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# Best Practices: Implementing an Online Course Development & Delivery Model

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## **Abstract**

The rise of online and hybrid courses at the higher education level increases the need for distance learning infrastructures to nourish online faculty preparedness and student online learning success. One part of the distance learning infrastructure is incorporating the use of educated and trained instructional designers to assist faculty in developing robust and quality online courses. Developing online courses with an instructional designer is a very laborious process, but the results can outweigh the struggles that faculty encounter when doing it on their own. The authors explain what is involved in an established six-step course development model for developing, reviewing, and delivering a quality online course.

## **Introduction**

### *Background*

According to the BABSON Survey Research Group (2013), data from Fall 2002 through Fall 2011 indicate that student online enrollments continue to rapidly increase. During 2010-2011, the total online enrollment increased to 6.7 million, a 9.3% growth rate in online enrollment. These astounding numbers, coupled with the expansion of degree completion programs, online general education transfer courses, and high school dual-enrollment and early college programs dictate that the proper distance learning infrastructure must exist in order to promote student satisfaction and maintain positive enrollment increases.

The authors collaborated for more than seven years at a large university that had a solid distance learning infrastructure and course development model for online course development. The business model included a financially self-supporting college that employed senior instructional designers, instructional designers, a faculty developer, technical support, media services, and marketing. The college serviced online teaching faculty who taught online courses that were part of an online degree program. The instructional designers were responsible for assisting faculty with the development of the online course content (reviewing, editing, making recommendations, training, building learning objects, consulting, course reviews, quality assurance reviews, and course deployment). Upon final content approval, the instructional designers built the courses in the learning management system for the faculty. Many faculty found this to be a great resource so that they could focus on other responsibilities, but this model hindered many faculty from gaining the skills needed to make their own changes after the course development partnership expired. This ultimately became frustrating for faculty when they were unable to receive immediate support on making changes when needed and it also deprive them of additional technical skillsets and certain levels of autonomy.

After a seven year tenure at the large university, the author, Outlaw, transitioned to a smaller university in its infancy initiating a distance learning office. A business model did/does not exist for the new distance learning office, nor was/is it financially self-supporting. The office employs one staff person as the director of distance learning, who also serves as the senior instructional designer, faculty developer, trainer, technical support, media consultant, and accessibility and copyright consultant. Outlaw had to immediately adopt a palatable online course development model to get the faculty started with the development and delivery of their online courses, while simultaneously trying to build a proper distance

learning infrastructure. As with the previous example, the senior instructional designer is responsible for assisting faculty with the development of the online course content (reviewing, editing, making recommendations, training, building learning objects, consulting, course reviews, quality assurance reviews, and course deployment). Upon final content approval, the faculty are trained to build their own courses in the learning management system. Many faculty found this to be a very laborious process, but also agreed that having access to an instructional designer is a great resource because they learned additional pedagogical and technological skills, not only for the online course, but also for their classroom courses. This model, although very time consuming and strenuous, provided faculty with additional confidence in teaching and autonomy after the course development partnership expired.

Individuals working in an environment with a well-defined course development model or in an environment that is not privy to the full spectrum of distance learning resources only need to know that the best end results of developing an online course stem from the active collaboration and team work of a subject matter expert and an instructional designer. To gain these positive results, one must recognize and implement common best practices from a research-based online course development model.

## **Infrastructure for an Online Course Development Model**

### *Instructional Design*

Instructional design is the systematic process of translating principles of learning and instruction into content that is conducive for learning (Smith & Ragan, 1999). From the authors' experience, this practice of enhancing instruction that is efficient, effective, and engaging is achieved by using technology and multimedia. The process consists of pedagogical and andragogical theories to determine learner needs, instructional goals, and measurable transitions in a course. The goals are met by incorporating instructional design theories and theoretical models with the content from the subject matter expert. Creating an online course is a collaborative effort that requires the subject matter expert and an instructional designer to build a course that is self-sufficient, interactive, engaging, robust and of quality. One could technically work without the other, but both roles bring unique experiences to the partnership to enhance the skills that one or the other lacks to make the course as robust as possible. Ultimately,

according to Steven (2013), the creation of an online course requires a shift in pedagogy, in which the instructional designer is trained to use research and best practices as a guide to make the specific transformations (those usually unbeknownst to faculty).

