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CHANGING TIMES: ENGAGING FACULTY IN ONLINE EDUCATION

by
Steven C. Farney

A Dissertation

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Department of Educational Leadership
College of Education
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At
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Dissertation Chair: Horacio Sosa, Ph.D.

Dedication

To My Wife

Cristin Elizabeth Farney

Without you this doctorate would not have been possible. Your patience and support while I proceeded throughout this journey were second to none. You helped to keep me on the path when I would have otherwise stopped. Thank you and I love you!

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To those who participated in this action research project, specifically the employees of Rowan University, I would like to thank you for your precious and generous time you provided to make this project a reality. Your insights into the phenomenon of online education were enlightening and the basis of this project.

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Abstract

Steven Farney
CHANGING TIMES: ENGAGING FACULTY IN ONLINE EDUCATION
2011
Horacio Sosa, Ph.D.
Doctorate in Educational Leadership

The Internet has become a popular vehicle for the delivery of programs and courses among institutions of higher education. Nevertheless, it appears that many faculty members are still resistant to engage in online delivery based on biases and preconceptions rather than facts. The purpose of this action research project was to learn positive and negative views of faculty at Rowan University regarding online delivery of courses in an attempt to increase their participation in this mode of delivery. Additionally the researcher sought to explore if faculty concerns about online education could be addressed, clarified, or dispelled. The research was conducted using a mixed methodology approach within the overarching framework of transcendental phenomenology to guide the process. Data was gathered using quantitative surveys, qualitative focus groups, and mixed methods surveys. The findings of the research showed that, in general, faculty are reluctant to engage in online delivery primarily because of lack of time and limited knowledge of the institution's rationale and its ultimate goals. In addition, it is shown that there are several other factors that, if strategically implemented, could facilitate faculty adoption of online education, among them: a better knowledge of technology, reasonable time for proper course development, appropriate compensation,, better communication between faculty and administration about the processes involved, and access to more information on the pedagogy of online education.

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Chapter I: Outline of the Project

In this chapter, the author provides a brief overview of online education, introduces the purpose of this project, discusses methodological approaches taken, provides concise details on the data collection tools utilized, and succinctly describes the findings of the project. This synopsis will be expanded in the subsequent chapters.

On Online Education

The Internet has become the most recent medium for postsecondary institutions to bring their academic programs to students who otherwise would not or could not travel to a campus to attend classes (Cox, 2005). Due to the Internet becoming less expensive and more accessible for more individuals in recent years, postsecondary institutions have turned to the Internet as a knowledge provider (Lan, 2001). While financial gain and enrollment increases are important factors, providing convenience for students has become the driving factor for many institutions (Christensen, Anakwe, & Kessler, 2001).

Since online delivery is a relatively new tool for institutions of higher education, many researchers categorize it in the much broader term of distance education (Guri-Rosenbilt, 2005). Due to this ambiguity, many institutions have taken it upon themselves to utilize their own definition of online learning. A more traditional definition of the phrase online learning has come to mean any course offered in an electronic medium (Chang & Smith, 2008). In contrast, distance education has come to encompass any academic offering held away from a postsecondary institution's main location of business (Guri-Rosenbilt, 2005). For the purpose of this study, online education is defined as the asynchronous delivery of academic content materials via the Internet.

On the Objectives

The purpose of this project was to learn positive and negative views of faculty at

Rowan University regarding online delivery of courses in an attempt to increase their

participation in this mode of delivery. Additionally the researcher sought to explore if

faculty concerns about online education could be addressed, clarified, or dispelled (see

Table 1 for current participation rates at Rowan University). A survey of the literature

revealed that there are very limited studies regarding faculty participation in online

education, hence the purpose of this project. In addition, the College of Education, the

primary setting of the project, is incorporating online delivery into its program offerings

and could become a beneficiary of results and findings of study. The hope is that

conducting this research will eventually increase faculty engagement in online delivery

which in turn will benefit students with greater access to high quality programs.

Table 1

Percent Faculty Participation in Online Courses at Rowan University

	n	TT %	COE TT %
Fall 07	8	62.5	62.5
Spring 08	12	16.7	16.7
Summer 08	7	57.1	42.9
Fall 08	13	38.5	38.5
Spring 09	12	25.0	25.0
Summer 09	22	22.7	4.5
Fall 09	25	28.0	28.0
Spring 10	30	30.0	20.0
Summer 10	30	40.0	26.7
Fall 10	31	22.6	16.1
Spring 11	27	37.0	18.5
Summer 11	35	28.6	17.1

Note. n = number of online classes offered, TT% = percent of tenured or tenure track
faculty at the university participating in online education, COE TT% = percent of tenured
or tenure track faculty in the College of Education participating in online education

On the Methodology

In an effort to better understand faculty's positions and perceptions regarding online education, the following three questions were posed:

- What are the perceptions of online education among faculty in the College of Education?

- How do current college/university policies influence faculty perceptions of online education?

- How will open lines of communication help to foster a positive experience for faculty in regards to online education?

This project utilized a mixed methodology data collection approach, which is both qualitative to understand individuals within the scope of a problem in society and quantitative to examine how theories can be explained through relationships between variables (Creswell, 2009). This methodology was embedded in the overarching theoretical framework of transcendental phenomenology, which focuses on the data collection of several individuals who have experienced the phenomenon, while at the same time the researcher attempts to bracket off his own experiences so as to promote qualitative inquiry (Creswell, 2007). These methodological approaches allowed the researcher to engage faculty in conversations and discussions on the topic of online education in a meaningful way for the collection of data.

On the Data Collection and Analysis

Data was gathered using quantitative surveys, qualitative focus groups, and mixed methods surveys to ascertain faculty interactions with the phenomenon of online education. Data collection occurred during three action research cycles that were

conducted during the project. These action research cycles followed the four tenets prescribed by Hinchey (2008) in determining the beginning and end of action research cycles.

The author created a quantitative survey utilizing a Likert scale (Patten, 2001) and distributed said surveys through a tool called SurveyMonkey. This survey was a pre-test survey to measure the knowledge of tenured, tenure track, three-quarter-time temporary and full time temporary faculty on the concept of online education and how it is utilized by the College of Education. Faculty who had not participated in the online course process were targeted for the survey. A second, mixed method exit survey was distributed to faculty who participated in open forums held during Cycles I and III of the project. The purpose of this survey was to garner feedback from participants as to the effectiveness of the open forums on engaging faculty on the topic of online delivery.

The researcher conducted focus groups of faculty who have experience in online education, either in the College of Education and or from other academic colleges at Rowan University, to gain a more robust understanding of their attitudes and beliefs towards online delivery and how the phenomenon has impacted them. In addition, open forums were held to formally engage faculty on the topic of online delivery. These open forums were treated as focus groups for the purpose of data collection. The multiple data collection methods allowed the researcher to triangulate data and provide validity to the project and its results (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2009; Glesne, 2006; Hinchey, 2008).

Findings indicated that some faculty in the college have chosen to engage in online education, but many have remained reluctant to do so. Some contributing factors

to reluctance include: a lack of or poor knowledge regarding technology, limited time for proper course development, lack of sufficient communication between faculty and administration about the process, and preconceived bias towards the medium. Once the results of the project were obtained, an analysis of the three research questions was conducted to determine if the project accomplished its goals.

This dissertation is organized as follows: Chapter II provides a literature review on the relationship of faculty and the Internet as a delivery mechanism. Chapter III provides a description of the environment where the project takes place and the research methodology. Chapter IV provides the analysis of the findings. Finally, Chapter V presents conclusions, a reflection of the use of leadership during the project, an action plan for addressing the feedback from faculty, and suggestions for future research at other institutions.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Introduction

The most recent medium for institutions of higher education to bring academic programs to their constituents is the Internet or online environment (Cox, 2005). The principal reason is that it provides greater access to education for larger audiences (Lan, 2001). The result has been convenience for students and larger enrollments and financial gains for institutions (Christensen et al., 2001; Cox, 2005).

Current research has categorized online education in the much broader term of distance education due to the newness of the medium (Guri-Rosenbilt, 2005). Many institutions have taken it upon themselves to implement their own definition of online learning due to a lack of uniformity of the meaning of the term. For the purpose of this study, online education is defined as the asynchronous delivery of academic content materials via the internet.

There is a gap in the research available regarding how faculty are part of the phenomenon of online program and course delivery. Indeed, there is very limited research that has been conducted to determine how to engage faculty in online delivery. The review of literature to follow will focus on five thematic factors involving faculty and online education.

The Relationship of Faculty with Online Education

The success of online education not only relies on the students, schools, and universities offering it, but it also relies on the faculty and adjunct professors teaching courses within programs (Gibson, Harris, & Colaric, 2008; Lan, 2001; Norton & Hathaway, 2008; Santilli & Beck, 2005; Tabata & Johnsrud, 2008; Ulmer, Watson, &

Derby, 2007). Five factors can help to contribute to faculty adoption of online education, leading to this new program offering's success. These factors are: (1) to the context in which faculty work. Without a supportive and nurturing environment provided by the administration, faculty will be hard pressed to adopt the new mode of delivery (Gannon-Cook, Ley, Crawford, & Warner, 2009; Lan, 2001; Santilli & Beck, 2005; Tabata & Johnsrud, 2008), (2) adequate and appropriate compensation for the time and effort involved in the design, implementation, and upkeep of online courses (Gannon-Cook et al., 2009; Lan, 2001; Tabata & Johnsrud, 2008), (3) the ability for an institution to provide adequate and current technological support for those facilitating the course offering(s) (Santilli & Beck, 2005; Tabata & Johnsrud, 2008), (4) a faculty member's capacity and willingness to adopt technology as a tool for learning in the educational environment (Gannon-Cook et al., 2009; Gibson et al., 2008; Lan, 2001; Tabata & Johnsrud, 2008) and (5) the faculty's pedagogical belief about the quality of online education (Gannon-Cook et al., 2009; Lan, 2001; Norton & Hathaway, 2008; Santilli & Beck, 2005; Tabata & Johnsrud, 2008; Ulmer et al., 2007). Below, each factor is discussed in greater detail.

Environmental Context. Without commitment and vision from the administration to support the movement from traditional to online program offerings, faculty are less likely to support the initiative (Gannon-Cook et al., 2009; Santilli & Beck, 2005; Tabata & Johnsrud, 2008). In a study conducted at four universities located in the eastern, southeastern, and southwestern United States, faculty ranked lack of support and encouragement from their institution's administration as the number two factor that prevented them from participating in online or distance education (Gannon-

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Cook et al., 2009). In another study, 38% of faculty felt that administration fostered a positive culture allowing innovation and faculty participation in online education (Lan, 2001).

Research shows that institutions that have supported online education, compared to those institutions that do not provide such support, produce student experiences that are of greater quality and programs that gain national recognition (Lan, 2001). More resources are made available to faculty of institutions that support online learning than those that do not (Gannon-Cook et al., 2009). Institutional support allows faculty to take greater pride in their online program ventures and, in turn, quality and prestige improve for the online program (Lan, 2001).

Compensation/Incentives. While online education is now becoming a priority for many postsecondary institutions, it can be a drain on the already frayed time of faculty who are asked to participate (Gannon-Cook, et al., 2009; Lan, 2001; Tabata & Johnsrud, 2008). Faculty are already challenged to meet the current needs of their academic workload such as teaching, institutional service, and scholarly activities, without adding additional responsibilities. This can deter them from choosing to add the additional challenges and burden of acquiring the knowledge and skills necessary for online education (Tabata & Johnsrud, 2008). For online education to become accepted by faculty and flourish at an institution, the implementation must be less like a big stick and more like a dangling carrot (Lan, 2001).

For many faculty, incentives for work that is perceived as above and beyond traditional responsibilities help in their adoption of online education (Lan, 2001). Such incentives can include monetary compensation for online course development, reassigned

time to complete the work so that a faculty member's other academic responsibilities are not sacrificed in favor of the new responsibility, the awarding of graduate or teaching assistants to help with the volume of work associated with online courses/programs, and monies for expenditures incurred by online development (Gannon-Cook et al., 2009). Of those faculty surveyed, 44% indicated little or no incentive from their institution, whether it was a positive or negative incentive, and of those who did receive an incentive 25% received monetary compensation, 13% received training, and 13% received support from administration (Lan, 2001).

Researchers have discovered that there is a 10% probability of faculty participating in online education based on being compatible with their work style (Tabata & Johnsrud, 2008). One reason for this low percentage could be a result of faculty not being aware that the program can be incorporated into their work style through administrative incentives. Another reason for the low percentage is a result of a negative stigma faculty may have toward the idea of online education as a viable medium for quality education (Jackson & Helms, 2008).

Technology Training/Support. Many faculty entering into the realm of online program/course development and implementation do so without the necessary technological toolset to accomplish the goal (Gannon-Cook et al., 2009; Lan, 2001; Santilli & Beck, 2005; Tabata & Johnsrud, 2008). In one study, 7% of faculty surveyed believed that the external factor of technical and administrative support was essential for online education adoption (Gannon-Cook et al., 2009). This factor ranked third, only behind monetary rewards and insufficient rewards, among the four institutions surveyed.

While technological support for faculty in online course development is essential, understanding faculty's technological competencies is also imperative, as such an understanding will allow the program to provide appropriate support (Gibson et al., 2008). In having an honest self-awareness of his technology competencies, a faculty member can recognize early if he needs additional support or not as much support as other online educators (Gannon-Cook et al., 2009).

Technology support for faculty developing online courses/programs must come from resources provided by administration and must be outside of normal technical support for traditional course/program offerings (Matthew & Varagoor, 2001). The demands from faculty or students for ongoing dialog and affirmation is greater than in a traditional course because many students in an online course have participated in traditional face-to-face programs that provide for more personal interactions between students and faculty (Drouin, 2008). Of schools that have not espoused technology in the curriculum, 6% believed that their faculty had the sophistication to fully marry technology and education and 75% believed that there was moderate skill among their faculty to accomplish their goal (Lan, 2001). In contrast, of faculty who had administration-provided technological support, 100% felt confident in their technology skills (2001).

