



Faculty Experiences and Adaptations in Teaching Diverse Student Populations Across a University System: A Post-COVID Case Study

Elizabeth Candello, Lucrezia Paxson, Wendy Raney, Tracy Simmons and Mike McLaughlin
Washington State University

Abstract

This study examines how faculty adapt curricula to serve diverse student populations across a university system in a post-COVID environment. Through semi-structured interviews with six faculty members teaching a foundational writing course at four co-located campuses, we explored how instructors navigate different instructional needs between traditional and non-traditional students, particularly those with varying access to technology. Using a social constructivist framework, our analysis revealed two key findings: differential expectations for faculty communication exist across student populations, and both faculty and students seek varied forms of social support. The study offers a practical guide for faculty adapting to new learning environments and contributes to understanding how curricula can effectively evolve to support diverse student learning experiences in higher education. These findings highlight the need for flexible yet standardized approaches that consider both student population characteristics and environmental factors affecting learning outcomes.

While the slow pace of change in academia has long been lamented, COVID-19 became a catalyst for educational institutions to search for innovative solutions in a relatively short period of time (Tam, 2020). The pandemic has brought along improvement opportunities in higher education (Benito *et al.*, 2021), responding to student needs. Higher education institutions are now adopting a student-centered learning model (Treve, 2021), and there is a growing need to understand how to implement those modalities (Voogt, Pieters, & Roblin, 2019), especially amid an increase in cultural, generational, and ethnic diversi-

ty of higher education (O'Brien *et al.*, 2019). Since curriculum design is an iterative process, in which knowledge is intertwined with the realities of many different stakeholders, curriculum should be seen as a social and cultural practice with active involvement of faculty in design (Voogt *et al.*, 2019). As such, scholars have explored the challenges of collaboration (Kent-Drury, 2000) and found that it can be particularly challenging when collaborators must cross organizational cultures (Spilka, 1993). Indeed, over the last 10 years, the university system examined in this case study has expanded its offerings across the state

Keywords: Faculty Collaboration, Social Constructivism, Journalism & Mass Communication Education

to meet the changing needs of its student body and demands of industry, and the pandemic accelerated the need for adaptation and collaboration.

While researchers have examined the challenges of collaborating across professional boundaries as well as developing curriculum for culturally-diverse populations (Kent-Drury, 2000), little has been done to examine collaboration across a university system when the student bodies differ in life phases and demographics. And to our knowledge, little research has been done to shed light on the perceived experiences of faculty who are tasked to work with such a diverse student population under the rigorous standardization of curricula.

One of the vulnerabilities exposed in the wake of the pandemic was the difficulty many students had joining virtual classes due to the lack of access to reliable internet services. Based on statistical data from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) it is estimated that up to 20 million Americans still do not have access to the internet and that a large percentage of those are students of color (Jaisinghani, 2020). Researchers note that increasing the accessibility of university education is a complex and multidimensional social issue (Cahalan *et al.*, 2022) that requires further efforts in higher education, especially since economically and socially disadvantaged students are typically less likely to engage with online education (Ortagus, 2017).

The university examined here reported that 31.5% of students across all campuses are minority, 32.5% of students are first generation; for one campus, 44.7% are first generation. There is a 12-year age deviation between the traditional and non-traditional student body across the college system. Thus, the challenges facing the college are three-fold: (1) curriculum to create consistent, yet individualized delivery by faculty; (2) multi-campus (co-locations) collaboration to meet these rapidly changing needs; and (3) teaching in a post-COVID environment informed by shared pedagogical experiences. Researchers argue that if colleges today hope to serve all students, it is vital to recognize the great influx of nontraditional, or older, students (Houser, 2005). Therefore, this case sought to share the insights of faculty, who are designing curricula and working with traditional and nontraditional students.

Benito (2021) suggest that many universities need to shape higher education for a better learning experience. Scholars like Bates (2015) have ar-

gued that we need to redesign traditional courses for new learning environments, particularly given the “detraditionalization” of social life in that periods of learning, work, unemployment, caregiving, or resting have spread throughout the course of life in recurrent cycles, sometimes resulting in a challenging combination of tasks for individuals when different life stages overlap (e.g., Ortagus, 2017). And now we see a redistribution of age levels within the university undergraduate population. Indeed, Ross-Gordon (2011) claimed that the majority of college students could be defined as “nontraditional” now with a growing diversity of populations, ages, and responsibilities. And since more older adults are enrolling in college, Chen (2017) argued that the support for post-traditional students in college should be different than the support needed for traditional 18- to 24-year-olds. Adult learners over the age of 25, defined as the nontraditional student in this study, are becoming the fastest growing group of undergraduates in North America (Carney-Crompton & Tan, 2002). Traditional and nontraditional students view the learning process differently. Therefore, during a collaborative curriculum re-design for a changing student body – ignited by a post-COVID world – this case study reveals the perceived experiences of faculty who must meet the high standards of delivery for a diverse student population.

The college's writing course

The foundational writing course at the examined college of communication, under its university system, provides students with the training and discipline necessary to succeed as a communication practitioner. By the end of the course, students are able to select information, knit that information into relevant assignments, write with deadline pressure, use outside resources, conduct interviews, and edit work, with accuracy and clarity. The college set a standard to make its students more competitive for internships and jobs, astute media consumers, and critical contributors.