### *Instructional Designers*

Instructional design is generally executed by instructional designers. According to scholars, instructional designers are typically educators, trained in emerging technologies and pedagogy, who possess specialized skills (Steven, 2013). They must be able to conduct needs assessments, write objectives, and choose content, method, instructional strategies, and best practices (Schwier & Wilson, 2010). Professionally, instructional designers should be able to build interpersonal and trust-worthy relationships, communicate clearly, motivate, solve problems, manage projects and deadlines, outsource, train, and adapt. In addition, instructional designers should be intuitive, supportive, encouraging, organized, persuasive, flexible (Schwier & Wilson, 2010), capable, energetic, pragmatic, and helpful (Stevens, 2013).

### *Subject Matter Experts (SME)*

Like instructional designers, SME's are educated experts in their content discipline; however, they may not particularly know how to integrate and/or teach with technology, nor are they usually trained to transform classroom strategies into an online format. During the course development project, SME's must be able to adopt new teaching strategies, adopt technology for pedagogical uses, transform autonomy to collaboration, understand the roles in the course design partnership, and embrace the transformations needed from classroom to online delivery (Stevens, 2013). Professionally, SME's should be able to be flexible, professional, committed, and able to shift perspectives and work collaboratively (Stevens, 2013).

### *Overall Goal of a Quality Online Course*

Together, the partnership with the instructional designer and the SME could result in a course that is

robust, of quality, interactive, engaging, and according to Stevens (2013), should meet desired learning outcomes, appropriately use technology, possess good assessment practices, and adhere to best practices of instructional design. Shneiderman (1994) states that students are not strongly motivated by simply acquiring facts, accessing information, drill and practice, and listening to lectures. Engaged students have an active investment in their learning, which goes beyond reading, acquiring facts, memorization, regurgitating answers, and listening to lectures (Chickering, 1996). Kearsley and Shneiderman (1998) state that the underlying basis of Engagement Theory is that students should have meaningful involvement in their learning through interactive and valuable tasks, thereby, promoting activities that have authentic focus. Use of technology can promote engagement, spike active learning, increase retention, build online communities, and spark social presence (Lefever & Carrant, 2010) that is difficult to achieve otherwise. Engagement and construction suggests knowledge retention takes place with active learning through activities such as creation, collaboration, exploration, peer-review, and publication (Shneiderman, 1994). Proserpio and Gioia (2007) concur that optimal teaching and learning occurs when teaching and learning styles align in this virtual generation using mediums such as cloud-based applications. Green (2012) concurs that the use of emerging technologies can promote active learning and engagement, which lead to increased retention through a robust learning environment. Exploring creative ways of teaching and learning with the use of technology also builds online communities and increases social presence. Green (2012) also reiterates the value of emerging technologies that promote active learning to engage student awareness through innovative pedagogical strategies to enhance knowledge retention. Implementing innovative ways of learning with the use of technology creates a unique learning experience that encourages continual exploration and collaboration with peers that can be extended to personal or professional life. The review of Gagne's Nine Events of Instructions (2013) for online and hybrid courses reiterates the valuable need for the use of technology to provide a robust learning experience that can be extended to professional and personal life. An educated and experienced instructional designer can assist faculty in incorporating these features in building the online course.

## **Outlaw Six-Phase Course Development Model**

Studies have been conducted to reveal positive effects in the course development process that includes

the partnership with a SME and instructional designer to develop online courses, especially when universal design templates are implemented (Borgemenke, Holt, & Fish, 2013; Chao, Saj, & Hamilton, 2010; Liston, 1999; Stevens, 2013). In order to obtain these goals, the relationship with an instructional designer and the SME is vital in the productivity of creating a quality, interactive, engaging, and robust course. As with ideal characteristics for instructional designers and SME's, there are common emergent themes in the research that are conducive to developing a course development model. Per Stevens (2013), five of these emergent themes are partnership, communication, collaboration, cooperation, and commitment. The course development partnership must also be built upon understanding roles, respect, and trust.

