online. Family members were getting sick, some dying, some losing jobs, facing furloughs, or perhaps more stressful, many were frontline first responders, “essential workers” who could not stay home but faced a pandemic with possible infection every day.

Looking back, we see a patchwork quilt of responses to delivering all course content in an online environment. Some faculty rose to the occasion and were rock stars; students said it was one of their best and most empowered semesters. Most did not feel so engaged. Faculty struggled to deliver typical lectures in a recorded format with occasional email tests. There have been many stories and articles written about the extreme dissatisfaction students experienced with how many colleges responded. Some of the complaints have grown into lawsuits demanding tuition refunds (Dickler, 2020).

Students, who were juggling life, work, family, and school were distracted and disoriented. Learning was relative and so was the assessment of learning. Some days it was enough to log on to Zoom, sans video and sans microphone, because it was just too hard to be seen or heard.

In the School of Business at New Jersey City University, deep in the heart of one of the epicenters of the coronavirus in Jersey City, New Jersey, we began to grapple with how to keep students engaged in learning when their world was falling apart. It went beyond the classroom. In the past year, we had insisted that all faculty who were or were planning to teach online become Quality Matters certified. We had also just moved to a fully digital e-text program throughout the curriculum in the School of Business. These small measures set up the infrastructure to pivot to online delivery marginally more smoothly than some. This allowed us to shift our focus to outside the classroom engagement for existing students and for potential incoming freshmen or transfers.

The goal was global and somewhat amorphous—retention, recruitment, and inclusion. What would that look like and how would we know if we were successful? There was so much we did not know.

The one thing of which we were certain however, from anecdotal text messages from students, Zoom meetings with faculty, and from the daily media bombardment, telecommuting and virtual learning meant that high school and college students, parents, and working potential graduate and adult students were significantly increasing their screen time (Andrews, 2020). It was not the time to “go dark” but to find non-traditional ways to engage with social media and digital programming. Many were spending more and more time online and seeking out trusted sources for consumption of their news, information, and ideas.

In the Dean’s office, staff stepped up with ideas and creative responses. The result was what we have come to call a digital platform for “Career, Class, and Convos.” It would be a platform to meet the needs of existing students, the needs of the community, and the needs of potential students. The founding principle of the engagement would be to “Build Trust.” With a cacophony of news, blogs, political messaging, and rampant disinformation or wrong information, we wanted our outreach to be the calm in the chaos. We were further influenced by data from the Pew Research Center from January 2019 about *Defining generations: Where Millennials end and Generation Z begins* that says, “... Millennials (defined as ages 23-38 in 2019) are the most racially and ethnically diverse adult generation in the nation’s history. Yet the next generation – Generation Z (ages 7–22 in 2019) – is even more diverse,” (Dimock, 2019). Further, Dimock (2019) says, “Social media, constant connectivity and on-demand entertainment and communication are innovations Millennials adapt-

ed to as they came of age. For those born after 1996, these are largely assumed.”

And, so, the format was designed to get out in front of our target audience (students, prospective students, alumni, local corporate partners, family members) and control the narrative around the NJCU School of Business brand. We would adapt to the current situation, using long-form content and maximizing social media. Our Assistant to the Dean for Enrollment Management, Leonard (Lenny) Williams, a millennial himself, suggested the framework. It would go beyond hard-core recruitment and focus instead on providing good quality content about current topics of interest (i.e. what stocks to consider when the market crashed by NJCU’s Student Investment Management Group). The programming would start with some of our relatively new young faculty who are passionate about their subject matter, looking at some of our new degree programs or those that might need a boost in enrollment, while thinking about how to weave in application of the program content relative to the pandemic crisis, and record the output.

The programming evolved into a virtual talk show format, with a host, (Lenny Williams) who provided the set up and questions, faculty who could answer questions about real world application, students who were involved in the programming and/or industry professionals with their take on the current environment, and our career services director talking about the impact on jobs. We chose the long-form content format that has been supported by a number of bloggers in respected circles of the social media universe (Sukhraj, 2016; Ahmad, 2017; Baker, 2020).