The course is taught by several full-time faculty members, who teach one to five sections of the course across four co-located campuses. Each semester there are about 15 sections of 18 students each. For one of the co-located campuses the student enrollment is 32. Currently, there are 875 communication majors, thus approximately 30% are taking the course at any one time.

Writing course amid COVID-19 and post COVID-19

The virtual instruction required due to COVID-19 was the impetus needed to shape the course to take an individualized approach to a standardized curriculum, based on the faculty's individual expertise and student population. As a result, the faculty took a social constructivist approach to teaching and began collaborating to share experiences, focus assignments, suggest peer reviews, and added the opportunity for students to engage in the learning process.

Since March 2020, the faculty agreed to create a shared collection of assignment materials for consistency, saved in the Cloud. Faculty examined how they would need to communicate with students in synchronous and asynchronous environments moving forward, also known in the literature as blended learning (Azizan, 2010). Faculty encouraged students to take control of their learning by increasing expectations that students will study lessons outside of class, allowing more time for discussions in class.

While faculty collaboration resulted in the mutual understanding that consistency across the four co-located campuses would need to maintain the integrity of the college's rigorous communication education during and after the pandemic, it also exposed differential expectations for faculty communication among the various student populations, namely between traditional and nontraditional students that needs to be addressed. Therefore, this case study is guided by the instrumental paradigm in curriculum design that is based on not what faculty should do but what students have shared as their needs with faculty (Vischer-Vorerman & Gustafson, 2004) and a social constructivist approach in that knowledge is constructed through social interaction and collaborative learning. The case study presented here reflects the collaborative steps in a redesign of curricula across a university system with a diverse student body based on the findings from faculty feedback. It aims to provide useful guidance for other higher education institutions that are planning curricula redesigns, to offer different learning modalities, to meet the growing needs of a diverse student population amid a changing environment.

Literature Review

Inequities among a diverse student population

The inequalities among college students, including by race, ethnicity, socio-economic position (SEP), and life phases have long been studied and only have been

exacerbated by COVID-19 (Raifman & Raifman, 2020; Hoyt *et al.*, 2021), and there is a need to study these vulnerable groups amid the challenges of this change (Holmes *et al.*, 2020). While many studies have examined the inequities among a student population (e.g., Jack, 2021; Kim *et al.*, 2021; Taylor, 2021), including first-generation students (e.g., Ricks & Warren, 2021), non-traditional students (Sutherland *et al.*, 2023), and student experiences through the pandemic (e.g., Hoyt, 2021; Maurrasse, 2021; Marron, 2021; Hope, 2021), little has been done to shed light on the experiences of faculty who are tasked to work with a diverse student population under the rigorous standardization of curricula.

Curriculum design

Pathak-Shelat & Mehta (2023) argued that universities will not exist in their current form and will need to add a hybrid component to the physical campus experience. Thus, it is increasingly important that curriculum design caters to the needs of those who learn in hybrid models (Chugh *et al.*, 2017). While research has found that curriculum design for distance education makes education accessible for everyone (Carr, 2012) potentially and scholars have provided frameworks for designing blended learning curricula (Chang & Lin, 2024; Lopez-Perez & Perez-Mateo, 2020), little has been done to reflect the life phases of students and what that means for learning. Brown and Livstrom (2020) examined the curriculum design processes for the needs of ethnically, culturally, and linguistically-diverse students, and much of the research has argued for a contemporary curriculum design for distance education in the form of a triad comprising pedagogy, technology, and an engaged community of learners (Chug *et al.*, 2017). The facilitation of all three requires an understanding and purposeful design approach to the socio-cultural elements of the community.

Collaboration

Designing curricula for the socio-cultural elements of the community takes collaboration (Glassman *et al.*, 2021). Lines (1997) defines collaboration as a 'relationship.' This form of collaboration exists as a relationship in which broad ranging conversation occurs between the faculty. While studies have examined the relationship between learner and faculty in education, (e.g., Ceratto & Belisle, 1995), Jones (2001) argues that there are few studies that examine the collab-

oration between the designers, or faculty, in the development of curriculum. A collaborative model for preparation and delivery of hybrid courses was developed by the faculty of business at RMIT University. That design found that collaboration starts with the academic discipline negotiating and mediating and provides the following: information in a way that is proactive and student-centered; an opportunity for continued negotiation; a forum for discussion; and further collaboration with other disciplines. Jones (2001) believes that the collaborative model enables a continuous dialogue, discussion and explanation, with technology supporting the educational aims set by the faculty.

Social constructivism in education

Social Constructivism, developed from Vygotsky's (1978) seminal work, explains learning and knowing as an inherently social process where knowledge is constructed through interaction with others (Brophy & Alleman, 2002; Lave & Wenger, 1991). This theory emphasizes that learning occurs not in isolation, but through dialogue, collaboration, and social negotiation of meaning (Palincsar, 1998; Wertsch, 1991). Recent studies have explored the integration of digital technologies with social constructivist approaches. Tondeur *et al.* (2020) examined how teachers develop technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK) through collaborative learning environments. Their findings suggest that social constructivist approaches enhance TPACK development when combined with technology-rich settings.