These vital themes contribute to a professional and productive instructional design and SME partnership. The goal of the partnership is to produce a robust, interactive, and engaging course to increase the value of the online student learning experience. Likewise, the use of theory, best practices, and quality assurance measures aids in the application of required skills needed to conquer this task. Outlaw routinely used research, basic instructional design principles, advanced education, usability testing data, faculty and student feedback, and years of experience to successfully guide faculty through course development projects. To date, this guide is known as the *Outlaw Six-Phase Course Development Model*. The model has evolved over the years, has been used to mentor novice instructional designers, and is used to introduce and guide faculty through the online course development project and partnership.

Phase 1, the Initial Meeting phase, is very similar to the Analysis phase of the ADDIE Model. This phase involves conducting a comprehensive needs analysis of the subject matter expert, the course, and the audience. It encompasses asking a series of questions to determine the SME's teaching philosophy and technological self-efficacy to assess which technologies would be best for his/her ease of use (while aligning with objectives). The questions are also designed to gather data on identifying the course materials (i.e., objectives, supplemental resources, assessments, and multimedia), consulting on accessibility and copyright, and acquiring needs for media and graphics, length of course, course requirements, and objectives. Finally, the questions are also designed to gather information on the audience to determine the grade level, typical skillset, and required outcomes. This data is compiled to

create a plan of action for the course development, which includes obtaining outsourced resources and services and purchasing equipment and software.

Phase 2, the Content Build and Review phase, is similar to the Design and Development phase of the ADDIE Model. This phase is the process of designing (or storyboarding) the course in its entirety (i.e., readings, lectures, assignments, discussions, assessments). Faculty are given the syllabus, schedule, and module templates to begin building their content on paper in preparation before it is transported in Phase 4. Standard navigation jargon is included on the templates so that faculty can merely concentrate on the design of the content and pedagogy. The instructional designer reviews the draft, makes edits and recommendations regarding instructional strategies and instructions; provides guidance where accessibility, copyright, and media are concerned; and designs instruction and learning objects. This process mimics the journal review process and goes back and forth until all matters are resolved and the entire course is scripted and approved on paper.

Phase 3, the Training phase, is when the SME receives training in pedagogy, online facilitation, and/or technology. This phase can transpire interchangeably at any point in the six-phase model. Some SME's may desire to know the end result of using a specific technology to ensure that its use will be affordable, easy, align with the objectives, integrate well with other technology, and meet specific requirements for the faculty and the students. Training can transpire in Phase 1, but should be completed by Phase 4.

Phase 4, the Build in the Learning Management System phase, is comparable to the Implement phase in the ADDIE model. The content is built in the learning management system in preparation for the course and quality assurance reviews in Phase 5. In Phase 4, the SME's are encouraged to take a moment to go through the fully developed course as a student to gain the student's authentic experience. During this phase SMEs also discuss and obtain training on course facilitation best practices and on how to use the learning management system tools, especially for grading. Any issues discovered in design, pedagogy, or technology should be immediately resolved during this phase.

Phase 5, the Course Review and Quality Assurance phase, is the point in the process where everything is reviewed to resolve any pending issues before the course is deployed to the students. This phase

should typically be a matter of checks and balances if the SME completed the first four phases correctly and if the instructional designer kept running notes throughout the process. This phase concludes final course reports that are prepared for administration, especially when compensation is an award for online course development. During this phase the SME prepares the welcome email/letter that is provided to the students at least two weeks before the start of the course so that students are prepared to purchase course materials and to complete the introductory activities.

Phase 6, the Facilitate, Journal, and Revise phase, is the phase that begins after the start date of the course. First, it is recommended that faculty receive best practices tips on facilitating an online course during Phases 3 & 4, especially if he/she is a novice to online facilitation. Technology changes every day; therefore, veterans are also recommended to stay abreast of best practices in online facilitation. Second, it is recommended that faculty journal their experience while the course is in session. It is not likely that an individual will recall every instance that happened during the delivery of the online course so keeping a journal will expedite the revision process. Faculty should keep a weekly journal of what did and did not go well and a log of the most common questions students asked to prepare to make those enhancements. Faculty should formulate their thoughts on why and how particulars should be revised and then revise the course for the next offering right away. They should discuss their journal notes with a designer and obtain assistance on enhancing instructions and/or revising strategies. Revise EARLY.