We used a combination of Instagram Live and Zoom (recorded and archived). Marketing was a push through the School of Business Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and reinforced by staff and faculty Zoom sessions, Blackboard (our student learning management system) messaging and WhatsApp. There was a regular time slot – Thursdays at 12:00 noon and 12:30 pm for the programming so viewers would know when to log on and join the conversation.

Some of the topics included:

- *The Power of Credit Budgeting and Credit – NJCU 2020 Graduate and Wells Fargo Service Manager*
- *How to Build a Website and E-Commerce Tips – NJCU 2020 Graduate and Employee Common Thread Collective*
- *LinkedIn and Personal Branding – NJCU Director of Career Services Essentials*
- *Contemporary Issues in The Hospitality Industry- NJCU Hospitality Faculty, Expedia and Hyatt*

Through the “Career, Class, and Convos” themed programming, the NJCU School of Business gradually became a new trusted source for content and thereby a trusted place for continued education. Where colleges had long erected hurdles to applications and enrollment with SAT minimums, GRE’s or GMAT’s, and other firewalls to the education found behind our academic walls, we were starting a conversation. We became a resource for the students looking to take a gap year to wait out the COVID-19 while still accessing free knowledge and developing an organic relationship

with NJCU.

We created a landing page for archiving digital recordings and making them on-demand for anyone who missed them (specifically linking to high schools and community college partners to share with their students or recent graduates). Each link allows anyone to access information for a more personalized Virtual Coffee Chat or even an Instant Decision Day. Added to this archival web page, is a virtual tour link for prospects.

Some statistics collected between April 9 and June 11, 2020:

- 63% increase in Instagram followers
- From 0 to 760 Instagram Live Viewers
- 220 Zoom Live viewers (still counting because the archived videos will have additional viewers moving forward)

There was one other aspect to the platform. Many of the programs exemplified inclusion by featuring guests, speakers, industry professionals, alumni and friends of diverse backgrounds in race, ethnicity, gender, industry profile, and economic standing. The faculty and student body, already diverse in many ways but still reeling from the recent protests and unrest, highlighted different faces, different perspectives, and different language but highly reflective of our target audience. The platform has evolved and developed a following.

What have we learned in a very short time? Words matter. Messages matter. Creating a quiet space for learning, speaking, and engaging is one way the NJCU School of Business is making a difference.

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You Don't Know My Story: Feeling Unconnected in an Existing Online Course

Kenneth Williams, Ph.D. — Kettering University

AS WE QUICKLY TRANSITIONED from on-campus learning to virtual learning, I focused on the mechanics of conducting classes through the use of new technologies and new pedagogies. As a faculty member, I am constantly reminded, and rightfully so, to maintain the high quality of learning seamlessly. In doing so, I focused on the emotions and adjustments of the on-campus students who transitioned to a virtual environment. I neglected the possibility of emotional adjustments that an existing online student might be experiencing.

I am a faculty member at a private, non-profit university that specializes in science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and business. I teach accounting and finance courses, both undergraduate and graduate, as well as on-campus and online. I have not been on campus since mid-March when the physical campus closed and all on-campus courses went virtual. One week prior to going virtual, all faculty, both full-time and adjunct, went through mandatory scheduled sessions to learn how to conduct their courses virtually using Blackboard Collaborate. I was already familiar with the workings of Blackboard Collaborate since I teach online courses. All faculty were encouraged and supported in the mechanics of conducting classes virtually. We were reminded

to be sensitive and flexible to the challenges and adjustments students would have transitioning from learning on-campus to learning virtually.

The terms online learning, virtual learning, distance learning, and e-learning are different; although often used interchangeably (Moore, Dickson-Deane, & Galyen, 2011). The common characteristic is the use of technology in learning. The difference between the terms is how students engage in the learning (Moore et al., 2011). Universally, educators do not agree on what each term means (Anderson, 2008; Lowenthal & Wilson, 2010). At my university, online learning is asynchronous with little-to-no virtual, face-to-face interaction and virtual learning is synchronous, face-to-face interaction during a normal class day and time.