The pandemic accelerated research into online learning through a social constructivist lens. Rapanata *et al.* (2021) investigated how social constructivist principles can be applied in online learning environments to foster student engagement and critical thinking. They found that carefully designed collaborative curricula and peer feedback can effectively support knowledge construction in virtual settings.

Kim and Hannafin (2011) further elaborated on how social constructivist frameworks support scaffolded learning experiences, particularly in technology-enhanced environments. Their research demonstrates the importance of social interaction in knowledge construction and skill development. Additional key theorists like Bruner (1996) and Jonassen and Rohrer-Murphy (1999) have contributed to our understanding of how social constructivism shapes learning environments and pedagogical approaches.

Recent research has also focused on cultural aspects of social constructivism. Yeh *et al.* (2021) explored how cultural backgrounds influence knowledge in multicultural classrooms. Their study highlighted the importance of culturally responsive teaching practices. Indeed, the theory emphasizes that learning is situated in specific contexts; however, Rapanata *et al.* (2021) highlighted the need for more research on how social constructivist principles can be effectively applied in blended learning environments, such as the one examined in this case.

Building on Vygotsky's (1978) principles, a key challenge in modern context-dependent learning environments is ensuring all voices are heard. The faculty from the four co-located campuses needed to identify the independent experiences among all of its students that required new ways of teaching. A breakdown of the student profile for each of the campuses – pseudonyms for each location were used to protect student populations – indicates the diversity across the university system (Table 1). The question was, therefore:

RQ1: What are the perceived experiences of faculty who work with a diverse student population, required to use rigorous standardization?

Methodology

A case-based qualitative, semi-participatory, method was used to answer the question. Yin (2014) defined a case as an event, time, place, or phenomena, in this case a writing course. Semi-structured interviews were

Table 1: Average headcount enrollment per campus

Campus	% Minority	% First Generation	% Veteran	Age
Location A	30.3%	30.3%	.9%	20.1
Location B	29.5%	32.5%	2.6%	30.8
Location C	28.8%	46.4%	5.8%	24.7
Location D	32.8%	41.9%	5.2%	25.3

Table 2: Question guide for a changing learning environment with a diverse student population

What were those pre-existing student struggles that were exacerbated by the new environment?
When the new environment caused change to the learning modality, what struggles did your students share with you?
What were your conversations like with students who thought about dropping out rather than continuing their education?
What adjustments did you have to make to keep students moving forward?
How has the new environment changed your method of teaching this course?
From your perspective, what student population was most severely impacted?
How do you continue to collaborate with your students amid this new learning environment?

conducted with the six faculty members in the college who teach the writing course, since the optimal size for group learning is four or five people in a social constructivist approach (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978), this case was ideal for collaboration. Several work sessions were conducted with the six faculty members to first understand the struggles, challenges, and needs of the faculty and perceived experiences of students; second, define work standards amid a new fluid environment that requires a blended component or student-centered learning. Initially, the faculty across the four co-located campuses met over a three-month period via Zoom to discuss how to adapt, improve, and make the writing course more accessible to a diverse student population amid a changing environment. The following outlines the methodological steps taken: (1) Each of the six-faculty members agreed to take notes that included our own challenges and observations and to bring those notes to each work session. Through an iterative process, those notes became our question guide to understanding what we were all experiencing during the pandemic and post-pandemic. (2) Semi-structured interviews among our participating six faculty were conducted. One faculty member, a part of this phenomena and who is also an assistant professor and trained Ph.D. at the college, gathered our note taking; this was our framework to develop a standard form of questioning to understand how other faculty across our system were handling the changing environment. These questions covered student struggles from the faculty perspective; student intentions to complete their education that was identified by faculty via faculty-student conversations; adjustments needed to the curricula; and modalities for teaching. (3) A coding scheme was then devel-

oped while analyzing the Q&A data and reviewing the literature (Kang & Zinger, 2019). Data was coded using an analytic process, referred to as open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Each data set was labeled as either traditional or non-traditional student populations to indicate the faculty's teaching environment. Taken from the faculty interviews, the following themes were constructed:

- Anecdotal evidence that differential expectations for faculty communication exist across student populations as perceived by faculty;
- Ways in which faculty and students seek counsel and support from each other as perceived by faculty.

During data analysis, further categories around *collaboration* emerged to generate practical implications.

The following section provides a question guide for faculty in higher education for use in amending curricula for a diverse student population amid a changing environment (Table 2). Although this case study examines the experiences in a COVID and post-COVID learning environment, each question that follows could be modified to address a specific changing environment. The faculty identified these questions as suitable to understand their colleagues' current needs when teaching a diverse student population.

Next, the conceptual categories that emerged: differential expectations for faculty communication and social support, and the implications for faculty seeking to build a standardized curriculum with needed flexibility are discussed.

Faculty interpretation of student communication
Theme 1. Communication needs differ among traditional and nontraditional students. Faculty feedback

revealed that faculty differences exist in their communication with students based on their student populations. Faculty who predominantly teach nontraditional students found that they were more aware of those in this cohort (compared with traditional students) who are struggling to stay enrolled in classes, often preparing to drop out rather than continuing their education after the pandemic.

A faculty member who teaches traditional students said:

In my class and generally on our campus we have had students who simply stopped communicating with us. Some we were able to reach out to and bring back into the course with flexibility on due dates, expanded formats of delivery of assignments, and some one-on-one coaching.