## **Perspectives on Instructional Design Support**

### *Instructional Designers Perspectives*

Several instruction design experts were asked to provide their perspective on the value an instructional designer has in the partnership with faculty to design and develop online courses. The following are comments from instructional design professionals:

Dr. Nicole House, Manager of Instructional Technology for Ellucian at Delta State University:

*“Instructional designers have advanced training in the formal construction of learning environments based on theoretical precepts, a firm understanding of curriculum design, and the skillset to transform*



*subject matter to viable learning objects. It's important to acknowledge that designers are learner-centric and place context over perspective. So the instructional designer is an objective partner with a clear goal to aid you in developing a course that will support successful student outcomes. They are vested in creating an effective, well-organized online learning space that engages learners with your content and course vision. This saves you time, promotes student satisfaction, and provides a reliable systematic approach to course design.”* (personal communication, February 1, 2015)

Dr. Kristi Garrett, Director of Instructional Design at Atlanta Technical College: *“In an ideal educational system, the goal of the instructor and student is to increase student knowledge of the curriculum content in an interactive learning environment. Since we know the educational environment is continuously evolving, an ID can guide the faculty through a logical approach to course development by asking probing questions. For instance, the ID can view it from both the student and instructor perspectives. For lack of a better term, the ID serves as the “devil's advocate” to identify teaching and/or technology gaps in the course design. A valuable component is the ability to provide a bird’s-eye view of the course development process. The instructor is usually too involved as the subject matter expert and has a diminished view of how quality instruction can increase learning.”* (personal communication, February 3, 2015)

Tasha M. Brown, Director of Higher Education Services at AliveTek, Inc.: *“An ID guides you through the process of designing a quality course that adheres to online learning standards and best practices. The ID will also provide tips and guidance on the best technology to use and how content should be arranged and chunked to ensure the students are learning in a meaningful way. Combining each of your expertises will allow your courses to be rich, engaging, innovative, and a model to your peers and students of what quality online learning should be.”* (personal communication, February 16, 2015)

### *Faculty Perspectives*

Several faculty were polled and asked to answer the following questions regarding their experience with using an instructional designer to assist with the development of their online course. The faculty were randomly selected to provide a mixture of new and novice faculty who were privy to an established

distance learning infrastructure versus those who were new to online teaching and/or new to working with an instructional designer and were not privy to an established distance learning structure.

1. If you remember the first time you were partnered with an instructional designer (required or volunteered), what were your initial perceptions of the faculty/instructional designer partnership?
2. From the faculty perspective, what value do you place on the importance of using an instructional designer to assist with the design and development of your online courses?
3. What advice would you give to others who are going into the course development partnership?

The following six are faculty who were partnered with an instructional designer at an institution that had an established distance learning infrastructure at a college specifically designed for distance learning, which included support for course design, media, technical support, training, course reviews, and marketing.

Dr. Maryann Whitaker, Adjunct Assistant Professor at John Tyler Community College: *“The first time I was partnered with an instructional designer for an online course, I was anxious about the nature of the relationship being somehow adversarial or awkward. I worried that the designer would try to argue pedagogy with me or try to tinker with my course content. However, the experience turned out to be a wholly positive one, with the designer doing exactly that, helping me with the best design for the course by which to deliver the content. Her suggestions and advice were invaluable, and she caught some major mistakes on my part as we went through the course. I learned a tremendous amount from this encounter, and one of the things I learned is that a good instructional designer is worth his/her weight in gold (and I subsequently worked with an ineffective designer who was unhelpful and unresponsive, so I know the difference).*

*I would say that it is absolutely essential to work with an instructional designer, especially with a new prep. There are design details that would likely go unnoticed or undone that make the course so much more user friendly for both the instructor and the students. I have worked with a designer for every online course I have taught, and it made both development and teaching more enjoyable. Working with an instructional designer is essential to the process of bringing a course online, and it is*

*obvious which courses have been designed well and which have not been designed at all.*