I was prepared and confident to be aware and address student concerns or adjustments from on-campus to virtual. However, what about the student who was already learning off-campus in an online environment? I did not imagine I would face challenges or emotional adjustments from students already taking classes in an online environment. I faced the challenges and emotional adjustments from one such student in my online graduate course.

The situation stemmed after the first week of the online course when the students received their grade for the first discussion forum. In my reflection of the first week's discussion forum, I commented how several students waited until late Friday evening, as discussion forums end on Friday at 11:59 p.m., to respond to fellow students' posts. I commented how responding earlier can generate more enlightening, informative, and insightful discussions. Responding earlier also allows learners time to respond to any questions, requests for clarifications, or any other new insights made by fellow students and me. These comments triggered a highly-charged, emotional response from a student.

The student sent me an email expressing concern and offense about my comments. The student informed me that his schedule included working a full-time job while facing the possibility of layoff, owning and managing a small business for six years that was negatively impacted by the COVID-19 crisis, and administering a food pantry at his church with his wife. The student informed me that only he and his wife administered the food pantry since the other volunteers were over 60 years in age and advised not to help at this time. The student and his wife have four young children, very confused about the current health crisis. The student was facing 17-18 hour days with his schedule and did not have the capacity for working on class assignments every night. The student informed me that my comments lacked empathy and consideration for schedules and what people may be going through during this crisis.

I responded to the student and suggested that we talk over the phone. We ended up meeting virtually via Google Meet. What I most appreciated (and I believe the student appreciated) was we did not have a discussion or debate; we had a conversation. This communication distinction is very important. Garmston and Wellman (1999) described four ways of talking: discussion, debate, dialogue, and conversation. Discussion is talk that has a purpose, often to make a decision. Debate is an extreme form of discussion, in which people take sides and advocate for their side; they leave no room for compromise. Dialogue is more structured than conversation, but less structured than discussion or debate. Dialogue engages people in building their understanding of an issue, without the pressure to make decisions or be right. Conversation consists of casual, friendly talk about personal and social matters; it's usually not directed or facilitated (Garmston & Wellman, 1999).

The student started the conversation by apologizing to me as he felt he had been disrespectful. I told him while I appreciated the apology, it was not necessary, nor had I in any way felt disrespected. The student did most of the talking and I did most of the listening. Our conversation lasted nearly two hours. The student told me all about what he was going through during this COVID-19 pandemic and how it was impacting his personal and professional responsibilities.

My class was the student's fifth course in his MBA degree program. He earned A's in all of his prior courses. His goal is to graduate his MBA program with a 4.0 grade

point average. His fear was my class might be an obstacle in achieving that goal. The student's standards are his work must be exemplary and views grades as a reflection of him and his efforts. The student wished he had not sent the message while his emotional reaction was high. The student just needed to vent his fears and frustrations. The student needed someone to take time to listen and try to understand what he was going through.

As educators, we are called to do more than teach and engage in scholarly activities. We are called to serve our students as coaches and mentors, and even therapists. I have no formal training as a therapist, so I would definitely refer a student to the appropriate individual, department, or agency. However, you do not have to be a trained therapist to listen. The student was not looking for answers; just an interested, disinterested person to express his fears, frustrations, challenges, and hopes due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The situation reminded me of a few lyrics from a gospel song as follows: "You don't know my story; you don't know the

things that I've come through; you cannot imagine the pain, the trials I've had to endure..." (Kee, 2012). The student just needed to tell his story.

Transitioning students from on-campus learning to virtual learning has primarily been about the technologies, the pedagogies, the learning outcomes, the assessments, and the emotional adjustments of on-campus students being quarantined. While we have rightfully focused on a smooth transition for our on-campus students to engage in virtual learning, we cannot get caught-up only in the technology, tools, and logistics. Depending on the situation and the reason for the interaction, I was reminded to replace the word "student" with the word "person or individual". I was also reminded not to take our existing online students for granted. I learned how online students can feel isolated and disconnected being quarantined, just like our on-campus students may now be feeling.

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