Another faculty member on a different campus who teaches nontraditional students said:

I'm working with two students now to ensure their "incompletes" from the spring semester are changed on their transcript. They communicated that they couldn't complete a semester because of family or work.

Two of the faculty who teach traditional students expressed that they were not aware of any students who considered dropping out at any point during their college careers.

One faculty member who teaches nontraditional students said:

Throughout any given semester, I will have at least two students tell me that they are unable to come to class due to childcare. I have to work with them to extend deadlines.

Another faculty who teaches traditional students said:

I don't know many of my students as well as I should. Mostly, they're immersed in their phones.

Whereas the faculty who teach nontraditional students said: "I always get to know each of my students well – it could be my age – they talk to me."

Another faculty member who teaches nontraditional students said: "I often know exactly what my older students need from me. No ambiguity."

Differential communication aligns with the work by Cooper (2018) who found that faculty with experience teaching nontraditional students reported a heightened awareness of the challenges these students face, including childcare needs and work-life balance.

Theme 2. Faculty and students seek social and informational support from each other. A prominent recurring theme to emerge was anecdotal evidence that social support exists between faculty-to-faculty and learner-to-learner. Each faculty described offering students various means of support including: one-on-one coaching, discussions addressing fears of failure due to the added stress caused by the pandemic and conversations regarding keeping lines of communication open.

One faculty member who teaches nontraditional students said:

Being there for the students and giving guidance seems to help. I had one student who just needed to talk things out over the phone. And used this as a consistent tool to get through the semester.

Another faculty member who teaches traditional students said:

After the first written assignment I decided to have individual Zoom meetings with every single student, (80 of them) to go over my edits. I would have met with just a few after class who really seemed to be struggling, but because of the lack of engagement, I felt these individual meetings were crucial. I think it made a huge difference.

And another faculty member shared that giving students plenty of time to complete assignments seemed to help:

I need to provide more examples of what I was looking for. But by extending deadlines and being responsive, students performed well.

The change in learning environment for many of the faculty expressed understanding and openness:

I try to be more understanding and flexible with students, and make sure everyone is communicating. I also stress to communicate with other instructors.

A faculty member found that "personal check-ins with students" help:

We visit more one-on-one now. I've sent emails to each student individually, welcoming them to class and making sure they know how to reach me. That's a little more than I usually do.

Another faculty member who teaches nontraditional students said:

Beyond what I hear from students, I know I use the guidance of my colleagues all the time. Those templates and previous work by faculty

help me tremendously.

This is consistent with previous research about social support, specifically informational support that provides advice, suggestions, and information that a participant can use to address his or her problems (House, 1981). Another faculty member said: “The students appreciate discussion and conversation to guide them through lecture and course content.” Similarly, Sharma and Shree (2023) stated that blended learning must include allocated and organized unconventional study time accompanied by the study material in the lectures and competence developed during the classroom experience.

A faculty member who teaches nontraditional students said that fellow students have been instrumental in the learning process:

Many of my students have stepped up to help others. I’m so appreciative of their time to help a peer. This doesn’t happen among all of my student groups; however, I think the interest to help is there, but many feel helpless and need just a little push in the right direction to help.

We set out to share the perceived experiences faculty who work with a diverse student population across a university system transitioning to new synchronous and asynchronous learning environment post-COVID. The collaboration among the six faculty on the four co-located campuses shared differential expectations for faculty communication, an opportunity for students to become active participants and supporters in the learning process, and overall, the importance of considering the environment of student cohorts when designing curricula for a new learning environment.

Discussion

This case study supports previous research on curriculum design that no one preferred design works for all students or even for one particular student population (Mestre, 2006). Research has found that blended/hybrid courses may be the best teaching format for a variety of student learning styles (Mansour & Mupinga, 2007). This case set out to share faculty experiences amid curriculum redesign across four co-located campuses following a pandemic and found that experiences in different communication and the need for social support exist across student populations that may prohibit the standardization of curricula. Instead, researchers have identified that curriculum in post-COVID needs to be developmental, personalized,

and evolving; pedagogy that is student-centered, inquiry-based, authentic, and purposeful; and delivery of instruction that capitalizes on the strengths of both synchronous and asynchronous learning (e.g., Zhao & Watterston, 2021; Trust & Whalen, 2021; Darling-Hammond & Hyler, 2020).

The implications of this case study highlights the increased need in practice for faculty across campuses to discuss needs, and identifies opportunities where students and specific learning environments should become collaborators in the learning process. Therefore, this study suggests that the social constructivist principle that learning is situated in specific contexts and is influenced by the cultural and social environments in which students learn must be considered in learning environments post-COVID.

Indeed, research shows that interaction among students and faculty is critically important for student satisfaction and retention (Bovill *et al.*, 2016). While Chugh *et al.* (2017) proposed a triad comprising pedagogy, technology, and an engaged community of learners to ensure curriculum needs, Bovill and Woolmer (2019) argued that there is a widespread lack of agreement over what students are invited to collaborate on, this case study reveals an opportunity for faculty to first collaborate among each other to share experiences, and their understanding of students’ needs and environmental changes should be a part of the pedagogical development. However, asking students to co-collaborate, when their resources may be limited and barriers to learning are high, should be tempered by each individual faculty member who understands the students’ particular needs and environment.