*Absolutely do not go into the relationship with a chip on your shoulder or thinking that the partnership is not going to be worthwhile. Go into it with a positive, collaborative attitude with the understanding that the instructional designer knows that you are the subject matter expert. Teaching online is different from face-to-face in many respects, so if you're teaching online for the first time, revel in the time and availability of your instructional designer. You will be amazed at how much you can learn, even if you've been in the classroom for many years.” (personal communication, February 2, 2015)*

*Lori Windham Leavelle, Instructor at The University of Alabama: “I was very glad to be able to have a designer, because I had never put a class together online and was not sure of all the opportunities that were possible. My initial class development, I was not pushed or encouraged to complete the courses or to step out of my comfort zone to create the course online. I have since worked with several instructional designers. Each had such different personalities, but all were very professional. Each experience was different and had pros and cons.*

*Using an instructional designer has a variety of perks: a) I get paid for putting the course content together, b) if you have the right designer, it can encourage you and open up new opportunities that can also benefit your face to face classes as well as online courses, c) instructional designers can also make sure all classes are uniformly put together so online students can make sure all material is set up the exact same way for each class, and d) the Instructional Designers have computer programs that I do not have nor does the Faculty Resource Center have, to make the classes more engaging.*

*Make sure your course content is ready before you ever meet with the designers and make sure you create a checklist of each item that is needed to complete the online course development. It can appear overwhelming initially, but when you create a “To-Do List” it is not any different than putting a class together face-to-face.” (personal communication, February 2, 2015)*

*Dr. Vivian Wright, Professor of Instructional Technology at The University of Alabama: “I appreciated the organization the instructional designer proposed. And, I greatly appreciated the designer recognizing*

*my important role as the content provider! Being able to work with another who understands the intricate nature of online course development and someone who can offer a “different spin” is invaluable to me! I like the outside the box thinking that another can provide! Listen! Think about how a different pedagogy being offered by the designer can assist your students in learning the material! Think (and ask) why would I use this technology and how would I use it for student comprehension of the material?” (personal communication, February 2, 2015)*

*Dr. Felecia Wood, Professor at The University of Alabama: “I was very grateful to have the expertise of an instructional designer. My expertise is with content – not presentation in an online format.*

*The partnership is critical to the successful development of an online course. Clearly the strategies used online must be different than those used in the face-to-face teaching/learning process. Both the faculty and the instructional designer must trust each other to ensure that a quality online course is the priority.*

*Clarify roles initially – faculty as subject matter expert and instructional designer as technology expert. I also suggest faculty learn the roles of everyone involved in the process. In specialty areas, such as nursing, having a dedicated instructional designer who understands the needs and nuances of nursing education is important to facilitate the process of course development. Without that dedicated person, faculty must repeatedly explain the uniqueness of the discipline of nursing to a multitude of instructional designers.” (personal communication, February 3, 2015).*

*Jennifer F. Humber, Director of Online Services/Instructor for GBA 245 at The University of Alabama: “As a new instructor, I was very excited and extremely relieved to know that I would have assistance in creating a new course. I wanted my online class to be just as engaging as my campus section. I was skeptical, quite frankly, that this would be possible in an online format. The instructional designer put my concerns at ease and was quick to introduce tools and new ideas to make my course even more engaging than my campus classroom.*

*Technology is constantly changing. Instructional designers typically have much more knowledge of*

*updates and ways that they should be applied in the classroom. Instructional designers serve as the gurus of technology and content building so that faculty can continue to serve in their role to provide content knowledge and field expertise.*

*Be open minded and willing to try new tools and online teaching concepts. Technology can make the process easier to manage if you are willing to learn and apply something new. Trust the Instructional Designer and know that they are qualified and are knowledgeable about current research in the field of online learning. They are not changing the content of the course, but rather finding a way to present it in a more user-friendly and engaging way for the online learner. Be thankful that you have the opportunity for teamwork. A considerable amount of work was relieved by having an instructional designer. The end result was improved engagement and overall success within my course increased tremendously as well.” (personal communication, February 5, 2015)*