Technology Adoption. Researchers believe that not only is technological support important for online education adoption, a faculty member's propensity for technology can help foster the medium's implementation as well (Gibson et al., 2008; Lan, 2001; Tabata & Johnsrud, 2008). The personal motivation to use technology drives faculty as an intrinsic motivator for faculty acceptance of online education (Gannon-Cook et al.,

2009). Additionally, the more proficient a faculty member believes he is in technology incorporation in everyday work, the more likely he is to use those skills in other avenues such as online education (Tabata & Johnsrud, 2008).

Utilizing a Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) researchers were able to discover that faculty technology acceptance is related to the success of online education (Gibson et al., 2008). If faculty perceive the usefulness of technology as a pedagogical tool for education, they are more likely to accept the technology and the Internet as a viable medium for education (2008). In addition, the easier a faculty member finds technology to use, the more likely he is to adopt the technology and move forward in participation in online education (Santilli & Beck, 2005). However, if a faculty member does not have exposure to technology then he is less likely to adopt it in either a traditional setting or an online environment (Gibson et al., 2008).

Pedagogical Beliefs. Some faculty are choosing to adopt online education as a new means to offer courses and programs, but many still struggle with the concept of online education as a valid method of pedagogy (Gannon-Cook et al., 2009; Lan, 2001; Norton & Hathaway, 2008; Tabata & Johnsrud, 2008). Several factors can contribute to the skeptical attitude of faculty in response to the validity of online education. One such aspect is that of student authenticity. Santilli and Beck (2005) attempt to scan for the attitudes toward student authenticity in their research. Of those surveyed, 32% of faculty rely on their professional judgment and experience for determining student authenticity in an online environment. An additional 23% who responded had not bothered with checking student authenticity or did not provide a response to the survey question.

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Another belief among many faculty is that the quality of education of online or distance education programs is lower than that of its traditional brick-and-mortar counterparts because there is a discrepancy in learning outcomes (Ulmer et al., 2007). At the same time as this belief is perpetuating in academia, a small minority of faculty experienced in online education are spreading the word that the quality is just as rigorous as traditional coursework. If the perception of sufficient quality exists, then faculty are motivated to participate (Tabata & Johnsrud, 2008). That perception can only be infused if faculty are shown or discover how technology can be used to replicate traditional, face-to-face classroom experiences (Lan, 2001).

Conclusion

Faculty also have their own stake in the online education venture (Gannon-Cook et al., 2009; Lan, 2001; Santilli & Beck, 2005; Tabata & Johnsrud, 2008). The institution's environment, compensation and incentives, technology training and support, technology adoption, and faculty pedagogical beliefs will help shape a faculty member's role in online education adoption. Administration will need to work with faculty in determining the appropriate plan to address these issues if online education is to become as successful as traditional education.

The gap in the research available regarding how faculty in higher education are part of the phenomenon of online education is an integral part of this project. This gap was the catalysis in the development of the project and it was the goal of the researcher to provide new knowledge on the topic in order to fill the void. Chapter III will discuss the ways in which data will be collected to support this effort. Chapter IV will attempt to illustrate how the data, once analyzed, either supports or refutes the limited research

available and will provide insight on the engagement of faculty regarding online delivery.

Chapter V will provide conclusions for the project.

Chapter III: Methodology

Introduction

      The purpose of this project was to learn positive and negative views of faculty relating to online delivery of courses in an attempt to increase their participation in this mode of delivery. Additionally the researcher sought to explore if faculty concerns about online education could be addressed, clarified, or dispelled. In doing so, the author utilized a quantitative electronic survey (Patten, 2001), qualitative focus groups (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Glesne, 2006), mixed methodology exit surveys as well as data from open forums. In this chapter the researcher provides: a description of the environment of the project, an overview of the methodological structure utilized, a synopsis of the change framework of the project, a description of the data collection tools and analysis methods employed, and an explanation of the four tenets of each action research cycle.

The Rowan University College of Education at a Glance

      Rowan University is a mid-sized, public institution with a master's level Carnegie classification. Rowan is located 20 minutes outside of Philadelphia in southern New Jersey. The university services approximately 11,300 students between undergraduate and graduate programs. Rowan is accredited by the Middle States regional accrediting body. It is comprised of six major divisions with the division of Academic Affairs overseeing all matters related to the academic function of the university. Faculty and professional staff are members of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) as their main bargaining unit.

      The College of Education is one of seven colleges housed under the division of Academic Affairs. The college serves approximately 3,400 undergraduate, graduate, and

post baccalaureate students throughout the various programs it offers. The college received its national reaccreditation from the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) in October of 2007. The College of Education's primary responsibility to the university is to prepare students to be professional members of the educational community, public and private (Rowan University, 2007a). The main cultural belief of the college is that of "The Learning Community in Action." The espoused beliefs, external strategies, goals, and philosophies (Schein, 2004) that represent the organization help to define this learning community and can be found in "The Learning Community in Action" (Rowan University, 2007b).

The College of Education is currently undergoing a transformation. Three factors are driving this transformation: (1) increased competition for students, (2) reduced monetary resources, and (3) increased accountability due to decentralization. The first, and most significant, change resulting from this transformation is the college's partnership with the newly formed College of Graduate and Continuing Education (CGCE). CGCE is responsible for facilitating program offerings that are outside of the traditional 16-week Glassboro or Camden campus classes. Examples of these programs offerings through CGCE include: fully online programs where a student does not have to travel to receive his education; accelerated eight-week in-class programs; and hybrid or blended programs that marry online and accelerated offerings.

The college is currently at a stage where the first factor, increased competition, has led to a decrease in enrollments over the past seven years. To help combat this decrease in enrollments, the college has turned to online education and CGCE to offer its quality programs in a way that is more convenient to a larger number of potential

students. Other regional institutions such as Wilmington University, Drexel University, and Strayer University have already added non-traditional programs to their arsenal of offerings for students in the southern New Jersey region, hence the increased competition. While Rowan had been late to the game, remarkable progress was accomplished in a relatively short period of time to gain ground and recapture a larger student population in the area.

The second factor that has been the impetus of transformation for the College of Education is a decrease in resources. The state of New Jersey has historically provided funds to assist in the operation of Rowan University. However, this funding has diminished dramatically in recent years to the point that Rowan is now more of a state aided university, rather than a state supported one. To mitigate this impact on the university budget, CGCE has developed a revenue-sharing model with members of the university. After expenses, academic departments that participate with CGCE receive a percentage of the net revenues while the remaining revenue is divided between the units within the Division of Academic Affairs. This creates a new revenue stream for departments and the college, supplementing dwindling operating budgets. Prior to CGCE, academic departments were sorely underfunded both monetarily as well as in other areas such as provisions of permanent and temporary tenure track faculty lines. This new revenue stream helps to alleviate this burden by proving fund that otherwise would not exist to acquire resource that will lead to high quality programs.

The third factor resulting in the college's transformation comes in the form of accountability. Partnering with CGCE in online courses and programs increases accountability for both the college and its departments due to the increased revenues

departments earn through the cost sharing model. Prior to CGCE, departments would not have been concerned with administrative responsibilities such as balancing the department budget. If an academic department did not have enough money at the end of the fiscal year, it would be tradition that the Dean's office would cover the deficit. Now that there is a new revenue stream for the academic departments, the expectation is that their budget will be balanced. If it is not balanced at the end of the fiscal year, then their CGCE monies will be used to cover the deficits.

In order to engage faculty in online development, the researcher must be aware of the underlying assumptions surrounding the organization. This additional background information will provide insight into the organization and allow the researcher to engage the faculty while acknowledging the difficulties the organization faces internally.

An underlying assumption within an organization is a belief by members of the organization that is not openly espoused to members outside of the organization (Schein, 2004). Underlying assumptions can be labeled as a root cause of undermining organizational change adoption when implemented by an organizational leader. Like any other organization, the College of Education has underlying assumptions surrounding it. These underlying assumptions are barriers that leaders must be aware of when initiating a lasting change process to the organization. Leaders must address them and if need be incorporate them into the change process. Being a member of the unit, this researcher has had the opportunity to bear witness to some of the underlying assumptions put forth by faculty within the organization.

Three main underlying assumptions surround the college: (1) the existence of leadership that has little care for the employees it oversees, (2) lack of appropriate or

effective communication between administration and employees, and (3) a perception of distrust between the administration and employees with respect to the leadership, faculty and staff believe that their voice is minimized regarding the various tasks and duties regarding the college, resulting in disenfranchisement. The lack of communication between parties has resulted in the perceived alienation of the workforce, causing difficulties in implementing change. Thirdly, the perception of distrust between parties has resulted in a fractured culture preventing the ability of a shared mission for the college.

Understanding the underlying assumptions of an organization helps to provide a leader with knowledge on the culture of the organization, in this case the College of Education. With a diverse population within the college, having a grasp on the culture will only aide in engaging faculty on the topic of online delivery.

Methodological Approach

A mixed methodology approach to data collection implies the use of both qualitative and quantitative research data collection tools. Qualitative research seeks to answer questions by looking for the relationship among variables in the population where data is being collected (Creswell, 2009). Unlike qualitative research, quantitative research looks for replication in the data collection and, in turn, seeks to make generalizations based on those results. For this mixed methodology research project surveys were used for quantitative data collection.

The qualitative theoretical underpinning of the research project is the phenomenological approach that attempts to understand patterns of relationships and experiences of individuals in order to explain a phenomenon (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007;

Creswell, 2007; Creswell, 2009). Within the phenomenological approach, there are two subcategories: hermeneutical phenomenology and transcendental phenomenology (Creswell, 2007).

This research was based on the subcategory of transcendental phenomenology, which focuses on the data collection of several individuals who have experienced the phenomenon, while at the same time the researcher attempts to bracket off his own experiences so as to promote qualitative inquiry (Creswell, 2007). This can be a difficult task for the researcher to undertake and in the context of this study could be impossible as the author was a participant observer in this process (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Glesne, 2006). However, through acknowledging this difficult situation and taking steps to address it during the research process, the researcher believes that he removed himself from the project so as to promote qualitative inquiry.

Change Framework

In order to enact meaningful change, a framework to address the change must be put into place. The change framework used throughout this research program attempted to address the perceived college's organizational defense routines (ODRs) toward online education. ODRs are those policies, procedures, or actions that prevent individuals, parts, or divisions of the organization from experiencing embarrassment or threat publically or privately (Argyris, 1990). While utilizing ODRs organizations are incapable of meaningful change or progress. In addition, ODRs by their very nature are self-sustaining, preventing individuals or groups in the organization from identifying their cause, and thus ending their use. ODRs are counterproductive and self-serving to

progress within the organization, preventing meaningful organizational learning, and helping individuals consolidate power.

The three reasons as to why ODRs are difficult to address are: organizations bypass ODRs as though they were not in use; members of the organization make the bypass undiscussable; and then an atmosphere in the organization where the undiscussables are ignored or overlooked is created (Argyris, 1990). If individuals in the organization attempt to address the ODRs, these three tactics go into effect, even strengthening the ODRs and compounding the issue. Members of the organization become hopeless in changing the organization's ODRs for two reasons. One reason they feel change is hopeless is because the cure appears worse than the problem. A second reason is that they do not wish to create unnecessary complications by addressing the undiscussable.

The process of changing the college's behavior may take longer than the timeframe of this research project. However, beginning the process of changing the college from a single loop organization that is reactionary to hierarchal demands to one that is a double loop will benefit the college in the long-term. Double loop learning is a process wherein the organization sets forth a plan for change and all members of the group have the option of accepting the plan, suggesting modifications to the plan, or rejecting the plan (Argyris, 1990). As a double loop organization the college will incorporate governing values into the system and will allow constituents to address patterns of behavior and incorporate lasting change.

In order to create an environment where faculty would feel comfortable and safe in speaking their minds for this research the following three steps were taken: (1)

choosing an appropriate location, (2) addressing the researcher's attire, and (3) limiting the researcher's interactions with participants. Choosing a location for data collection not associated with the Dean's office attempted to provide participants a feeling of safety in speaking freely. The researcher, assistant dean of the college, changed from his daytime business attire to clothing more representative of a student, including t-shirts and jeans. Finally, the author made an effort to minimize his interactions with participants which involved, at times, posing questions in such a way that promoted participants interacting with each other.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data Collection Tools. The following data collection tools were used during this project:

- Quantitative surveys

- Qualitative focus groups

- Mixed method surveys

- Open forum (focus group)

Quantitative data. A survey was created in an electronic format using the online tool www.surveymonkey.com. Once created, the survey was field tested using a convenience sample of coworkers and friends to ensure the survey was user friendly (Patten, 2001).

The survey was distributed to faculty within the College of Education who have not participated in the online education process. This group of faculty included tenured faculty, tenure track faculty, full time temporary faculty, three-quarter-time permanent faculty, and three-quarter-time temporary faculty. The goal of the online survey was to

receive cursory impressions on the topic from faculty not participating in online education. There was one open-ended question on the survey for those participating to provide additional comments. Microsoft Excel 2007 was utilized to determine basic descriptive analysis of the quantitative data. This software package was utilized due to its simplicity of use and ability to provide such descriptive analysis required of the quantitative data. The open-ended question was analyzed and coded for themes using qualitative research methods (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Glesne, 2006). This survey can be found in Appendix A.

    Qualitative data. The qualitative data consisted of focus groups (see Appendices C, E, and F), with faculty who have gone through the process of online development for the College of Education. As was the case for the quantitative survey, the list of faculty who have participated in online development was identified through staffing records housed in the Dean's office. Permission was given by the dean of the College of Education to use these records. As a field test, the focus group questions were provided to the associate dean of the college prior to administering to the focus group.