Differential expectations for faculty communication

Adult learning scholars have consistently revealed differential learning expectations for mature learners as compared to traditional college students (Kasworm, 2003). This study supports the research that traditional and nontraditional students have differential expectations for faculty communication. Houser (2005) found that nontraditional students want clear instruction, focused on viewing them as individuals with life experiences that have created specific educational goals. Although this research does not demarcate between verbal and nonverbal immediacy, clarity, or affinity seeking, it does suggest that communication between faculty-student is more frequent among nontraditional students. This study also further supports the argument that no longer should we continue

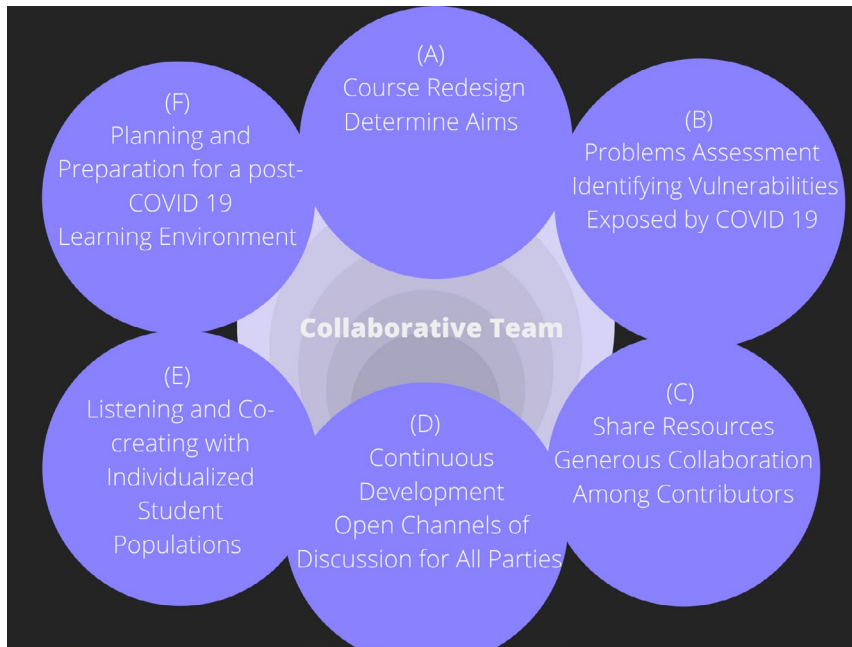


Figure 1
Cross-functional and cross-discipline collaborative model for online design and preparation post-COVID-19

to suggest, across-the-board, that every student will appreciate the same communication (Houser, 2005).

Providing social support for traditional and nontraditional students

Consistent with the research that traditional and non-traditional students seek social support, this research supports that the focus needs to be directed to the interconnectedness of academic and social experiences (Meuleman *et al.*, 2015) away from the university. It is advantageous then that Baruah *et al.* (2022) found that online support modalities is emerging as an effective tool for support in the college environment. Much has been studied on the relationship between social support and school outcomes that are strongly influenced by the social contexts in which they live (e.g., Rosenfeld, 2000), thus this case underscores the importance that both traditional and nontraditional students place on the support of faculty and peers. Support can also impact resource-limited institutions and smaller programs (Martinez-Cola *et al.*, 2018). Beetham and Sharpe (2021) found that developing peer learning communities can be cost-effective strategies. Consistent with this study's findings, researchers like Aithal and Aithal (2023) have urged institutions to implement the following practical approaches including: utilizing free digital tools; developing peer mentoring programs; creating collaborative learning communities for both faculty and students; and implementing flexible assessment methods.

In this study, the faculty collaboration sought to identify appropriate learning experiences across tra-

ditional and nontraditional student groups. This case study's recommendations include continuous dialogue between faculty and the flexibility of curriculum to allow students to be a part of the learning process based on communication needs and social support resources. To demonstrate this process, this case study contributes to Jones' (2001) cross-functional and cross-discipline collaborative model for asynchronous and synchronous design and preparation (Figure 1.). Jones was concerned about the loss of autonomy that discourages faculty to adopt a collaborative approach across universities. However, this case study uses the model to confront faculty concerns of not only collaborating with fellow faculty but integrating student collaboration, although limited given levels of communication, in the process and extends the model by incorporating the consideration of the learning environment (F) to the process in that students' needs differ based on life phases and accessibility to learning. As the model indicates, listening and collaborating with students should be a step in the curriculum re-design process, but it's not until the learning environment is considered can real curricula reform take place.

This model informs those institutions of higher education that the current environment, outside the institution, should be considered when developing curricula and help to dictate the pedagogy used by faculty. A one-size fits all curriculum is not viable given the expansion of university offerings across regions. This case strongly emphasizes the importance of considering the learning environment and context, which

is a key tenet of social constructivism. It shows how the pandemic and post-pandemic environment affect the learning process. Therefore, this case demonstrates how social constructivist principles need to be adapted for diverse student populations, including traditional and nontraditional students.

There are limitations to this case study that should be considered. As argued by Cooper *et al.* (2012) university culture and even regional factors may have influenced the experiences expressed by faculty. In addition, the faculty were part of the phenomena examined here and were part of this iterative process, which raises questions of implicit bias and whether impartial analysis could be conducted; an external source or data set could eliminate those concerns. Lastly, this case study is not generalizable to a larger faculty-student population, but rather offers a guide for faculty needing to rethink their teaching amid a changing learning environment. Future research should examine student's feedback on the collaborative process of a curricula redesign to assess whether student needs are really being met versus faculty perceived realities.