Dr. Michelle Cheshire, RN Mobility Coordinator for the Capstone College of Nursing at The University of Alabama: *“I have been working with an instructional designer for over 8 years. Initially the partnership was intimidating because I was reminded of my lack of technological skill set. However once I realized that the designer’s gift was the technology design and my gift was the subject matter expert I quickly realized what a wonderful product could result from the partnership. Without an instructional designer to assist with the design and development of all my online courses the courses would be bland and not engaging for the student. I think it is important when entering into this partnership to embrace the gifts that both professionals bring to the table and utilize both the faculty and designer talents to design a course that is conducive for optimal learning for students so they can achieve the course objectives.” (personal communication, February 10, 2015)*

The following five are faculty who were partnered with an instructional designer at an institution that did not have an established distance learning infrastructure. However, the following faculty had either not taught online before and/or had not used an instructional designer for course development assistance prior to 2014. The instructional design support they received in 2014-2015 consisted of one instructional design expert who provided support for design, media, technical support, training, course reviews, and online facilitation.

Patrick O. Gélinas, Senior Instructor at The University of South Carolina Aiken: *“To be honest, when I first began contemplating offering one of my courses in an online format, I was already sure that I wanted to work with someone who had expertise in online course development. For one, the course in question was one that I had carefully developed over several years and in which I had a lot of pride. I certainly did not want to attempt putting it online myself and jeopardize the quality of the course, especially considering that I had never before taken (nor taught) an online course. With all of the nuances and differences between a face-to-face course and a truly online course, I was convinced that I would probably overlook something in the development process if I tried to do it alone. After meeting with an instructional designer approximately one year ago, I knew without a doubt that I had made the correct decision. Aside from her incredible openness and terrific personality, she outlined exactly what the process would entail, literally from A to Z. I found the partnership to be very helpful in several ways. By providing strict - but honest and fair - deadlines for me, I was able provide my initial drafts and materials for review and feedback. As we all know, it is always good practice to have another set of unbiased eyes review our work and provide feedback. The designer also provided me with excellent suggestions for online tools and features in Blackboard that I wasn’t even aware of. And it wasn’t simply a matter of her making suggestions that I was coerced to follow... ultimately, all decisions were mine. The designer explained why I might decide to use one feature over another, and in which instances a given procedure or tool would enhance (or detract) from student learning outcomes. There was a rationale behind every explanation, which is obviously something from which I would have never benefitted, had I not worked with an instructional designer. In addition, the designer empowered me to do a lot of the work independently, which isn’t to say that I didn’t make errors – I can assure you that I made plenty. But her philosophy of “teaching a man to fish” has really paid off, as I have a much greater confidence now, in building online content.*

*I cannot stress enough how valuable working with an instructional designer has been. Even for a seasoned online-savvy instructor, there is an immense amount of knowledge, expertise, and troubleshooting that comes along with this kind of partnership. A lot of it comes down to best practices: an instructional designer helps the subject matter expert avoid many of the pitfalls and innocent design errors that can potentially derail a course. At a minimum, I would always want to*

*have an instructional designer give my online course their “blessing” before I roll it out. Moreover, I am of the firm belief that there really IS a correct way to offer a course in the online format. While content may differ considerably across different disciplines, for a university’s online courses to be most effective, they ought to be developed in a consistent fashion, with consistent navigation, and with the highest degree of scrutiny and attention to detail. Instructional designers will optimize this outcome and ensure that all parties benefit: the student, the faculty, and the university.*

*I would simply say: go in with an open mind, learn whatever you can from the instructional design expert, and make the most of the experience. When I was going through the process the first time, there were other faculty members who seemed convinced that they already knew everything there was to know about teaching an online course, simply because they had “successfully” taken or taught an online class before. Do not have this attitude, and leave your ego at home. Remember: the instructional designer is just as much of an expert in their “area” as you are in yours. Ask yourself how you would respond to someone who wasn’t receptive to your explanations or suggestions.*

*Also, be up front and honest about what you intend your course outcomes to be. The more you can tell the instructional designer, the more helpful they can be. Just as a handyman wouldn’t use a sledgehammer to hang a picture on the wall, the instructional designer knows exactly what the right tools are for the given task/assignment/discussion/research endeavor. He/she will help you select the most efficient and effective tools for your purposes as well as for the students.” (personal communication, February 3, 2015)*

