Community of Learners in an Online Program: Student & Faculty Voices

- J. Carter-Wells, Ph.D., Reading and Program Coordinator
- Tammy Galaviz, M.S., MSIDT graduate student
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- **MS in Instructional Design & Technology**
  - California State University, Fullerton
  - March 28, 2007
  - [http://msidt.fullerton.edu](http://msidt.fullerton.edu)
• **Background/Overview** - (J. Carter-Wells - 5 min)
• **Research study-case study-rationale, methodology, design and analysis** - (J. Carter-Wells – 10 min.)
• **Results/themes**
  - Prior experience w/technology - (K. Ivers-5 min)
  - Peer interaction - (K. Ivers- 5 min.)
  - Teacher/student interaction - (J. Schools- 5 min)
  - Constructivist approaches to teaching and learning - (J. Schools- 5 min)
  - Diversity and critical discourse - (B. Glaeser- 5min.)
  - Institutional support - (B. Glaeser- 5 min)
  - Transformation learning/Perspective transformation - (K. Ivers- 5 min.)
• **Student Voice and Experience** - (T. Galaviz-10 min).
• **Conclusion/Questions and Answers** - 5 min.
Background/Overview

- MSIDT Degree is an online cohort program with students from around the country.
- Core Classes and Sequence combines theory and practice in Instructional Design so graduates will become experts in designing instructional programs and materials for optimum learning in an electronic environment.
- 30-unit Fully Accredited Program-WASC.
- All courses reflect an understanding of how adults learn. Courses are designed to activate students’ prior knowledge and to connect their prior knowledge with the course content.
- Majority of students from business/industry-Kia Motors, Chevron, Washington Mutual Bank, Intel, Southern California Edison, Genentech, etc.
Background/Overview

• 10 Courses/IDT prefix
• 20 month consecutive program in 5 term segments
• 2 courses/term segment
• Sequential cohort-based theory and practice courses culminating with a project/practicum
• Boot Up Camp- Orientation, program resources, training, advising
• Midpoint Symposium-advising, focus groups, project decision point
• Blackboard course management system
• To view the course sequence, visit http://msidt.fullerton.edu/
Program Strands

- Each course has objectives and activities intertwining and linking the strands throughout the program:
  - Assessment/Evaluation
  - Collaboration
  - Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
  - Media Literacy
  - Research
  - and Written Communication
Program Site

Masters Degree in Instructional Design and Technology

College of Human Development and Community Service

Online Master's Degree
INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN & TECHNOLOGY

Get ready for California State University, Fullerton’s latest cutting-edge online Master’s Degree in Instructional Design & Technology. Earning your Master’s in Instructional Design and Technology prepares or enhances your career in the exciting and growing field of instructional technology.

Tuesday, March 25th 2003

LATEST NEWS
APPLICATION DEADLINE
For a New Cohort - Fall, 2003.
Research study-case study- rationale, methodology, design & analysis

• Focus on tracking the student-centered online learning community over time
• Synthesis of various instructors in experience
• Theoretical frameworks- constructivist learning, academic online learning communities community and student centered learning
Research study - case study - rationale, methodology, design & analysis

- Case study methodology
- 58 students over 3 cohorts in MS degree program - 2002-2006
- 3 yr. qualitative study - longitudinal
- Review of online learning literature; regular part of faculty meetings - monthly research study focus
- Data collection sources - web-based exit survey conducted by IT unit, discussion board archives, secondary sources - program data, meetings, syllabi, faculty presentations, program evaluation documents, reports, WASC, students written records, and focus group data with an outside evaluator
Research study-case study-rationale, methodology, design & analysis

- Likert-scale questions-quantitative analyses
- Qualitative content coding
- Discourse analysis
- Inter-rater reliability- faculty discussions, critiques and multiple drafts and iterations of themes and concepts
Table 1: Open-Ended, Web-Based Survey Questions (pg. 12)