    For the qualitative focus group a semi-structured question format was utilized (see Appendix B). Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to explore research themes through open-ended interview questions while at the same time provide comparative analysis due to same or similar questions asked to all focus group participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Faculty within the College of Education who have had the opportunity to experience online education were solicited to participate in the focus group. The researcher utilized both audio and video recording methods to capture the data that were

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provided during this exchange. The focus group was scheduled during a time that maximized the number of participants.

A focus group held in Cycle II (refer to p. 27 for Cycle description) of this project utilized a sample of convenience of faculty to form a committee to help construct the next round of open forums for faculty who are participating, or would like to participate, in online education in the college. A sample of convenience is when a researcher chooses a group of individuals to participate in a data collection session and these individuals are opportunely available to participate (Patten, 2001). A sample of convenience, while not ideal, was necessary due to the limited availability of faculty during the summer months. While this was termed a committee internally, for research purposes it was utilized as a focus group.

To properly document the qualitative data collection of this project, four digital video cameras and a digital audio recorder were utilized. The purpose of using four digital video cameras was (1) to ensure the entire environment was captured and (2) redundancy in the event of equipment failure. The digital voice recorder was utilized to aid in transcription as well as another means of redundancy. The environment where the qualitative data was collected was structured in such a way to ensure that participants could view one another which aided in their interactions and minimized focus on the researcher.

A two-cycle process was utilized in the coding of the qualitative data (Saldaña, 2009). Descriptive coding was the initial method used for coding. This method was combined with categorizing the data by question to help identity initial patterns. The qualitative questions utilized were designed based on themes that were emergent from the

initial research questions. Descriptive coding is the process of assigning one or two nouns for each initial theme discovered (2009).

Interpretive and inferential analysis commenced once the descriptive analysis was complete (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Pattern coding was used to identify emerging interpretive and inferential data themes. Pattern coding is appropriate in identifying relationships in human behavior (Saldaña, 2009). This coding method coincides with the theoretical framework of phenomenology utilized throughout the research project. Once coding was complete, a clearer picture of emerging themes took shape and analysis began by tying the themes back to the initial research questions posed at the beginning of the research project (Creswell, 2009).

The third data collection tool used for the action research project was a mixed method post-survey distributed to the attendees of the open forum after they experienced it. The mixed method approach to the construction of the survey allowed for the determining of the quantitative aspects of the experience while capturing the richness of faculty perceptions to the change initiative (Creswell, 2009; Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Glesne, 2006). This data tool provided insight to the effectiveness of peer collaboration with regards to online education as well as the effectiveness of open communication concerning the new medium. The survey (see Appendix C) was distributed via email using the online survey tool SurveyMonkey. As stated previously in the *Methodological Approach* section of this chapter, this analysis will be married with the analysis of the quantitative data. Open ended questions were analyzed and coded for themes using qualitative research methods (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Glesne, 2006).

Open forums. Using the feedback from the qualitative and quantitative data and the author's own experiences being the college's liaison to CGCE, a program was constructed to inform and engage faculty on the topic of online delivery. The open forum programs are the fourth data collection tool utilized by the researcher. The open forums, while not advertised as such, were treated as focus groups for the purpose of this project. Participants attending the open forums were not informed that the events were being used as focus groups for this project. Those individuals who had developed and/or taught an online course for the college were invited via email to participate as part of a panel discussion. The goal was to share experiences with attendees and to also answer questions attendees may have about online education. The open forums were held on Friday, April 16, 2010 at 4:00 p.m. in room 3091 of Education Hall; Tuesday, October 26, 2010 at 2:30 p.m. in room 1056 of Education Hall; and on Wednesday, November 3, 2010 at 4:00 p.m. in room 3112 of Education Hall (see Appendix I). Flyers were distributed to advertise the events. Please see Appendix J for more detail.

Triangulation and Validation

Triangulation can be viewed as a means for researchers to analyze their data and bring validity to their project (Creswell, 2009). A concurrent triangulation strategy was used in interpreting the quantitative and qualitative data collected. The concurrent triangulation strategy is when both qualitative and quantitative data are simultaneously collected and then compared or married to paint a more robust picture of the population (Creswell, 2007). The benefits of this analysis strategy are that it allows researchers to marry the strengths of both data collection techniques, it provides a level of triangulation

that brings validity to the data collection process, and it allows the data to complement each other in the analysis phase of the research project.

In addition, the practice of member checking qualitative transcripts to aid in providing validity to this action research project was utilized. Member checking is the process of sharing recorded data collection sets with participants to verify if the information they stated is accurate (Creswell, 2007; Glesne, 2007). This process happened after Cycle III of data collection.

The multiple data collection methods allowed for the triangulation of data and provided validity to the project and its results (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2009; Glesne, 2006; Hinchey, 2008). In having multiple points of data collected on the research questions, validity, or credibility, of the results was achieved allowing for the richness of the data to illustrate the current problem and allow for movement to the change initiative (Creswell, 2009). In addition, by recognizing researcher biases regarding the action research project it was possible to validate the findings during data collection (Glesne, 2006).

Due to the perceived organizational defense mechanisms (Argyris, 1990), it was anticipated that data collection and the change project implementation may incur some difficulties. One such difficulty was the perception by the target population of the project as a whole. The researcher's roles as assistant dean and liaison to CGCE lent itself to a view of skepticism, leading to the possible prevention of participation in the project by some faculty. The idea of online education as a valid means of program offering was not a widely accepted view by faculty in the college. This perception hindered the researcher's progress during the action research project

Action Research Cycles

The action research cycles were the formal mechanism for the author to utilize the data collection tools outlined previously. The action research cycles utilized the four tenets put forth by Hinchey (2008) which aid a researcher in determining the start and completion of an action research cycle. Three action research cycles provided both qualitative and quantitative data to determine the effectiveness of the project in engaging faculty in online delivery. Cycle I began in spring 2010 and spanned from January until May. Cycle II occurred during summer 2010 and spanned from June to August. The last of the three cycles occurred during the fall 2010 semester and lasted from September until December.

Action Research Cycle I. During the first cycle, spring 2010, a quantitative electronic survey to faculty within the College of Education was distributed. Faculty targeted to receive the survey were those who had not participated in online development or taught online courses for the College of Education. Focus groups were conducted with tenured, tenure track, three-quarter-time temporary, full time temporary and adjunct faculty who have experience in developing and teaching online courses for the college. This provided additional insight as to what positive and negative experiences have occurred while moving the College of Education to online program deliveries. Two focus groups were held to maximize participation.

After collection of these two types of data, an open forum for faculty on the subject of online education in the College of Education was formed. This open forum provided faculty interested in online education, regardless of their experience, the opportunity to discover what the medium has to offer to the field of education, what role

CGCE plays in the process, and to ask questions in a positive, open environment. Faculty who participated in the focus group were recruited to participate in the open forum to provide their insight and share their experiences. Faculty participation in the open forum was voluntary. The open forum was offered once during the spring 2010 semester.

To measure success or failure of the program, a post-survey was administered to those faculty who participated. Due to the researcher's role as assistant dean he needed to make sure that he approached faculty in a manner where his role did not sway faculty responses. The following phases were part of Cycle I:

Planning. Planning commenced for this action research project by collecting data from the faculty within the college. The first planning component implemented was a quantitative survey sent to faculty in the college who had not developed an online course to get their impressions of online education. The second data collection set came in the form of qualitative focus groups. Faculty who had participated in the online development process were invited. The goal of the focus groups was to capture the experiences, thoughts, and beliefs of those who had experienced the online development process to see how the college can improve upon communication and engage those not involved.

Acting. After collecting the data, and informally analyzing it, it was then time to implement one of the open forums on online education. The action attempted to provide faculty with a mutually beneficial environment in which to discuss online education and discover how the College of Education can utilize this new medium of program offering. Ultimately, the open forum allowed the researcher to attempt to discuss underlying assumptions of faculty toward online education in order for the college to be able to move forward with this medium collectively.

Observing. Observations were done throughout the entire process. Observation, however, was most pronounced during faculty interactions. Witnessing non-verbal communications during the focus groups and open forum on online education helped to paint a robust picture of faculty experiences.

Reflecting. Reflection occurred throughout the process, culminating in the feedback survey that faculty were provided after the open forum. During the process the researcher constantly questioned how this project influenced him as a leader and as a researcher. Ongoing reflection aided in the adaptation of the project to gain valuable feedback from faculty during the process.

Action Research Cycle II. During Cycle II, summer 2010, the post-survey results from the open forum in action research Cycle I were reviewed to look for themes to aid in developing the next open forum(s). In addition to reviewing exit data collected from Cycle I, a committee was formed consisting of a sample of convenience of faculty to construct the next open forum(s) to be held during the fall 2010 semester. This group was identified by both a sample of convenience (Patten, 2001) and because there are a limited number of faculty available to participate in research during the summer months at the institution. Once input was obtained from the faculty, the improved structure for the open forums was put into place. The following phases were part of Cycle II:

Planning. Planning commenced for Cycle II by first reviewing and analyzing the results of the post-survey administered after the open forum held in Cycle I. Once the data was reviewed, it was determined that faculty input was needed to improve upon the open forum before it as held again in the fall.

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*Actin**g**.* To accomplish the task of gathering faculty input, a committee was established of faculty available during the summer months to discuss the general findings from Cycle I and to solicit feedback to make improvements to the open forum to be held again in Cycle III.

*Observing**.*** Observations were conducted during Cycle II's action. Observations were recorded using both DVR and video cameras and later reviewed. This information was then process and utilized in data analysis later on in the project..

*Reflecting**.*** Reflection occurred and culminated at the end of Cycle II when the researcher reviewed the data provided by the faculty. Ongoing reflection aided in the creation of Cycle III, providing the building blocks to improve the action research project.

Action Research Cycle III. Cycle III occurred during the fall 2010 semester. After reflecting on the valuable data provided by faculty on improvements to the open forum, plans to hold two open forums in the fall commenced. Similar to Cycle I, all faculty in the college were invited to participate in the second and third open forums. The goal of the second open forum remained the same as the first open forum, continuing an open dialog between faculty and those responsible for online education about how online education impacts their role in academia. The activities of this cycle will be described in the subheadings to follow:

*Planning**.*** Planning commenced during this cycle by first reviewing and analyzing the data collected from faculty with their feedback on how to improve the open forum for fall 2010. Once the data was reviewed, it was determined that the original format for the open forum had to be changed to remove information faculty deemed non-

essential and to provide more time for the information faculty wanted to hear about. Specifically more time was provided for CGCE to speak and more time was added for the faculty panel where those who have gone through online development were able to share their experiences and take questions from those in attendance (see Appendix G for panel questions). In addition, it was determined that the research project would benefit from one more focus group consisting of professors who are non-members of the College of Education, but who have participated in online education development and execution at the university.

Acting. After collecting the data, and informally analyzing it, it was then time to implement the revised open forum. The action was to build upon the successes of the first online open forum held in Cycle I while minimizing the detractors from that session. In addition, a final focus group was scheduled toward the end of Cycle III involving faculty who participated in the online development process at Rowan University but were not members of the College of Education.

Observing. Observations were recorded using both DVR and video cameras and later reviewed. Witnessing non-verbal communications during the focus group helped to paint a robust picture of faculty experiences. In addition, the focus group was digitally recorded using DVR and videos cameras.

Reflecting. Reflection of the data occurred after the final focus group was held toward the end of the action research cycle. This reflection was utilized in planning for future open forums in order to maintain the change initiative.

Conclusion

The preceding chapter provided an overview of the methodology employed by this project. In doing so, the chapter outlined the methodological framework of the project, the setting in which the project is taking place, and overview of the chosen data collection tools as well as the data analysis methods that will be utilized. The chapter also describes the four tenets of each action research cycle and provides details as to how the researcher employed the data collection tools during these three cycles. Chapter IV will describe the findings from the data analysis performed and will attempt to compare these results against currently available literature.

Chapter IV: Findings

The results of the data collection were robust in the sense that they painted a useful picture of engaging faculty on the topic of online education and the role faculty played in this initiative. This chapter addresses the major themes discovered during the analysis of the data collected during the three research cycles. In addition, biases, assumptions, and limitations of the action research project are discussed to provide an overall picture of the context of the project. All participants' quotes in the analysis were reordered during the data collection. A synopsis of the action research cycles is provided in Table 2. The themes addressed during analysis were:

- Faculty Time

- Faculty Understanding of Online Education at Rowan University

- Faculty Underlying Assumptions

- Pedagogy

- Communication

- Technology

Table 2

Action Research Cycle Synopsis

AR Cycle	Data Collection Tool	n	Outcomes	Qual. Participant #s
I	Quantitative Survey	40	Faculty feedback	
I	Focus Groups	16	Faculty feedback Open forum development	1, 2, 6, 7, 9
I	Open Forum	7	Gauge change impact	
I	Mixed Method Exit Survey	60	Faculty feedback for open forum improvement	
II	Focus Group	5	Faculty feedback	2, 5, 8
III	Focus Groups	6	Faculty impressions	3, 4
III	Open Forums	14	Gauge change impact	
III	Mixed Method Exit Surveys	14	Faculty feedback on improvements	

Note. AR = Action Research, Qual = Qualitative

Faculty Time

Current research states that faculty time is an essential element of consideration when juxtaposed to the responsibilities of online education in higher education (Gannon-Cook, et al., 2009; Lan, 2001; Tabata & Johnsrud, 2008). Time to accomplish responsibilities such as teaching, scholarly activities, and institutional service can become a challenge to faculty when the workload of online course development and execution are added (Tabata & Johnsrud, 2008). In order for faculty to be able to accept online education as part of their day-to-day job responsibilities, a cooperative approach must be pursued (Lan, 2001).