Conclusion

Benito *et al.* (2021) argued that the pandemic has brought along improvement opportunities in higher education, opportunities in hybrid modes of instruction. Similar to Jones' (2001) recommendation that collaboration enables a continuous dialogue, discussion and explanation, with technology supporting the educational aims set by the faculty, the faculty experiences shared encourages all higher education institutions to consider the learning needs of each student population and current climate and environment first and then establish a sustainable curricula. For example, collaboration among faculty exposed differential expectations for faculty communication across a system-wide university, specifically among traditional and nontraditional students, that affects the implementation of curricula.

The curriculum design changes by the faculty collaboration were instituted in fall 2020 and have continued. Due to the changing learning environment as a result of the pandemic, the following changes were made: 1) a system of communication via multi-channel platforms was established for students to communicate with faculty as desired; 2) a peer mentorship program was initiated for students on the co-located campuses to connect and support one another; 3) a

repository was created for all faculty responsible for teaching the writing course to share assignments, quizzes, tests, and grading rubrics. Since the pandemic has exposed a need for systemwide reviews within educational institutions to increase adaptations for a diverse student population, the curricula changes instituted acknowledge that student populations have an opportunity to contribute to the design of their curriculum based on learning needs and environments.

References

- Aithal, P. S. & Aithal, S. (2023). How to empower educators through digital pedagogies and faculty development strategies. *International Journal of Applied Engineering and Management Letters (IJAEML)*, 7(4), 139-183.
- Azizan, F.Z. (2010). Blended learning in higher education institution in Malaysia. Proceedings of Regional Conference on Knowledge Integration in ICT.
- Baruah, J., Dalton, D., & Borchardt, J. (2024). A comparison of online and offline support modalities as predictors of stress among traditional and non-traditional college students. *The Journal of Continuing Higher Education*, 72(1), 33-49.
- Bates, Tony (2015). "Balancing the use of social media and privacy protection in online learning" and "ensuring quality in teaching." Chap. 8, 9, and Chap.11 in *Teaching in a Digital Age*. <http://opentextbc.ca/teachinginadigitalage/>.
- Benito, Á., Dogan Yenisey, K., Khanna, K., Masis, M. F., Monge, R. M., Tugtan, M. A. & Vig, R. (2021). Changes that should remain in higher education post COVID-19: A mixed-methods analysis of the experiences at three universities. *Higher Learning Research Communications*, 11, 4.
- Beetham, H., & Sharpe, R. (Eds.). (2019). *Rethinking pedagogy for a digital age: Principles and practices of design*. Routledge.
- Brophy, J., & Alleman, J. (2002). Learning and teaching about cultural universals in primary-grade social studies. *The Elementary School Journal*, 103(2), 99-114.
- Bruner, J. (1997). The culture of education. In *The Culture of Education*. Harvard University Press.
- Bovill, C., & Woolmer, C. (2019). How conceptualisations of curriculum in higher education influence student-staff co-creation in and of the

- curriculum. *Higher Education*, 78(3), 407-422.
- Bovill, C., Cook-Sather, A., Felten, P., Millard, L., & Moore-Cherry, N. (2016). Addressing potential challenges in co-creating learning and teaching: Overcoming resistance, navigating institutional norms and ensuring inclusivity in student-staff partnerships. *Higher Education*, 71(2), 195-208.
- Brown, J. C., & Livstrom, I. C. (2020). Secondary science teachers' pedagogical design capacities for multicultural curriculum design. *Journal of Science Teacher Education*, 1-20.
- Cahalan, M. W., Addison, M., Brunt, N., Patel, P. R., Vaughan III, T., Genao, A., & Perna, L. W. (2022). Indicators of higher education equity in the United States: 2022 historical trend report. *Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education*.
- Carney-Crompton, S. & Tan, J. (2002). Support systems, psychological functioning, and academic performance of non-traditional female students, *Adult Education Quarterly*, 52, 2, 140-154
- Carr, A. (2012). Thematic review of family therapy journals 2011. *Journal of Family Therapy*. 34, 431-451.
- Chang, C.Y. & Lin, Y.S. (2024). Using design thinking for interdisciplinary curriculum design and teaching: A case study in higher education, *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 11(1), 281.
- Ceratto, T. & Belisle, C. (1995). Reframing learning in CSCL environments. Retrieved here <https://doi.org/10.3115/222020.222052>
- Chen, J. C. (2017). Nontraditional adult learners: The neglected diversity in postsecondary education. *SAGE Open*, 7(1), 1-12.
- Chugh, R., Ledger, S., & Shields, R. (2017). Curriculum design for distance education in the tertiary sector. *The Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education*, 18(2), 4- 15.
- Cooper, K. S. (2018). Using affective data in urban high schools: can we equalize the graduation rate?. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 21(1), 104-121.
- Cooper, R., Fleischer, A., & Cotton, F. A. (2012). Building Connections: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Qualitative Research Students' Learning Experiences. *Qualitative Report*, 17, 1.
- Darling-Hammond, L., & Hyler, M. E. (2020). Preparing educators for the time of COVID... and beyond. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 43(4), 457-465.
- Dollinger, M., Lodge, J., & Coates, H. (2018). Co-creation in higher education: Towards a conceptual model. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 28(2), 210-231.
- Glassman, M., Kuznetcova, I., Peri, J., & Kim, Y. (2021). Cohesion, collaboration and the struggle of creating online learning communities: Development and validation of an Online Collective Efficacy Scale. *Computers and Education Open*, 100031.
- Holmes, E. A., O'Connor, R. C., Perry, V. H., Tracey, I., Wessely, S., Arseneault, L., & Bullmore, E. (2020). Multidisciplinary research priorities for the COVID-19 pandemic: A call for action for mental health science. *The Lancet Psychiatry*.
- Hope, J. (2021). Pandemic hampers student engagement, highlights inequities. *Enrollment Management Report*, 24(12), 9-9.
- House, J. S. (1981). *Workstress and social support*. Reading, MA: Addison Wesley.
- Houser, M. L. (2005). Are we violating their expectations? Instructor communication expectations of traditional and nontraditional students. *Communication Quarterly*, 53(2), 213-228.
- Hoyt, L. T., Cohen, A. K., Dull, B., Castro, E. M., & Yazdani, N. (2021). "Constant stress has become the new normal": Stress and anxiety inequalities among US college students in the time of Covid-19. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 68(2), 270-276.
- Jack, N. (2021). Revolutionizing education. In *Emerging Strategies for Public Education Reform* (pp. 27-57). IGI Global.
- Jaisinghani, P. (2020). "COVID-19 is Widening the Education Gap. This is How We Can Stop It." World Economic Forum. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/08/we-must-resist-covid-19-widening-us-education-gap/>
- Jonassen, D. H., & Rohrer-Murphy, L. (1999). Activity theory as a framework for designing constructivist learning environments. *Educational technology research and development*, 47(1), 61-79.
- Jones, S. (2001). Collaboration – A threat to academic autonomy. ASCILLITE Conference Proceedings – Meeting at the Crossroads, December, 299-306. Melbourne.
- Kang, H., & Zinger, D. (2019). What do core practices offer in preparing novice science teachers