- Think back and recall any assumptions you had about online learning communities prior to entering the program and discuss them.
- How would you describe the online learning community you experienced in this program?
- Do you think you have been a member of an online learning community in this program? Why or why not?
- Did your experience in this program change your perspective about being an online student?
- Research indicates that online learning communities are often characterized by a learning versus a teaching curriculum. Which kind of curriculum did you experience in this program?
- Some educational theorists contend that learning is acquired more through social interaction and less through individual, isolated effort. Was your learning dependent on the interacting with others in this program, or more the result of your individual initiative?
- Do you feel that members of your cohort took on specific roles and responsibilities within the community? If so, describe those roles.
- What interactions with others made you feel more a part of the online community?
- What interactions with others made you feel less a part of the online community?
- What program elements increased your sense of community?
- What program elements decreased your sense of community?
- Did issues pertaining to gender, ethnicity, or learning disabilities impact your learning?
- What was your most transformational learning experience in the program?
- Did you perceive any connection between the assessments you received from your peers and your instructors and your connection to the community?
- In what ways did you develop your ability to think critically?
- Of all of the technologies used in the program, which technology most contributed to community development?
- In what ways have you been able to apply theory to practice?
Results/Themes

• **1. Prior experience w/ technology**
  - Computer mediated learning using BB enabled learning as well as range of pedagogical practices implemented by faculty
  - Prior experience with online learning and technology- program requirement w/ essay and interview
  - Range of technology experiences enhanced community of learners with students assisting others due to range of skills
Results/Themes

• 2. Peer interaction
  • Satisfaction w/online learning is strongly related to amount of active interaction with other learners, especially with small groups
  • ½ of students stated that most meaningful learning came from interactions with others
  • Some students reported that they learned best by working independently
  • Concerns when there are negative experiences online
  • Interesting how the necessary lack of peer interaction during final independent project impacted community of learners—“disengagement” and new program strategies—eoffice hours
Results/Themes

3. Teacher/student interaction

- Positive student-to-instructor interaction helps promote the value of the online community
- Feedback and communication improve student motivation and course participation
- Timely and consistent feedback maintain the feeling of participation in the community
- Lack of feedback can lead to student feeling of isolation from the community

- Professional behavior should always be maintained; students are sensitive to communications with negative connotations
- Availability of instructor for on-line office hours is positively received by students
Results/Themes

4. Constructivist approaches to teaching and learning

- Learning experienced as an intentional process of constructing meaning from the information and experiences encountered in the discussion boards
- Students maintain focus on course objectives, guide discussions and remain integral to the course content as active learners
- Importance of social relationships
- Foster knowledge construction and challenges to think critically
- Establishment of positive relationships with instructors
- Ethical dimensions of the online environment—establish guidelines
- Provide opportunities for social bonding—boot-up camp and midpoint symposium, etc.
- Promote transformative learning—new perspectives
Results/Themes

• 5. Diversity and critical discourse
  • Think critically about diverse issues
  • Differences in linguistic, cultural and social backgrounds – concerns for power inequalities in student interactions
  • Assistive technology issues
  • Multiple measures of assessment
Results/Themes

• **6. Institutional support**
  • Replicate the university environment as much as possible - boot-up camp, website
  • Provide instruction in expectations - ethical conduct, writing rigor, etc.
  • Provide services - library instruction, technical support
  • Handbook for program
  • Cohort co-captains - new implementation
Results/Themes

- 7. Fostering transformational learning/Perspective transformation
  - Adopt new frames of reference-link prior knowledge w/ new information
  - Challenge thinking and new perspectives; solve ill-structured problems
  - Discussion board prompts, small group activities, final independent project
  - Individualize learning options
  - Stimulate motivation and cohort culture
Student Voice and Experience

- Face to face orientations
- Asynchronous discussion boards
- Synchronous office hours
- Group projects
- Student-to-student learning
- Increased student interaction and bonding
- Positive student-to-teacher interaction
THANK YOU!

Conclusion/Discussion Questions and Answers!!!!