Faculty time was a dominant theme in the research data obtained during this project. The College of Education is currently an understaffed college with 56 out of a possible 83 faculty lines filled to serve approximately 3,400 undergraduate and graduate students. With faculty course coverage hovering around 60% overall for the college, the shortage of man-hours for the traditional faculty workload is significant and places a strain on the receptiveness towards additional workload responsibilities such as online course development and instruction. As *Participant One* stated during the 3/19/10 focus group:

"I guess I could have taken the time myself to do some research on some best practices in online delivery, but finding the time for that is hard. So even maybe a day or two workshop where I could have gone for some training would have been great."
This sentiment was echoed throughout all three action research cycles by the participants.

Another attribute of faculty time that was brought forth during data collection was the emphasis that the eight-week acceleration of online course offered by the College of Education took significant time to adjust to. Many faculty explained that they have taught in the 16-week traditional format for their entire teaching career in the college. Due to this course pacing engrained in the culture, accelerating a 16-week traditional course into an eight-week format was challenging. *Participant Two* goes on to explain this idea further during the 7/21/10 focus group as part of action research Cycle II:

"The thing that I'm always impressed with is the pacing, cause the pacing's so quick for me. I don't know that it's so quick for them. It's very quick for me. I feel like I'm always on a, you know, a little treadmill. (Inaudible) going round and round. I'm not sure I'm always getting where I need to go, but it's the pacing, and they don't seem to mind it.

Cause I said to them, 'Don't you find…' I mean cause there's two assignments every week and if you get behind, you're done. I mean it's just you cannot get behind, in part because the curtain comes down and you can't submit the items then, evidence, assignments, whatever, and in part because it just would be too hard to catch up."

Participants Three and *Four* go on to expand on the idea of online education being time consuming and attribute it to the need to be more organized when developing/teaching an online course versus a traditional course. During their dialog at the 12/1/10 focus group held in Cycle III, the two participants highlighted the fact that faculty must be more organized when dealing with online courses for two reasons. The first reason is the students: the two participants brought forth the idea that online students are more demanding than traditional students and they have a greater expectation from faculty and their dedication of time towards their needs. The second reason is the accelerated format of an online course. As *Participant Three* states:

"I mean I could walk into, you know, when I've taught this class now three years in a row, and I can from one week to the next do nothing because I don't, you know, have anything to grade. I just walk in and teach the class."

Participant Three continues in the conversation explaining that the online environment does not allow for professors to act in this relaxed manner. All course materials, syllabi, and assignments must be completed before the class starts and there is no deviation once the online course begins, with the exception of an emergency.

A third significant discovery with the data relating to faculty time came in the form of how online courses count in relation to faculty teaching load within the College of Education. The current policy within the college is that professors can teach an online

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course as part of their faculty load only when it is the very first time the course is taught. After the first time the course is taught, the faculty member must negotiate with their department chair and Dean's office as to whether this course will count as part of their teaching load or above and beyond their teaching responsibilities. More often than not, online courses are denied to be allowed as part of a faculty member's teaching load after the first time the course is taught. The administrative rationale for this course of action is to minimize the number of adjuncts teaching traditional courses. This added burden to an already strained faculty load is contrary to what researchers have suggested, which is for administrators to take into consideration the time that faculty need to execute online education at their institution (Gannon-Cook, et al., 2009).

Many participants relayed strong feelings towards this specific piece of time as it relates to their teaching load. *Participant One* goes on to say:

"I do have concerns about running an entire graduate program all outside of faculty load. I just think it is going to have implications for the amount of energy faculty are going to be able to put into the program. I think about my undergraduate program. I'm a coordinator of that and that's an in load and I just do lots with those students. I mean I send them to conferences, I may be advisor to their professional group, I do certifications and trainings, and all kinds of things outside of class with those students. You know, and with the graduate program, there is a kind of this feeling of it being tacked onto everything else you're already doing and I should think, yeah. I mean, I understand financially and practically why it starts that way, I do understand that. But I do think that if the college and university is really going to kind of own and embrace

these programs, at some point this should be made part of my core job, and not just some sort of thing that gets tacked on extra."

Participant Two also shared a similar feeling as *Participant One* on the subject at the 3/26/10 focus group:

"One of the things that I recently emailed my department chair, as much as I like these courses, that this is the last semester I do this because doing it overload is just, there's not enough hours in the day to do what we need to in terms of research and course load that we have, and do this well. So I said not to be mean spirited but because I know what is suffering as a result of not being able to teach this course in load, that I can't keep doing this. So, if it could be in load, I would be delighted to teach the online courses, but if it is not, then I won't be teaching online courses in the future. And it's a time issue in terms of, and I know you make extra money, and that's all well and good, but if you can't put in 24 hours a day I can't get it all in. So, it's a real concern. My understanding is that in other colleges that policy is not consistent across the university."

This belief of both *Participant One* and *Two* speaks to two aspects online faculty are dealing with regarding time. The first is that some faculty feel like they want to embrace online education but believe that the additional duties will place a greater burden on their own other responsibilities. Faculty in the College of Education have a large workload. The average faculty workload, based on the university's agreement with the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), is 12 semester hours per semester for a total of 24 semester hours of the academic year. While many faculty fill this requirement by teaching classes, some may fulfill this requirement with other non-teaching activities such as grant work or other scholarly work. During the summer, however, faculty may

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teach up to an additional 12 semester hours' worth of coursework for additional pay. The courses they teach in the summer range from five to eight weeks long.

A second component contributing to the statements of *Participant One* is that faculty who are or want to participate in online education want it to be the best educational experience that a student could have. However, with these additional occupational responsibilities, some faculty fear that their focus cannot be fully placed on the development and offering of online courses and programs. This lack of dedicated time to a new medium of course offering could result in a substandard academic experience resulting in a lessening of the quality of education. In addition, *Participant Two* speaks to the inequity of the teaching load policy. There exists no teaching load policy for online courses at the university level. The responsibility lies with the each college as to how online courses count against a faculty member's teaching load and is not consistent across the university.

Faculty Understanding of Online Education at Rowan University

For faculty to support the initiative of online education, the administration must provide a clear understanding of what online education is and how it impacts faculty in their work environment (Gannon-Cook et al., 2009; Santilli & Beck, 2005; Tabata & Johnsrud, 2008). There are mixed results from the data gathered surrounding this topic. The level of involvement by the participants seemed to have determined the level of knowledge a faculty member had regarding the topic. It appears there is a linear correlation between the involvement of faculty in online delivery and the level of knowledge on the topic.

One such faculty member, *Participant Five*, went on to describe online education as something inevitable, not something that was sound for educational execution with students. *Participant Five* goes on to say:

"When there's such a push, am I gonna be in a classroom, or am I gonna be…first of all, I can't type to save my life. I might be sitting there for five years trying to chat with students or, you know, when, you know, I just now got Skype. I'm embarrassed to say, cause that's old, and I should have been on that long already, but you know, my concern is the future. Is it gonna be where the traditional classroom is gonna disappear? That's my concern."

Table 3

Cycle I Pre-Survey

	Frequency				% Respondent			
Question[a]	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD
1	21	19	0	0	52.5	47.5	0.0	0.0
2	8	19	8	5	20.0	47.5	20.0	12.5
3	9	9	19	3	22.5	22.5	47.5	7.5
4	3	11	23	3	7.5	27.5	57.5	7.5
5	5	10	21	4	12.5	25.0	52.5	10.0
6	15	18	5	2	37.5	45.0	12.5	5.0
7	2	8	25	5	5.0	20.0	62.5	12.5
8	16	22	2	0	40.0	55.0	5.0	0.0
9	15	19	5	1	37.5	47.5	12.5	2.5
10	18	17	4	1	45.0	42.5	10.0	2.5
11	13	16	10	1	32.5	40.0	25.0	2.5
12	9	17	8	6	22.5	42.5	20.0	15.0

Note. n=40, SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree
[a] Questions can be found in Appendix B

This lack of understanding about online education within the college is also illustrated by the responses of those who participated in the pre-survey in Cycle I. While the sample size is too small to be representative of the population as a whole (n=40),

inferences can be made about the individuals who did respond. Of those who responded, 75% answered either *Disagreed* or *Strongly Disagreed* when asked if they felt they had a voice in how online programs are developed by the College of Education. Of those who responded, 65% answered either *Disagreed* or *Strongly Disagreed* when asked if they knew of and understood college and university policies regarding online education. Finally, 62.5% of those who responded to the pre-survey answered either *Disagreed* or *Strongly Disagreed* when asked if they were familiar with resources that were available should they choose to develop online courses (see Table 3).

What the survey results showed in conjunction with the qualitative data collected over the three cycles is that faculty have not been exposed to the information they need to be able to make an informed decision regarding online education in the College of Education. *Participant Six* expands on this lack of knowledge during the 3/12/10 focus group:

"My other response is kind of different too, and that is it was an unknown from my perspective. I had never done online programming. I had worked on Blackboard, I liked doing things online with my students, but I had never done anything like this and so it was this big cloud of I don't know, and I ended up going into doing it and planning a course. I was very reluctant because I felt my course really needed face-to-face time and I had been a naysayer for a long time about online study because I felt it needed face-to-face. So, my response to impressions of the College of Education moving into online really had to do with my own experiences, really positive experiences, with what has happened as a teacher teaching online."

Table 4

Cycle III Post Survey #1

Question[a]	Frequency					% Respondent				
	SA	A	N/A	D	SD	SA	A	N/A	D	SD
1	4	4	0	0	0	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
2	3	2	2	1	0	37.5	25.0	25.0	12.5	0.0
3	4	4	0	0	0	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
4	5	3	0	0	0	62.5	37.5	0.0	0.0	0.0
5	4	3	1	0	0	50.0	37.5	12.5	0.0	0.0
6	2	3	2	0	1	25.0	37.5	25.0	0.0	12.5

Note. n=8, SA=Strongly Agree, N/A=Not Applicable, A=Agree, D=Disagree,
SD=Strongly Disagree
[a] Questions can be found in Appendix D

Table 5

Cycle III Post Survey #2

Question[a]	Frequency					% Respondent				
	SA	A	N/A	D	SD	SA	A	N/A	D	SD
1	3	3	0	0	0	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
2	1	4	0	1	0	16.7	66.7	0.0	16.7	0.0
3	3	3	0	0	0	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
4	4	2	0	0	0	66.7	33.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
5	2	4	0	0	0	33.3	66.7	0.0	0.0	0.0
6	0	4	2	0	0	0.0	66.7	33.3	0.0	0.0

Note. n=6, SA=Strongly Agree, N/A=Not Applicable, A=Agree, D=Disagree,
SD=Strongly Disagree
[a] Questions can be found in Appendix D

Faculty Underlying Assumptions

A belief by members of the organization that is not openly shared or espoused is

known as an underlying assumption (Schein, 2004). This is countered by espoused

beliefs, when a member or members of the organization openly state what they believe as

part of the culture of the organization (2004). In relation to this action research project,

data revealed both underlying assumptions and espoused beliefs of faculty in regards to

online education. The first came in the form of some faculty espousing that they were not

proponents of online education and had no plans of participating in the medium. This espoused belief was strong and conveyed clearly during data collection throughout the three action research cycles of this project.

A second underlying assumption regarding faculty comes in the form of perceived apathy towards online education. This assumption is made based on evidence collected during the three action research cycles. The first piece of evidence is illustrated in the form of response rates for the Cycle I pre-survey. Of the 221 faculty sent the survey, only 40 responded after numerous emails reminding them of the survey, providing an ultimate yield of 18.1% (see Table 3). In addition, the majority of participants in the various data collection exercises during this action research project were current or former participants in online education. The number of new participants in the action research project was nominal and came toward the end of Cycle III in the form of participation in the two online open forums.

In addition, there were some perceived issues among the faculty themselves who participated in the project. One such example came during the 3/26/10 focus group. At the end of this focus group, one of the participants, *Participant Seven*, who is a newly hired faculty member within the college asked to speak to me privately. Upon agreeing, we entered the hallway and *Participant Seven* began to explain how the focus group made it difficult for her to provide honest responses due to some of the other faculty being in the room. There apparently was some tension between her and other members of the group, making it difficult for her to openly participate within the focus group.

This exchange illustrated a very interesting data collection point for the project. Up to this point, one of the underlying assumptions surrounding this topic was the

appearance that online education was really 'faculty versus the administration' fueled by the years of ill will between the two groups. This interaction with *Participant Seven* illustrated another dynamic which may be providing resistance towards online education adoption, one of peer pressure.

Another concern raised during the data collection period of this research project was a concern by faculty of student authenticity in the online environment. This concern was also discussed by Santilli and Beck (2005) who, through the course of their research, determined that not many faculty were checking or had a mechanism to check whether the students who are on the other end of the computer were the same students who registered for the class. *Participant Five* was the most vocal about this concern in his statement:

"Again, my concerns are, you know, mostly just how to control…I've done quizzes on-line, and I guarantee, a good percentage of them cheat. Because you can look at their grades in class, you look at their grades on-line…the grades on-line are always better than in the classroom. So there's, I know there's cheating going on. Can I prove it? No."

Participant Five's comments were also supported by *Participant Eight* during the 7/21/10 focus group. Both participants echoed what others stated during the three action research cycles, which is that while online education has the potential to become a robust medium for students in higher education to learn, there are pitfalls that are significant to professors, pitfalls professors do not believe are applicable to traditional courses. Participants who shared this belief were then asked how they know that this does not

happen in their traditional courses. Answers varied but what was illustrated was that students will cheat regardless of the medium in which their classes/programs are offered.

The researcher's reaction to the participants' stance on the issue of authenticity was not one of pedagogy necessarily, even though it speaks to the topic very much, but that the perception is more of fear of the unknown by the participants. While the participants in the research project covered a range of academic experiences in teaching at the level of higher education, all had participated in teaching traditional courses. In doing so, they were exposed to the typical practices of teaching traditional courses. It is those beliefs that are engrained into the culture of traditional teaching at the higher education level that create these artificial roadblocks to the belief that online students are of lesser competence than traditional students.