- for equitable instruction? *Science Education*, 103(4), 823-853.
- Kasworm, C.E. (2003). Adult meaning making in the undergraduate classroom. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 53(2) 81-98.
- Kent-Drury, R. (2000). Bridging boundaries, negotiating differences: The nature of leadership in cross-functional proposal-writing groups. *Technical Communication*, 47(1), 90-98.
- Kim, E. H., Flack, C. B., Parham, K., & Wohlstetter, P. (2021). Equity in secondary career and technical education in the United States: A theoretical framework and systematic literature review. *Review of Educational Research*, 0034654321995243.
- Kim, M. C., & Hannafin, M. J. (2011). Scaffolding problem solving in technology-enhanced learning environments (TELEs): Bridging research and theory with practice. *Computers & Education*, 56(2), 403-417.
- Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). Learning in doing: Social, cognitive, and computational perspectives. *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*, 10, 109-155.
- Lines, R. (1997). Emergent paradigms in design education. In EPDE Conference Proceedings. (pp. 65-69).
- Lopez-Perez, M. V. & Perez-Mateo, M. (2020). A Framework for Curriculum Design in Blended Learning Environments: A Literature Review. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*, 17(1), 1-26.
- Mansour, B. E., and Mupinga, D. M. (2007). Students' positive and negative experiences in hybrid and online classes. *Coll. Stud. J.* 41, 242-248.
- Marron, J. M. (2021). Structural racism in the COVID-19 pandemic: Don't forget about the children!. *The American Journal of Bioethics*, 21(3), 94-97.
- Martinez-Cola, M., English, R., Min, J., Peraza, J., Tambah, J., & Yebuah, C. (2018). When pedagogy is painful: Teaching in tumultuous times. *Teaching Sociology*, 46(2), 97-111.
- Maurrasse, D. (2021). Challenges to US higher education in performing local missions during and after the Covid-19 pandemic. *Higher education's response to the Covid-19 pandemic: Building a more sustainable and democratic future*, 25, 67.
- Strausburg: Council of Europe.
- Meuleman, A-M., Garrett, R., Wrench, A. and King, S. (2015) 'Some people might say I'm thriving but non-traditional students' experiences of university, *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 19(5), pp. 503-517.
- Mestre, L. (2006). Accommodating diverse learning styles in an online environment. *Reference & user services quarterly*, 46(2), 27-32.
- O'Brien, B., Tuohy, D., Fahy, A., & Markey, K. (2019). Home students' experiences of intercultural learning: A qualitative descriptive design. *Nurse Education Today*, 74, 25-30.
- Ortagus, J. C. (2017). From the periphery to prominence: An examination of the changing profile of online students in American higher education. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 32, 47-57.
- Palincsar, A. S. (1998). Social constructivist perspectives on teaching and learning. *Annual review of psychology*, 49(1), 345-375.
- Pathak-Shelat, M., & Mehta, B. (2023). The future of higher education in ethical metaverse: Co-existing in virtually enhanced physical reality. In *The Emergence of the Ethically-Engaged University* (pp. 137-157). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Raifman, M. A., & Raifman, J. R. (2020). Disparities in the population at risk of severe illness from COVID-19 by race/ethnicity and income. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 59(1), 137-139.
- Rapanta, C., Botturi, L., Goodyear, P., Guàrdia, L., & Koole, M. (2021). Balancing technology, pedagogy and the new normal: Post-pandemic challenges for higher education. *Postdigital Science and Education*, 3(3), 715-742.
- Ricks, J. R., & Warren, J. M. (2021). Transitioning to college: Experiences of successful first-generation college students. *Journal of Educational Research and Practice*, 11(1), 1.
- Rosenfeld, L. B., Richman, J. M., & Bowen, G. L. (2000). Social support networks and school outcomes: The centrality of the teacher. *Child and adolescent social work journal*, 17, 205-226.
- Ross-Gordon, J. M. (2011). Research on adult learners: Supporting the needs of a student population that is no longer nontraditional. *Peer Review*, 13, 26-29.
- Sharma, L., & Shree, S. (2023). Exploring the online and blended modes of learning for post-COVID-19: A study of higher education institutions. *Education Sciences*, 13(2), 142.