*Dr. Sally McClellan, Associate Professor at The University of South Carolina Aiken: “From the beginning, I was able to see the structure of the course in a new way. From the materials shared and the questions posed, my course seemed more organized and the content was meaningful.*

*I would find it extremely difficult to do without the assistance of an instructional designer. There are too many things I just do not think about because I am so accustomed to being able to explain things in class, guided in large part by the questions posed by students.*

*Be open to all that you will learn, because you can learn a lot.*

*This experience has changed the way that I teach every course. My teaching is more organized, meaningful and my students connect with the content.”* (personal communication, February 2, 2015)

Dr. Melencia Johnson, Assistant Professor of Sociology at The University of South Carolina Aiken: *“My initial perceptions of the faculty/instructional designer partnership were that it was going to take some work off of me to standardize the course and that I would learn valuable information that I could transfer to my face to face courses.*

*I did not think that having an instructional designer was essential until our first meeting. Once we had our initial meeting, I realized that it takes more than viewing a guide to standardize a course. It is extremely valuable to have an instructional designer, but also to have a team of specialized online course personnel.*

*My advice to others would be to stay on task and make time to develop content weekly.”* (personal communication, February 3, 2015)

Dr. Andrew Geyer, Associate Professor at The University of South Carolina Aiken: *“When I first learned that I would be required to work with an instructional designer to develop my Internet-based class, I had my doubts, especially after the news that Blackboard was the required delivery platform. But the template that the instructional designer helped me adapt to my English 285 course fit perfectly with the way I wanted to teach the course material. The eight content modules I developed (with the assistance of an instructional designer) allowed me to teach the American Literature Since 1865 class using the chronological approach that I strongly believe works best. I was able to cover the same literary movements and genres that I cover in the classroom-based version of the course. I was able to connect those movements/genres in clear and meaningful ways with the readings. And to be honest, the Discussion Board feature of Blackboard allowed the students to interact much more effectively than I thought would be possible before I actually taught the course. Working with an instructional designer was a great experience all the way around.”* (personal communication, February



4, 2015)

Deborah H. McMurtrie, Director of Student Programs & Program Director of CE-MIST at The University of South Carolina Aiken: *“In my role as an adjunct faculty member at USC Aiken, I was asked to develop an online graduate course for teachers adding middle level certification. I had never worked with an instructional designer before, but found the instructional designer to be approachable, knowledgeable, and supportive. The process took longer than I had anticipated, but it was well worth it in the end. Together we crafted an 8-module course that includes a welcome letter, syllabus, course schedule, major assignment instructions, rubrics, and assessments. The instructional designer patiently read, analyzed, and edited multiple drafts to make sure that all of my components aligned and supported the course objectives. Her attention to detail was amazing! As a result of this experience, my online course will practically run itself. I highly recommend working through this process with an educated and experienced instructional designer, keeping an open mind and adhering to deadlines.”* (personal communication, February 9, 2015)

## Conclusion

As mentioned in the testimonials, the course development partnership can result in courses that are supportive of outcomes, effective, well-organized, engaging, promote student satisfaction and optimal learning, reliable, interactive, logical, uniform, meaningful, consistent, user-friendly, and successful overall.

In a well-designed course development model, the partnership could provide new opportunities in online teaching and learning, while also benefiting classroom instruction. Part of the model should include the use of instructional designers who possess advanced training in the construction of learning environments, are grounded in theory in curriculum design, have impeccable skillsets to transform content to viable learning objects, and are able to identify teaching and technology gaps. Unless SME's are educated and trained in instructional design, they should really embrace the level of expertise from the instructional design role. The immense amount of knowledge in technology, testing, accessibility, copyright, media, transformation, and attention to detail are typically not part of the SME's skillset when

developing courses. The two roles complement each other to build a product that meets the common goal. Both parties should be vested, objective, positive, collaborative, encouraging, trusting, open-minded, and willing. Lastly, both parties should ask questions, listen, think, and respect each other's roles in the course development model and project.

The use of an effective online course development model not only improves the robustness and quality of an online course, but could also improve pedagogies by properly using technology, increase faculty skills in course development and course facilitation (online and face-to-face), result in a course that is well organized and meaningful, optimize outcomes for all stakeholders, and increase student learning experience and satisfaction.

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