Pedagogy

Many faculty still struggle with the idea that online education is a valid means of program or course, while other faculty tend to embrace it as a new means of reaching students in a changing environment (Gannon-Cook et al., 2009; Lan, 2001; Norton & Hathaway, 2008; Tabata & Johnsrud, 2008). Several factors contribute to a faculty's pedagogical perception of online education in higher education. The data collected during this action research project yielded support for both sides of this argument, with those who are against being the most vocal.

The first and most vocal concern about the pedagogy of online education shared by participants of the project was that of rigor. As the research suggests, perceptions are that online education has a lower standard of rigor compared to traditional courses due to

a discrepancy of learning outcomes (Ulmer et al., 2007). This concept was supported by *Participant Six* during the 3/12/10 focus group:

"And I think also, some classes, some signature assignments are very difficult to complete in eight weeks. You know, if it were up to me, the course that I teach, the signature assignment is very hard for them to complete in eight weeks and I think the quality of what they turn in is much lower than when it's a full semester."

While this quote from *Participant Six* also speaks to time constraints for both faculty and staff, it also speaks to the faculty concern that taking a 16-week traditional course that is offered face-to-face at Rowan University and then compressing that course into an eight-week, accelerated, online course is difficult to structure. Faculty are required to compress their traditional courses by sometimes having what would be done over the course of two weeks in a traditional format be completed in one week in the online format.

This also is more profound in the College of Education due to national and state accreditation requirements. For most programs in the college, there are requirements embedded in the curriculum to ensure that national professional and state standards are met in the preparation of teacher candidates as a well as other school personnel. The standards are very specific and data must be accurately recorded for dissemination to the state and national oversight entities. *Participant Six*'s comment about these assignments brings up the concern surrounding the quality of work for online students due to the change in pedagogical format which in turn results in lower scores for accreditation purposes.

An additional area that is discussed in the research and countered in the data collection is that of replication. This concept is that a successful online program must replicate the traditional environment as best it can in order to be considered successful (Lan, 2001). This concept was refuted by some who participated in the research project. *Participant Three* goes on to state:

"But it's a, I think it's a whole different gamut, and I'm not sure that's necessarily in my opinion the right direction to go. Because I just felt that some students got short sighted because a professor's lack of technology, professors who were mimicking the actual classroom by having, you know, send them a test, have them take the test, scan the test, you know, that kind of…That literally was going on at the MBA level, and I thought it was sad, because I think kids got short-sighted on the knowledge because they were so focused on you have a professor who doesn't understand the on-line package."

Participant Three, as well as others who participated in the research project and also had developed online courses, brought up an interesting point that is counter to the research. What these participants echoed was that it is impossible to create the online experience in such a way that replicated the traditional experience. Many factors, such as the acceleration of the courses, the technology available, and how the course program lends itself to the online environment were all mitigating factors preventing the seamless transition from traditional to online environments.

On the other hand, there were individuals who participated in the action research project who were rather positive regarding the use of online education as a means to educate individuals in higher education. To begin, the pre-survey administered in Cycle I shows that of those who responded, 82.5% stated either *Agreed* or *Strongly Agreed* when

asked their opinion of the statement that online education is a valid form of program offering. In addition, many participants stated during the data collection process that they felt online education was here to stay and it was about time the College of Education and Rowan University began to participate in this medium. *Participant Nine* goes on to say at the 3/12/10 focus group:

"I think it's a good thing. I think perhaps we started a little bit late compared to some other institutions. But I think it's something we have to do if we are going to stay competitive because a lot of students, they can get the online opportunities at most of the institutions around us, so I think it is important. I guess what I would say is that the idea of online offerings is something I see as very positive for Rowan."

Communication

Communication was a significant topic that came to light through the analysis of data collected over the three action research cycles. One subset of communication that was identified was the communication between faculty and students and how there is a difference between communication in the traditional classroom setting and in the online environment. The second significant communication interaction was peer communication between faculty over the topic of online delivery. This was facilitated through the open forum initiative that resulted in faculty discussing the topic with each other.

Student and faculty communication can be a catalyst for meaningful academic conversation and is key in the online environment when individuals are meeting in a non-traditional way (Moore & Marra, 2005). Participants discussed the need for communication between themselves and students in the online environment, sharing how

crucial it was, how time consuming it was, and how it could be a benefit to the academic process. *Participant Six* goes on to say during the 3/12/10 focus group:

"There was an increased number of them, probably because I had a double class, who were needy last fall in terms of what you really want, I really don't understand this, explain this again, I had to do that more this past year than I had to do before, and I'm not really sure why."

Participant Six illustrated a feeling that many participants shared: online students, at least in the college's first foray into the medium, were inquisitive about items that traditional students would otherwise pick up and be more self-sufficient about. In having to spend time on addressing these issues, faculty have less time to focus on the demanding classwork that the students are required to do and more time on hand holding students through the experience of an online course. In addition, faculty are put in the position of having to be in constant communication with students for two reasons. The first reason is that online students have an expectation of an immediate response to any inquiry they post to the professor. The second reason for the need for constant communication with students is a necessity due to the accelerated format in which the college's online courses run. If a professor does not communicate with a student in a timely manner, then the student runs the risk of falling behind in the class which can ultimately result in a student not passing the class due to the time constraints.

Table 6

Cycle I Post Survey

Question[a]	Frequency					% Respondent				
	SA	A	N/A	D	SD	SA	A	N/A	D	SD
1	6	6	0	0	0	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
2	5	5	0	2	0	41.7	41.7	0.0	16.7	0.0
3	5	4	2	1	0	41.7	33.3	16.7	8.3	0.0
4	8	3	1	0	0	66.7	25.0	8.3	0.0	0.0
5	5	7	0	0	0	41.7	58.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
6	3	2	5	2	0	25.0	16.7	41.7	16.7	0.0

Note. n=12, SA=Strongly Agree, N/A=Not Applicable, A=Agree, D=Disagree,
SD=Strongly Disagree
[a] Questions can be found in Appendix D

A second form of communication came during the change initiative of the open

forums held during action research Cycles I and III. This communication form attempted

to create an environment for faculty to speak about their concerns and criticisms of online

education as well as to become more familiar with the medium. Argyris (1990) would

call this exercise discussing the undiscussables in the sense that in order to move the

organization forward, honest and open communication must take place. Feedback from

the three open forums was resoundingly positive from the participants. Of those who

participated in the exit survey, 96.15% answered either *Agree* or *Strongly Agree* to two

statements (see Table 7). The first statement was that it was beneficial to have an

environment to discuss online education and the second was that the open forums should

continue in the future. One participant responded with the following on the exit survey

from the Cycle III open forum:

"The open forum provides an opportunity for support and many people, but not

all, would probably take advantage of it."

Table 7

Total Aggregate Post Survey

Question[a]	Frequency					% Respondent				
	SA	A	N/A	D	SD	SA	A	N/A	D	SD
1	13	13	0	0	0	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
2	9	11	2	4	0	34.6	42.3	7.7	15.4	0.0
3	12	11	2	1	0	46.2	42.3	7.7	3.9	0.0
4	17	8	1	0	0	65.4	30.8	3.9	0.0	0.0
5	11	14	1	0	0	42.3	53.9	3.9	0.0	0.0
6	5	9	9	2	1	19.2	34.6	34.6	7.7	3.9

Note. n=26, SA=Strongly Agree, N/A=Not Applicable, A=Agree, D=Disagree,
SD=Strongly Disagree
[a] Questions can be found in Appendix D

Table 8

Cycle III Aggregate Post Survey

Question[a]	Frequency					% Respondent				
	SA	A	N/A	D	SD	SA	A	N/A	D	SD
1	7	7	0	0	0	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
2	4	6	2	2	0	28.6	42.9	14.3	14.3	0.0
3	7	7	0	0	0	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
4	9	5	0	0	0	64.3	35.7	0.0	0.0	0.0
5	6	7	1	0	0	42.9	50.0	7.1	0.0	0.0
6	2	7	4	0	1	14.3	50.0	28.6	0.0	7.1

Note. n=14, SA=Strongly Agree, N/A=Not Applicable, A=Agree, D=Disagree,
SD=Strongly Disagree
[a] Questions can be found in Appendix D

While the perception of communication among colleagues during the open forums
was conveyed as a positive, there were some negatives surrounding the open forum,
specifically the initial offering during Cycle I. Several individuals took issue with the
duration of the first open forum which lasted over two hours and encompassed a great
deal of information (see Appendix E). In addition, the faculty panel was approximately
ten minutes long during the first open forum held in Cycle I versus the 30-45 minutes it
was during the open forums held in Cycle III. Instead of hearing from colleagues,

participants were aggravated to hear a 30 minute presentation of the researcher's

literature review and an hour long presentation given by CGCE during the open forum

held in Cycle I. During the summer this was corrected with constructive feedback given

by the focus group of faculty. Based on this feedback the open forums in Cycle III were

changed to daytime hours, with only two agenda items (see Appendix I), which were a

CGCE presentation and faculty panel, and two open forums were held instead of one as

was the case in Cycle I, providing more opportunity for faculty to participate. These

changes resulted in positive feedback on the exit surveys in Cycle III and also provided

an opportunity for more faculty to participate, which was the case.

Technology

Online education is a very technology oriented medium that requires a specific

toolset for faculty to have in order for the process and execution to be successful.

Technology training above and beyond the normal institutional support is required for

faculty to be successful (Matthew & Varagoor, 2001). In addition, a professor's

propensity, or comfort, with technology is also a leading cause for the adoption of online

education as part of the curriculum (Gannon-Cook et al., 2009; Gibson et al., 2008; Lan,

2001; Tabata & Johnsrud, 2008).

When discussing technology and online education during the three action research

cycles, the most dominant topic of conversation was that the technology support CGCE

provides to faculty was wonderful and should be commended. CGCE provides

development and implementation support from a technology standpoint for online

courses at Rowan University. Of those who responded to the exit survey for the open

forums held in Cycles I and III, 88.46% (n= 26) responded *Agree* or *Strongly Agree* to the

statement that they understood the resources available should they decide to participate in online education (see Table 7). In addition, many participants provided accolades to CGCE for their efforts in providing necessary support for online education. *Participant Seven* goes on to say from the 3/26/10 focus group:

"I would definitely say that the level of expertise dealing with some of the instructional designers over there, I worked specifically with Johnny and I'm very fond of him and the work that he does, and I get very good support over there, and good feedback and a good relationship."

While it is a benefit to the college's online endeavors for professors to be comfortable with their CGCE technology support, there appears to be an underlying reason for the positive feedback. CGCE has a very strict structure to its online courses. There are specific templates that must be used and timelines that must be adhered to in order for the course to be put online and taught to students. The specificity provided by CGCE eases the burden on professors who do not have an affinity for technology because it allows professors to work in a methodical manner. In addition, CGCE works day-in and day-out with faculty to ensure they have what they need from a technology standpoint to put their course online. This support is actually unprecedented when dealing with traditional courses on campus where the university lacks the necessary resources to provide support to professors who wish to venture into incorporating technology into the traditional curriculum. This supportive stance of CGCE also eases the professor's anxiety of using technology and doing something wrong, a belief that is common among those who lack comfort with technology.

However, the systematic and inflexible way CGCE provides support and structure to online course development and execution can be frustrating to some who are very comfortable with the use of technology. *Participant Nine* had this very experience during her time developing and launching an online course and found the situation to be somewhat stifling to the academic possibilities and flexibility that professors in the traditional environment are accustomed to. *Participant Nine* goes on to say during the 3/12/10 focus group:

"I had a heck of a lot of trouble specifically with the PointeCast and part of the problem is that I'm a techy. If a new version comes out I get it. So I was on Vista. I'm on Window 7 and CGCE isn't necessarily, PointeCast definitely isn't. And there was a major difficulty trying to get it to work and the thing was gee, should I go back to XP. I didn't want to go back to the XP. You know, it didn't make much sense to me and they won't let you just do the voice over within PowerPoint because that takes up too much space on the server and they do the PointeCast with a separate feed or something. That bothers me, it bothers me. Only, it's just frustrating to have to go through that overlaid program which I don't know if you've had any problems with it, it freezes up periodically."

While *Participant Nine* was the only individual to express frustration regarding technology, CGCE, and online courses, the sentiment speaks to the fact that while the CGCE process may be conducive to the majority of individuals at the institution who are not technology familiar, it may frustrate those who may be ahead of the curve when it comes to technology. This small group of professors who are technology savvy and enjoy academic freedom of course development will have a difficult time working in CGCE's

current online development and implementation structure. This could ultimately alienate individuals with technology knowledge who could be used to champion the process and help other professors adopt the medium.

Biases and Assumptions

Bias is defined as a researcher's ability to reflect upon his own subjectivity and how that subjectivity impacts his research project (Glesne, 2006). Being both the assistant dean of the College of Education, the setting for this action research project, as well as a doctorate student in the college led to an abundance of both bias and assumptions during this process. The following is a discussion of those biases and assumptions that the researcher encountered during this process and what steps he took to attempt to minimize their impact on the project. While the author could not eliminate the potential bias, he took steps to address and minimize it whenever possible to bring validity to the final data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Glesne, 2006).

The first step he took in the process to minimize bias came in the form of the choice of data collection tools. The first choice was to utilize the technique of focus groups instead of one-on-one interviews to collect data over the three action research cycles. The purpose of focus groups in qualitative data collection is to stimulate discussion among a group of individuals and to promote interaction among them, thus minimizing the researcher's role in the data collection process (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). This also coincides with the overall action research project's methodological approach of transcendental phenomenology which focuses on the data collection of several individuals who have experienced the phenomenon while the researcher attempts to bracket off his own experiences to promote qualitative inquiry (Creswell, 2007). In

essence, the researcher allowed the participants to discuss the focus group questions while minimizing his input during data collection.