- Spilka, R. (1993). Influencing workplace practice: A challenge to professional writing specialists in academia. In R. Spilka (ed.) *Writing in the workplace* (pp. 207-219). Carbondale, Ill: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research* (Vol. 15). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Sutherland, K., Brock, G., de Villiers Scheepers, M. J., Millear, P. M., Norman, S., Strohfeldt, T., & Black, A. L. (2023). Non-traditional students' preferences for learning technologies and impacts on academic self-efficacy. *Journal of Computing in Higher Education*, 1-22.
- Tam, Gloria, El-Azar, Diana. (2020). Three ways Coronavirus is reshaping education and what changes might be here to stay. World Economic Forum. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/03/3-ways-coronavirus-is-reshaping-education-and-what-changes-might-be-here-to-stay/>
- Taylor Jr, H. L. (2021). The pre-Covid-19 world: Race and inequity in higher education. *Higher education's response to the Covid-19 pandemic: Building a more sustainable and democratic future*, 25, 41.
- Treve, M. (2021). What COVID-19 has introduced into education: Challenges facing Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). *Higher Education Pedagogies*, 6 (1), 212-227. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23752696.2021.1951616>
- Trust, T., & Whalen, J. (2021). Emergency remote teaching with technology during the COVID-19 pandemic: Using the whole teacher lens to examine educator's experiences and insights. *Educational Media International*, 58(2), 145-160.
- Tondeur, J., Scherer, R., Siddiq, F., & Baran, E. (2020). Enhancing pre-service teachers' technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK): A mixed-method study. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 68(1), 319-343.
- Visser-Voerman, I., & Gustafson, K. L. (2004). Paradigms in the theory and practice of education and training design. *Educational technology research and development*, 52(2), 69-89.
- Voogt, J., Pieters, J., & Roblin, N. P. (2019). Collaborative curriculum design in teacher teams: Foundations. In J. Pieters, J. Voogt, & N. Pareja Roblin (Eds.), *Collaborative Curriculum Design for Sustainable Innovation and Teacher Learning* (pp. 5-18). Springer International Publishing AG. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-20062-6_1
- Vygotsky, L. S., & Cole, M. (1978). *Mind in society: Development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.
- Wertsch, J. V. (1991). *Voices of the mind: A socio-cultural approach to mediated action*. Harvard University Press.
- Yeh, E., Jaiswal-Oliver, M., Sharma, R., & Wan, G. (2021). Enhancing Asian immigrants' and international students' learning: Faculty cultural awareness and pedagogy training. *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication*, 31(1), 100-121.
- Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods*. London, UK: Sage.
- Zhao, Y., & Watterston, J. (2021). The changes we need: Education post COVID-19. *Journal of Educational Change*, 22(1), 3-12.
- Elizabeth Candello is a scholarly associate professor at the Edward R. Murrow College of Communication at Washington State University. Her research explores how organizations build relationships to increase health literacy among populations and examines how knowledge is produced and co-created. Elizabeth.candello@wsu.edu*
- Lucrezia Paxson is a scholarly assistant professor in the Edward R. Murrow College of Communication at Washington State University-Everett and a graduate of King's College London. After a career as a broadcast journalist and foreign correspondent, Cuen Paxson joined Murrow in 2012. She founded the college's Global Engagement program and Backpack Environmental program.*
- Wendy Raney, scholarly assistant professor in the Edward R. Murrow College of Communication, teaches Reporting Across Platforms (COMJOUR 333) and Writing in Communication (COM 300), and is the lead instructor for this foundational writing course. She has created two courses for the college: Sports Journalism (COMJOUR 487) and Strategic Sports Writing (COM 388).*
- Tracy Simmons, scholarly assistant professor in the Edward R. Murrow College of Communication, is an award-winning journalist with over 20 years of experi-*

ence specializing in religion reporting and media entrepreneurship.

Mike McLaughlin, lecturer in the Edward R. Murrow College of Communication, is a Murrow alumnus who is passionate about supporting students and sharing his love of journalism and precision writing. He started teaching what is now Communication 300 (Writing in Communication) on the Pullman campus in 2003. He developed the online version of the course and began teaching it in 2016.

© Elizabeth Candello, Lucrezia Paxson, Wendy Raney, Tracy Simmons and Mike McLaughlin, 2024. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License.