This method of data collection was preferred over one-on-one interviews for a few reasons. The first reason is that the majority of participants were employees of the College of Education. Having one-on-one interviews at any location would have lent itself to potential bias in interviews due to the researcher's role as assistant dean. During a one-on-one interview, an individual may have felt the need to provide an answer to an interview question that might sound like a positive piece of data for the project or provide a piece of data that puts him in a good light instead of providing open and honest answers to the research questions posited. The second reason was to make the participants feel comfortable during the data collection process. Individuals appear to be more comfortable among a group of peers versus the alternative of face-to-face with one individual.

In addition, before data collection sessions the researcher changed his physical appearance. During the day the researcher would wear more formal attire appropriate for a college administrator that usually includes a suit or jacket and tie. During the data collection sessions, including focus groups and open forums, the researcher changed his appearance from one of a more formal individual and into casual clothes which included t-shirts, sneakers, and jeans. The hope in changing his appearance to the participants was to provide a physical expression that there was a difference between being the assistant dean and being the aspiring doctorate candidate.

To address assumptions the researcher may have had, a reflective approach was utilized to reexamine those assumptions through the various roles the author plays in

society. The first, most meaningful, assumption comes from his role as an administrator within the College of Education. During this project the researcher assumed that faculty believed that online education was an poor means to offer programs created to usurp the traditional process of academia in higher education. As the researcher went through this action research project, it was discovered that some faculty do feel that way. However, of those who participated in this project, the majority did not feel as the vocal minority did.

A second assumption was that members of the project population understood what online education was within the College of Education. As data was collected, it was discovered that his assumption was far from accurate and it remained throughout the rest of the data collection process. The problem with this assumption was that it failed to recognize that there was a communication gap to be filled between administration and faculty over the phenomenon on online education. Ultimately, the open forums provided the details to those who chose to participate. However, the remaining individuals of the population are still uneducated as to what online education means in the college and university and what their role is in making this phenomenon come to fruition.

Limitations

Limitations to an action research project highlight the limitations researchers must face during this empirical process and their recognition helps to bring trustworthiness to the action research project by allowing the reader to better understand the context of the research (Glesne, 2006). This action research project is no different. There were many trials and tribulations that needed to be overcome during the project. The following outlines the project's limitations.

The first limitation was faculty participation, which was voluntary and also allowed for those who did participate to withdrawal their participation at any time prior to publishing. While this practice is sound for research purposes it does make an assumption that people will participate voluntarily. While some did participate voluntarily, the number of individuals who ultimately participated was small considering the entire population of 221 invited to participate. In addition, the researcher's role as an administrator may have caused individuals not to participate in this project, diminishing opportunities for rich qualitative and quantitative data collection.

A second limitation was the imposed restriction of interaction with participants by administration within the college. For example, after the researcher noticed in action research Cycle I that there was a small number of participants in the data collection sets, he decided to attempt to appeal more directly to faculty so as to solicit their participation. The author was informed by superiors that this would not be possible and the only way the researcher would be allowed to solicit participation in data collection sets would be to email faculty directly or post flyers around the academic departments within the college (see Appendix J). Some rejected ideas include: speaking to departments directly during their monthly department meetings, calling faculty to solicit their participation, and discussions of the action research project during college functions and meetings. The researcher was informed that this was to minimize any perception of favoritism or bias due to his dual role as an administrator and student. This obstacle, the author feels, was a significant hindrance in the attempt to solicit participation in the project.

A third limitation to the project was time itself. Many researchers state that it takes significant time, sometimes years, to enact and embed an organizational change

initiative that has a significant, meaningful impact on the organization (Argyris, 1990; Fullan, 2001; Kotter, 1996). This action research project was instituted over the span of two academic semesters and a summer. While the change initiative (the open forums) showed signs of engagement with faculty, there was nowhere near enough time to determine if lasting change had occurred with the organization. Perhaps with enough time data could be collected to determine the proper impact this change initiative had on the College of Education.

Conclusion

The project produced robust qualitative and quantitative data based on participant feedback. Once reviewed, coded, and analyzed, the data began to paint a vivid picture of faculty experiences related to the phenomenon of online education in the College of Education, and at Rowan University as a whole. This data spoke to the trials, tribulations, and triumphs of faculty who have had various levels of support during the inception of online education.

Chapter V will review the findings to determine what impact, if any, this research has had on the organization. The chapter will review if the action research project successfully achieved the goals set forth in the research questions posed at the beginning of the project. The chapter will also determine what implications this research may have on a more grand scale outside of the realm of the College of Education at Rowan University.

Chapter V: Conclusions, Leadership Reflection, and Implications

The purpose of this project was to learn positive and negative views of faculty regarding online delivery of courses in an attempt to increase their participation in this mode of delivery. Additionally the researcher sought to explore if faculty concerns about online education could be addressed, clarified, or dispelled. A survey of the literature revealed that there are very limited studies regarding participation, hence the purpose of this project. In addition, the College of Education, the primary setting of the project, is incorporating online delivery into its program offerings and could be become a beneficiary of its results and findings. The hope is that conducting this research will increase faculty participation in online delivery which in turn will benefit students with greater access to high quality programs.

Efforts were put forth to address, empirically, the quandary of how to engage faculty in the conversation of online education as part of the reality of their changing work environment. Using the concepts of Organizational Defense Mechanisms (ODMs) as a foundation for engagement, the researcher attempted to create a positive environment for faculty to discuss their undiscussables (Argyris, 1990) in an effort to increase faculty participation in online education.

The question that must be asked in relation to what has been done during this project is: why does this matter? The reason why it is so important is because online education is the new movement in course and program offering at institutions of higher education. This is especially important when compounding the issue of declining enrollments and funding over a period of years, something the College of Education was facing before the creation and implementation of CGCE.

This research ultimately matters because it attempts to add to the knowledge base in relation to the subject of faculty and online delivery within postsecondary institutions. This knowledge may be useful to those administrators, educators, and institutions looking to implement online education as a medium of higher education learning and who are not familiar with how to embrace that phenomenon at the organizational level. While this research has its limitations as discussed in Chapter IV, there is merit to the outcomes that have been discovered. They can be a helpful tool to those looking toward online education as a means to reach students who otherwise would not attend a particular institution. Also, it provides a format to engage faculty who otherwise would not engage in such a topic due to various reasons such as lack of interest or fear of change.

What Was Achieved?

In an effort to better understand faculty's positions and perceptions regarding online education, the following three questions were posed:

- What are the perceptions of online education of faculty within the College of Education?

- How do current college/university policies influence faculty perceptions of online education?

- How will open lines of communication help to foster a positive experience for faculty in regards to online education?

In order to determine whether the research project was a success, each question will be discussed and evaluated as to whether the action research project successfully provided evidence that answers these questions.

What are the perceptions of online education of faculty within the College of Education? Through mixed methodology it was determined that most faculty who participated in the project have an overall positive attitude toward online education. This is not to say that there are not those faculty who participated that were not in support of online education as this was also the case and discussed in Chapter IV.

However, the problem with making a general statement that all faculty perceptions were ascertained would be inaccurate. As had been stated earlier, the problem in determining the entire action research project population's perception is one of participation. Compared to the total population of invitees to participate in this action research project (n=221), very few within the college actually did participate (n= 155 with duplicates). In addition, of those who participated, many were already involved in online education, partially by design of the project, making it difficult to ascertain the perceptions of those who are not participating.

How do current college/university policies influence faculty perceptions of online education? It was found during the project, specifically during data analysis, that not many faculty actually knew or understood administrative policies and procedures surrounding online education within the College of Education. Many faculty actually discovered said policies and procedures during the data collection phase of this action research project. Therefore it can be said that faculty may not have been knowledgeable enough about developing and implementing online education within the college, resulting in faculty possibly being hesitant to participate. Due to the underlying assumption by faculty that administration has ulterior motives regarding any new initiative with the

college, this lack of transparent information may also lead to faculty not participating in the process.

Of those who were familiar with administrative policies and procedures, there were mixed reactions towards said policies. Regarding CGCE polices that dictate procedure surrounding development and execution of online courses and programs, participants were supportive and understanding of how it relates to online education. When speaking about specific College of Education policies surrounding online education, many faculty who participated in the research project were not supportive of these discussed policies and it was determined that at least one participant would not continue his participation in online education unless college polices were changed to be more flexible in relation to faculty. While not influencing perceptions of online education directly, the College of Education does have policies in place that may be barriers to faculty participation in the phenomenon of online education.

How will open lines of communication help to foster a positive experience for faculty in regards to online education? Communication was a piece of this action research project that showed the most promise of influencing faculty in relation to the phenomenon of online education and also in attempting to create a double-loop situation of lasting, meaningful change within the organization (Argyris, 1990). Of those who participated in the open forums, the communication and peer discussions that occurred during this time were singled out by faculty as being the best benefit for them. The two-way communication that occurred among faculty as well as between faculty and CGCE representatives left those in attendance with a positive experience in relation to online education. Even those who felt negative toward online education and attended the open

forums commented on how informative they were and how the open forums provided information for them to reevaluate their stance toward online delivery.

However, communication with faculty was limited by administration regarding participation in the project. Some barriers were imposed by the researcher's superiors regarding interactions with faculty, resulting in participation to be small (n= 155 with duplicates) compared to the number within the target population for the action research project (n=221). This limited interaction with faculty resulted in the possible loss of valuable qualitative and quantitate data collected. Limiting the data collection may have restricted the author's ability to paint a more robust picture of how faculty interacted with the phenomenon of online education. In addition, the limited interactions resulted in the possibility that many of the participants were those who were already users of this mode of delivery, reducing the sampling population even more. Overall, while it was determined that for those who participated in the project a positive environment was created, the limiting factors of communication may have resulted in a more narrow picture of how faculty have interacted with the phenomenon of online education within the college.

Leadership

In order for individuals or groups to enact change within an organization, leadership is needed to facilitate such a change. Leadership helps to facilitate and guide an organization through the change process, whether that is short-term or long-term change. The following sections will discuss the researcher's reflections on his leadership during the project and how that leadership helps to attain the goals set forth in Chapter I.

Democracy. Successful democratic leaders value individuals' input and ideas and receive commitment through participation. Democratic leaders are successful at soliciting ideas on how to best implement a shared vision, whether it is the democratic leader's vision or another's in the group. Tools such as teambuilding and collaboration, conflict management, influence, and listening are useful to a democratic leader (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002).

Democratic leadership is an aspect of the researcher that was utilized during this action research project. One such example came during Cycle II when the researcher held a focus group to review the findings from Cycle I and to solicit feedback from the population as to how to improve the open forum for implementation during Cycle III. The focus group consisted of faculty who happened to be available during the summer of 2010 and consisted of a wide range of faculty, from new to seasoned, across multiple disciplines.

During the focus group the author solicited ideas on how to improve the change initiative of the open forum. During the solicitation, the researcher attempted to minimize his interactions and responses in order to allow the group to come up with solutions on their own on how to improve the open forum and increase faculty participation in the process. By allowing the faculty to discuss solutions among themselves, it provided the author with an opportunity to listen to faculty feedback during the open forums. Ultimately a consensus was obtained as to what improvements should be implemented to the format of the open forum to improve the process. This democratic style of leadership allowed the researcher to take the faculty suggestions and formulate Cycle III of the action research project.

Social Justice Ally. Another aspect of leadership that the researcher espoused is that of being a social justice ally. Social justice is the belief that societal inequities should be championed so that every child may have the ability to earn a quality education (Dantley & Tillman, 2006). While this definition specifically speaks to the education of children, no doubt it remains a viable tool/principle to apply to higher education.

Prior to this project, the author had never considered himself a social justice ally. During project the researcher had written in his journal on a few occasions that he felt social justice was an educational tenet that was not for him. To clarify, the researcher is not an educator by education. Rather, his degrees are in the liberal arts and business fields. However, while going through this process as both a student and researcher, the author discovered that sympathy and correcting inequities was really at the core of what he was attempting to accomplish.

Regarding the impact of online education on students, this project made the task of being a social justice ally an easy one. While the effect may have been ancillary, the focus of the project to engage faculty on the topic of online education goes to the very root of the education of students. Faculty are the ones who are educating the youth in postsecondary institutions, not administrators. Without the conversation and ongoing dialog on the topic of online education with faculty, ultimately the students will suffer and be prevented from earning the quality education that social justice allies espouse to believe is a right of all students.

In addition, the same, in a manner of speaking, can be said about faculty. As this action research project demonstrates, faculty within the college have been minimally educated regarding online mode of delivery and its impact on the college and curriculum.

By enacting the change initiative of the open forums, the researcher attempted to both engage and educate faculty in order to change their feelings and opinions regarding online education and provide the necessary support to produce high quality education.

Transparency. A transparent leader is a leader who lives his values. He has an authentic openness to others about feelings, beliefs, and actions allowing integrity. Transparent leaders openly admit mistakes or faults and confront unethical behavior in others, rather than ignore it (Goleman et al., 2002).

As the researcher has espoused before starting this action research project, transparency was a form of leadership he valued and it was also a component of his leadership that was utilized during the project. While reviewing the journal entries the author made during the project, the themes of openness and honesty were reoccurring. This was also the crux of the open forum initiative, to have open and honest dialog with faculty in order to discuss the undiscussables (Argyris, 1990). These themes were most dominant in journaling right before and right after the open forums occurred.

It was essential to have transparent conversations throughout the action research project both for the open forums as well as for data collection purposes. During each and every qualitative data collection session, the researcher would be open and honest to all participants in sharing that he was an administrator within the college. In addition, the researcher was honest with participants in informing them that they could withdrawal from the action research project at any time without repercussion. This attempt at honest and open communication was to help in both establishing credibility with the participants that would lead to more reliable data, as well as to attempt to create a positive environment for participants which would also provide the same effect.

The Reflective Practitioner. A reflective practitioner is a person who evaluates his or her own ideas and theories against his actions. Leaders who are reflective practitioners need to share their perceptions of actions with others and solicit feedback for improvement (Rowan University, 2007b). Those who espouse to be reflective practitioners constantly evaluate and reevaluate all practices and ultimately look to change underlying assumptions within himself as well as the organization, resulting in a double-loop change situation (Argyris, 1990; Osterman & Kottkamp, 2004). A reflective practitioner is one who seeks to take risk while at the same time needs an environment that permits open communication among the members of the organization (Osterman & Kottkamp, 2004). In addition, reflection is one of the prescribed tenets of the action research cycle for those who choose it as their method of research (Hinchey, 2008).

During this action research project the researcher had the opportunity to demonstrate reflective practices as part of his leadership and decision making. The first example came in the form of the action research cycles. At the end of each observer phase the researcher would reflect upon what had occurred and move forward to build each subsequent cycle around this reflection. This reflective practice resulted in the creation of the faculty focus group in Cycle II that provided insight on how to improve the open forums for Cycle III. That is, the researcher reflected on the obtained information and subsequently utilized it to improve upon the engagement of faculty he was attempting to enact.

In addition, the reflective practice carried into the author's evaluation of his leadership during the project. Through journaling and reflection it was possible to determine what kind of leadership styles he utilized during this project. It helped to bring

validity to his thoughts and actions as they have been documented and illustrated. This allowed the researcher to constantly reevaluate his actions to see if improvements could be made to improve the organization. In addition, the author utilized verbal peer feedback during reflection to reevaluate actions taken both professionally and as a student to improve upon the decision-making process.

Transactional Leadership. Transactional leadership was a leadership style that the researcher utilized throughout the project. One such example of transactional leadership came when formulating the initial open forum in Cycle I. Unlike Cycle II, the researcher did not convene a focus group to specifically gather input into what the open forum should look like the first time it was offered. Instead the researcher utilized his personal knowledge base combined with data collected during the first phase of Cycle I to create the agenda for the first open forum. Upon reflection, it may have been more productive to start out with a committee that included a diverse faculty pool to help in the planning of the first open forum. This method may have begun to lay the groundwork for a double-loop, or lasting, change initiative in which all members of the organization had a say in the matter.

Another example of the utilization of transactional leadership during this project presented itself during its early phase. While it was understood that this was an action research project, at the same time this was a change initiative within the College of Education. If this were not part of an action research project, the researcher would have gathered a group representative of the various constituencies throughout the college to help plan the change initiative, as well as to help execute it. Instead, the planning and execution ultimately fell on the researcher to perform due to a lack of available

constituents, resulting in parts of the change project being more of his own design than that of members of the organization.

Visionary Leadership. A visionary leader is one that moves people toward shared dreams or ideas. He helps individuals in the organization see how his work fits into the big picture of the organization (Goleman et al., 2002). A good visionary leader will allow individuals in the organization to come up with their own creative ideas and solutions to given tasks and in turn will be able to retain the most talented employees in the organization.

While the researcher did not espouse to be a visionary leader at the beginning of this project, it is believed that the project aided him to begin moving in that direction. One of the goals of this project was to gauge faculty knowledge regarding online education within the college, as well as inform faculty through various means about what the College of Education was doing with this medium by using open and honest dialog. This dialog, at the onset, required the researcher to communicate the fact that online education within the College of Education, as well as Rowan University, was a reality that was here to stay. While not the researcher's vision, it was a vision of the university and espoused throughout Academic Affairs.

While there are tangible aspects of visionary leadership, such as mission statements, to actually see a leader's or organization's vision carried throughout the organization takes considerable time. This was seen on a small scale in reference to the open forums. The first open forum during Cycle I was not very well attended and most of those who did attend were already participating in online education within the college. When the open forums during Cycle III occurred, participation by faculty increased and

included those without prior knowledge. This illustrated to the researcher that individuals were willing to partake in the idea of open and honest communication regarding a phenomenon that will impact their day-to-day working environment.

This was a small example of visionary leadership that the researcher experienced during this project. Time will tell if this vision of a collaborative online education process with all constituents will be realized. It may take months or years to come to fruition. In order to keep the movement going with faculty, communication such as the open forums will need to be continued.

Action Plan for Increasing Participation

As Table 1 illustrates, faculty participation in online education both within the College of Education and Rowan University as a whole is small in comparison to the number of courses offered. The purpose of this project was to investigate faculty impressions, both positive and negative, towards online education in order to increase their participation in the process. Now that this project has successfully completed that task, it is time to focus on endeavors that will help resolve any issues precluding faculty from participating so as to increase faculty participation rates and, in turn, provide high quality educational programs. The following attempts to present some possible action items that the researcher will attempt to implement over the next two years to increase faculty participation in online courses to 75%. In doing so, the researcher will utilize both the leadership styles that were used during this action research project as well as others that may be discovered to accomplish the following action items. The action items will follow the six emerging themes described in Chapter IV of this document.

Faculty time was a significant theme that was echoed by many participants in the project. Many felt that online education placed an additional burden on already overworked faculty. To alleviate the time burden, two actions will be pursued: (1) the elimination of the current college policy that makes teaching online courses outside of a faculty member's 24 credit load for the academic year, and (2) offer reassigned time to faculty to develop online courses. The elimination of the current college policy will provide schedule flexibility to faculty, something to which they are accustomed. The reassigned time may allow faculty to reduce their assigned coursework for a semester and provide time for faculty to develop high quality online educational programs.

The second theme that will be pursued as part of this action plan will be to address faculty understanding of online education. As this research project has illustrated, of those who participated in this study many were unfamiliar with online education. To improve this knowledge base for faculty, two actions will be pursued: (1) continue the open forums that were utilized during this project, and (2) offer more specialized discussion groups that focus on certain aspects of online education within the college and university. These two action items will allow for a continued mechanism of communication with faculty on the topic of online education and will provide avenues for faculty to gain more knowledge on the topic from both peers and other employees.

The third theme to be addressed by this action plan is that of faculty underlying assumptions. Some participants have very negative opinions regarding online education, some of which were based on perceptions rather than reality. One way to combat these perceptions would be to offer hands-on workshops for faculty in which faculty would have the opportunity to work in the current online environment. This process will provide

faculty with first-person knowledge of the tools used at the university, as well as the limitations and strengths that the Internet brings to the learning experience. Also, to engrain online education into the culture of the university, the University's Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning could spearhead this venture. The Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning provides resources for both new and existing faculty on various faculty subjects such as tenure and recontracting, as well as resources for academic development. This entity could include the online workshop and others related to online education as part of new faculty orientation at the university so as to make it part of a faculty member's knowledge base starting at the beginning of their career at the university.

The fourth theme that emerged from this research covered the area of pedagogy. Of those who participated in this study, some were concerned of the soundness of the Internet as a medium for delivering academic programs. To help dispel this idea and aid faculty in the development process, work will commence to identify funds to hire an individual who has expertise in translating traditional courses and programs into the online environment. This individual would be a resource for faculty, both experienced and novice, to use in converting traditional courses into the online environment.

The fifth theme that emerged from this project was that of communication. Communication was presented in two ways: peer to peer and faculty to student. To address issues surrounding faculty/student communication, the researcher will pursue the option of creating online advising areas to alleviate the frequent questions professors receive in their online courses not related to the course being offered. In this new advising area students will be able to speak to academic advisors as well discover

information that is program, not course, related. In turn, professors will have more time to respond to student needs specific to the class they are teaching. In relation to peer to peer communications, one-on-one mentoring for faculty interested in or currently going through online development would be beneficial. The peer panel during the open forums of this project had the most positive feedback from participants. Hearing from other faculty who have already gone through the process was beneficial to those who have not participated in online education, but may be thinking about it. One-on-one mentoring takes the peer communication to a more personal level for faculty and also provides more time for discussion of development ideas or for questions to be posed.

Finally, the sixth theme of this project was that of technology. Technology was a positive theme that was illustrated in this project. To that end, the researcher is recommending that the current support process be bolstered by adding additional instructional designers, those technology staff that work with faculty to develop online courses. By increasing the number of instructional designers, more technical support can be provided to those who are currently working in online education as well as provide support for new individual who will decide to work with this new medium. In addition to increasing the number of Instructional Designers, CGCE should participate in the hands-on workshops that are being recommended and continue to participate in any additional open forums to provide information to faculty regarding the technological support available if one chooses to participate in online education.

In enacting this action plan over the next two years, the researcher hopes to take the knowledge acquired through this project to address, clarify, or dispel any concerns faculty may have surrounding online education. The hope is that these actions will

increase faculty participation in online education within the College of Education to a consistent 75%. While this part of the project ended with the discovery of faculty attitudes towards online education, like any fruitful action research project, the work will continue through this action plan.

How the Findings and Research Can be Replicated

The author believes that other institutions encountering similar environmental conditions could replicate the approach outlined in this work. The following provides some suggestions to supplement the work conducted in this project for those interested in replicating it. Institutions may find that depending on their own environment additional changes may be needed, but the premise remains sound for replication. The following discusses three potential options for institutions to adapt this research for their own environment.

One such data tool that could be utilized to measure leadership growth or change is a leadership inventory survey. A leadership inventory can be administered to participants in the project as well as those with whom the researcher works to get their impressions of leadership at the start of the project and at the end of the project. This data collection tool may provide another mixed method set of comparative data that could add to the triangulation of data and bring an increased sense of validity to project.

Another adaptation of this project that others could consider relates to interactions with faculty and restrictions placed on those interactions. It is important that any researcher looking to replicate this project ensures that he has full and unconditional access to the population that is being targeted in order to attain the most data possible about the phenomenon. Restrictions impeded this researcher's ability to increase the

participant population to have a more representative sample for the quantitative

components of data collection.

A proper timeline is crucial in attempting to replicate this project. Any

meaningful change initiative can take a few months to several years to take hold within

an organization (Fullan, 2001). This specific project would have fallen in the latter

category, needing years to determine the true impact of the open forums on faculty within

the College of Education. While participant numbers improved from Cycles I to III for

the open forums, there was still a small number involved in the change initiative

compared to the population of the college. As time goes on, and if this project were to be

continued, the researcher would estimate that more faculty would begin to attend,

increasing the dialog surrounding the topic of online education within the college and

resulting in a better understanding by faculty as to how this new medium of education fits

into their work environment and how they can participate.

Conclusion

The purpose of this project was to learn from faculty their positive and negative

views regarding online delivery of courses in an attempt to increase their participation in

such a mode of delivery if many of their concerns could be addressed, clarified, or

dispelled. Chapter II identified data collection tools in order to gather data during this

research project. These tools were chosen based on theoretical and practical

methodologies that guided the project to conclusion. Data was analyzed and findings

described in Chapter IV. Findings indicated that there are several factors that could

facilitate faculty adoption of online education if implemented: (1) a better knowledge of

technology, (2) allowing for reasonable time for proper course development, (3)

increasing the communication between faculty and administration about the process, and (4) eliminating certain bias towards the medium.

The project lends itself to replication for institutions and colleges that find themselves in the same environmental situation as the College of Education at Rowan University. However, those looking to implement this project may need to tailor it to their own unique environment in order to engage faculty on the topic of online education. Ultimately, the project illustrated that administration need to engage faculty on the topic of online delivery when the goal of the institution is to utilize it as a means of program offering. Faculty are the ones who have the burden of online program development, implementation, and execution placed on them by administration. Implementing a top-down approach to online delivery that minimizes faculty input may lead to a lack of adoption of online education within the organization.

In conclusion, if an institution of higher education can better and more fully understand all the faculty concerns and issues regarding online education, the institution can implement a series of measures to address such concerns which will eventually result in faculty participation. In doing so, the institution will also address their needs of declining enrollments and revenues due to the potential success of utilizing the new medium for program offerings. In order to accomplish these goals, institution must have an open dialog with faculty and their own environment so as to ensure online education is a success.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent Form

You have been invited to participate in a mixed methodology, action research project being conducted by Steven Farney, a Doctorate candidate in the Ed.D. in Educational Leadership program at Rowan University. You have been selected to participate in this research because you can provide valuable insight to the perceptions of online education within the College of Education. I will be conducting the focus group at a location convenient to you. The focus group will last approximately one hour, or as long as you may need to answer the questions asked. The information you provide will help in the creation of a collaborative process that fosters a mutually beneficial environment for both College of Education and its faculty regarding online education.

I understand that I am being asked to participate in a focus group, which I can decline.

I understand that my responses will be anonymous and that all the data gathered will be confidential.

I agree that any information obtained from this study may be used in any way thought best for publication or education provided that I am in no way identified and my name is not used. I understand that there are no physical or psychological risks involved in this study, and that I am free to withdraw my participation at any time without penalty. Steven Farney is the assistant dean of the College of Education at Rowan University. Project participation will be voluntary for all faculty and faculty will have the option to withdrawal from the study after their participation is complete. Due to the administrative

position Steven holds within the college, I understand that there will not be any consequences or repercussions if I choose not to be a subject in the study.

I understand that my participation does not imply employment with the state of New Jersey, Rowan University, the principal investigator, or any other project facilitator.

If you have any questions or problems concerning your participation in this study, you may contact Steven Farney at 856.256.4754 or at farney@rowan.edu or Horacio Sosa at 856.256.4129 or at sosa@rowan.edu.

_____   _____

(Signature of Participant)   (Date)

_____   _____

(Signature of Investigator)   (Date)

Appendix B

Faculty Survey

I would like to invite you to participate in a short survey on the topic online education within the College of Education. This is an anonymous survey and all information will be kept strictly confidential. Your opinions will be very helpful as we work to create a program for faculty interested in online education. By participating in the survey, you are giving permission for Rowan University to use your information for research purposes. Thank you for your help!

I If you have any questions or problems concerning your participation in this study, you may contact Steven Farney at 856.256.4754 or at farney@rowan.edu or Horacio Sosa at 856.256.4129 or at sosa@rowan.edu.

Directions: Please read each item carefully. Then ✓ your response. **Response Choices:**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Working with the College of Professional and Continuing Education is a positive endeavor for the College of Education.	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Communication regarding the College of Education's involvement in online education has been open.	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. I am familiar with current peer-reviewed articles on the subject of online education in higher education.	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. I am familiar with the College of Education's and Rowan University's polices regarding online education.	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. I know about the resources that are available to me if I choose to develop an online course.	☐	☐	☐	☐

6.	I believe online education is a valid form of program offering.	☐	☐	☐	☐
7.	I feel I have a voice in how online programs are developed in the College of Education.	☐	☐	☐	☐
8.	I know what online education is	☐	☐	☐	☐
9.	I would like to know more about online education.	☐	☐	☐	☐
10.	If given the opportunity to attend an information/support session about online education, I would attend if available.	☐	☐	☐	☐
11.	I am interested in being involved with online education.	☐	☐	☐	☐
12.	I do not know how to get involved in online education in the College of Education.	☐	☐	☐	☐

The following questions are *optional* but your responses would be greatly appreciated!

9. What is your gender?   ☐ female   ☐ male

10. Which best describes you? Please choose one from the list below.

☐ Full Professor   ☐ Full Time Temporary Professor

☐ Associate Professor   ☐ ¾ time Permanent Professor

☐ Assistant Professor   ☐ ¾ time Temporary Professor

11. Which best describes the length of employment at Rowan University?

☐ 0 to 5 years   ☐ 15 to 20 years

☐ 5 to 10 years   ☐ Greater than 20 years

☐ 10 to 15 years

12. Is there anything else you would like share?_____

_____

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Appendix C

Cycle I Focus Group Protocol

Good afternoon. My name is Steven Farney. I would like to thank you for taking the time to join me to discuss your experiences with online education within the College of Education. As we proceed with this discussion, I will serve as the moderator and I will record your comments electronically. I invite you to speak openly and freely. Please know that your comments will be confidential.

The purpose of this focus group is to collect honest feedback about what worked well for you during your online experience and what might be improved. Your comments will help to create a program that both informs faculty about what the College of Professional And Continuing Education (CPCE) is about but also will help guide faculty in the process of online education should they choose to participate. I am the assistant dean of the College of Education at Rowan University. Project participation will be voluntary for all faculty and faculty will have the option to withdrawal from the study after their participation is complete. Due to the administrative position I hold within the college, I am reinforcing to you that there will no consequences or repercussions if you choose not to be a subject in the study.

If you have any questions or problems concerning your participation in this study, you may contact Steven Farney at 856.256.4754 or at farney@rowan.edu or Horacio Sosa at 856.256.4129 or at sosa@rowan.edu.

Before we begin, are there any questions? OK, let's begin.

- What are your impressions of the College of Education's move into online program offerings?

- How do you think online education has changed the College of Education, if at all?

- Please describe your familiarity with and knowledge of college and university policies about online education. What are your thoughts regarding these policies?

- In what specific ways have university policies helped or hindered your adoption of online education?

- What kind of support, if any, could be provided for faculty to make the process of online development/implementation easier?

- What types of educational programs lend themselves to an online format?

- How would you compare Rowan online students to Rowan in-person students?

- If you had the opportunity to create an online program that addressed student needs, what would it look like?

- Please describe your idea of an ideal online program experience for professors.

- If you could change one thing about the current online process at Rowan, what would it be and why?

- Is there anything else you would like to share about online education in the College of Education?

Appendix D

Program Evaluation

I would like to invite you to participate in a short survey on the online education program you recently attended. This is an anonymous survey and all information will be kept strictly confidential. Your opinions will be very helpful as we work to improve the program for the future. By participating in the survey, you are giving permission for Rowan University to use your information for research purposes. Thank you for your help!

If you have any questions or problems concerning your participation in this study, you may contact Steven Farney at 856.256.4754 or at farney@rowan.edu or Horacio Sosa at 856.256.4129 or at sosa@rowan.edu.

Directions: Please read each item carefully. Then ✓ your response. **Response Choices:**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I learned about how the College of Education is participating in online education.	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Please provide some examples for question #1.				
3. I better understand my role in the online education process.	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Please explain your answer to #3.				
5. I learned about the resources available to me should I decide to participate in online education.	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Please provide some examples for question #5.				
7. I feel that having an environment in which to discuss online education was beneficial.	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. Please explain your answer to #7.				

9. I feel that this information/mentoring program should continue in the future.	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. Please explain your answer to #9.				
11. This information session/mentoring program has made me want to develop online courses.	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. Please explain your answer to #10.				
13. I would make the following recommendation(s) for future information/mentoring program.				

The following questions are *optional* but your responses would be greatly appreciated!

14. What is your gender?   ☐ female   ☐ male

15. Which best describes you? Please choose one from the list below.

☐ Full Professor   ☐ Full Time Temporary Professor

☐ Associate Professor   ☐ ¾ time Permanent Professor

☐ Assistant Professor   ☐ ¾ time Temporary Professor

16. Which best describes the length of employment at Rowan University?

☐ 0 to 5 years   ☐ 15 to 20 years

☐ 5 to 10 years   ☐ Greater than 20 years

☐ 10 to 15 years

17. Is there anything else you would like to share?: _____

_____

_____

_____

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_____

_____

_____

Appendix E

Cycle II Focus Group Protocol

Good afternoon. My name is Steven Farney. I would like to thank you for taking the

time to join me to discuss your experiences with online education within the College of

Education. As we proceed with this discussion, I will serve as the moderator and I will

record your comments electronically. I invite you to speak openly and freely. Please

know that your comments will be confidential.

The purpose of this focus group is to collect honest feedback about what worked well

for you during your online experience and what might be improved. Your comments will

help to create a program that both informs faculty about what the College of Graduate

And Continuing Education (CGCE) is about but also will help guide faculty in the

process of online education should they choose to participate. I am the assistant dean of

the College of Education at Rowan University. Project participation will be voluntary for

all faculty and faculty will have the option to withdrawal from the study after their

participation is complete. Due to the administrative position I hold within the college, I

am reinforcing to you that there will no consequences or repercussions if you choose not

to be a subject in the study.

If you have any questions or problems concerning your participation in this study,

you may contact Steven Farney at 856.256.4754 or at farney@rowan.edu or Horacio Sosa

at 856.256.4129 or at sosa@rowan.edu.

- From what you have heard or experienced, what should be included in an open

  forum program to provide the most benefit to faculty?

- What are your perceptions of online education?

- How do you view online education as part of higher education curriculum?

- What are some aspects of online education that interest you about becoming involved in online education? What are some concerns?

- What kind of support could be provided for faculty to make the process of online development/implementation easier?

- In an ideal world, what support would have if you participated in online education?

- Is there anything else you would like to share about online education in the College of Education?

Appendix F

Cycle III Focus Group Protocol

Good afternoon. My name is Steven Farney. I would like to thank you for taking the time to join me to discuss your experiences with online education within the College of Education. As we proceed with this discussion, I will serve as the moderator and I will record your comments electronically. I invite you to speak openly and freely. Please know that your comments will be confidential.

The purpose of this focus group is to collect honest feedback about what worked well for you during your online experience and what might be improved. Your comments will help to create a program that both informs faculty about what the College of Graduate And Continuing Education (CGCE) is about but also will help guide faculty in the process of online education should they choose to participate. I am the assistant dean of the College of Education at Rowan University. Project participation will be voluntary for all faculty and faculty will have the option to withdrawal from the study after their participation is complete. Due to the administrative position I hold within the college, I am reinforcing to you that there will no consequences or repercussions if you choose not to be a subject in the study.

If you have any questions or problems concerning your participation in this study, you may contact Steven Farney at 856.256.4754 or at farney@rowan.edu or Horacio Sosa at 856.256.4129 or at sosa@rowan.edu.

- What are your impressions of Rowan University's move into online program offerings?

- How do you think online education has changed the Rowan University, if at all? How has it changed your college?

- Please describe your familiarity with and knowledge of college and university policies about online education. What are your thoughts regarding these policies?

- In what specific ways have university policies helped or hindered your adoption of online education?

- What kind of support, if any, could be provided for faculty to make the process of online development/implementation easier?

- What types of educational programs lend themselves to an online format?

- How would you compare Rowan online students to Rowan in-person students?

- If you had the opportunity to create an online program that addressed student needs, what would it look like?

- Please describe your idea of an ideal online program experience for professors.

- If you could change one thing about the current online process at Rowan, what would it be and why?

- Is there anything else you would like to share about online education at Rowan University?

Appendix G

Open Forum Panel Questions

- Please state your first name, program(s) you have developed courses for, and when you developed your course(s).

- What prompted you to become involved in online education in the College of Education?

- What were your impressions of online education before becoming a course developer? After?

- How do you see online education fitting in as part of the curriculum in the College of Education?

- What were some of the rewards to developing course online? Some of the challenges?

- Do you use any of the technology learned from online development in your traditional courses? If so how?

- What advice would you provide to individuals looking to participate in online development at Rowan?

Appendix H

Cycle I Open Forum Agenda

<u>**Online Education Open Forum**</u>
<u>**April 16, 2010**</u>
<u>**Education Hall 3091, 4:00pm**</u>

Welcome

- Informed Consent Form

History

- Why CPCE?

- How did the relationship between COE and CPCE start/evolve?

Literature

- Handout

- What themes have emerged through peer reviewed academic articles

Policies/Procedures

- Handout

- What are some common policies that are in effect today?

Getting Involved

- How can a professor get involved in online education?

Technology Support – Mike Ciocco

- What technology support is provided by CPCE?

Faculty Panel

- Johnson, McBee, Campbell, Cammarota, Davis Bianco

- Share your story.

- What went right for you?

- What could be improved?

- Talk about pedagogy challenges/successes.

Q & A

Evaluation Survey

- Hand in Informed Consent Form

- Reminder

Appendix I

Cycle III Open Forum Agenda

<u>**Online Education Open Forum**</u>
<u>**October 26, 2010**</u>
<u>**Education Hall 1056, 2:30pm**</u>

Welcome

- Thank You and Overview of Session

- Informed Consent Form

Technology Support – CGCE

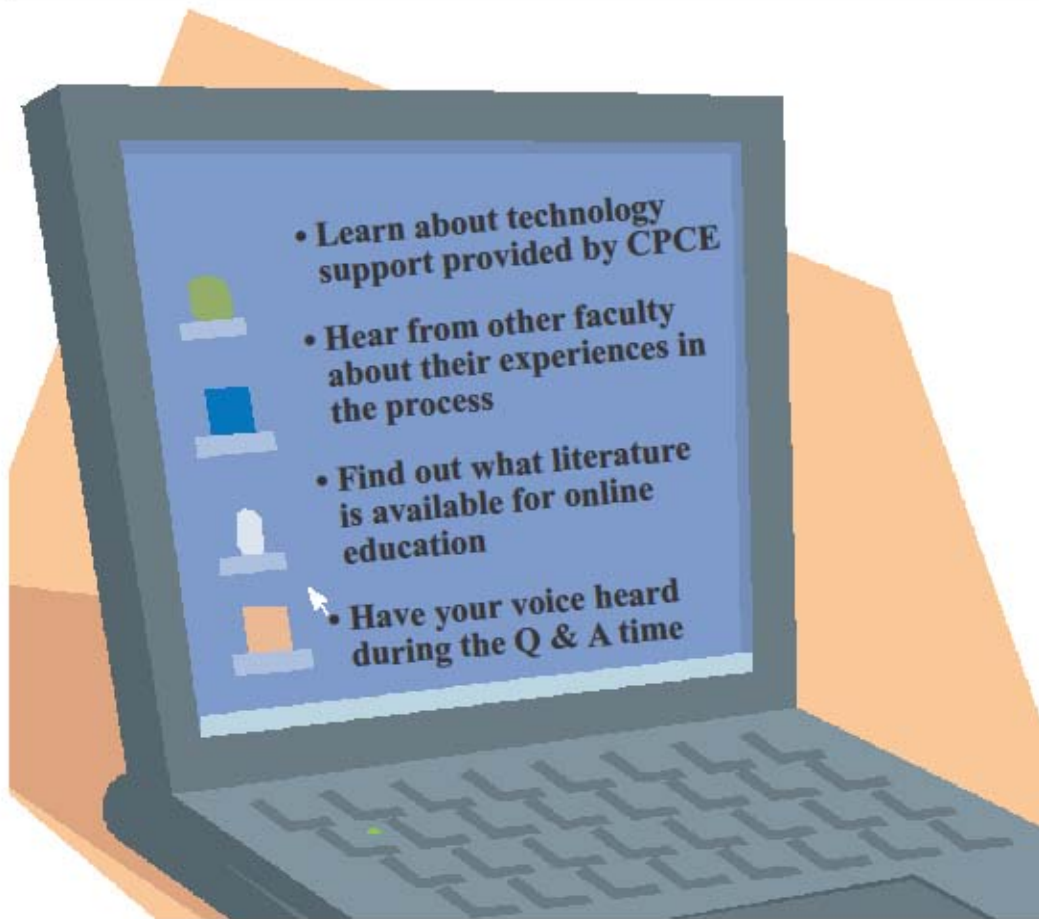**Faculty Panel**

Q & A

Electronic Evaluation Survey

(One Hour)
Open Forum

for COE faculty, staff and adjuncts to learn more about online education

Tues., Oct. 26 @ 2:30 pm, Room 1056
Wed., Nov. 3 @ 5 pm, Room 3112

- Learn about technology support provided by CGCE
- Hear from other faculty about their experiences in the process
- Find out what literature is available for online education
- Have your voice heard during the Q & A time