# PIONEERS, GUINEA PIGS, AND REBELS: PERSPECTIVES OF EARLY ADOPTERS IN ONLINE HONORS EDUCATION

By

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To my grandmother, Velma “Gretchen” Simpson Redd

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I have always known that I wanted to work in academia. When I took career assessments in elementary school, education always came up as a match. While other kids spent time outdoors playing, I was creating lesson plans from textbooks I found in my grandmother's attic and writing plays for my fourth grade class to perform. In high school, I listed college professor as my intended career on the PSAT score report. The road to completing my PhD has not always been easy, but I would not trade this experience for anything.

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Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School
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By

Melissa Leigh Johnson

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Chair: Kara Dawson
Major: Curriculum and Instruction

The purpose of this study was to describe the experiences of five faculty members from across the United States who had taught an honors course in a fully online environment. In describing a relatively new phenomenon in undergraduate honors education, these five innovators or early adopters of online honors education participated in a series of three individual interviews. Interviews focused on the participants' design, implementation, and reflection of their online teaching experiences.

Using van Manen's (1990) hermeneutic phenomenological analysis, findings were presented in two different manners. First they were presented as a series of in-depth teaching experiences, focusing on designing the course, teaching the course, and reflecting on the course. Commonalities from these in-depth descriptions across participants were included. Then findings were presented as the overarching themes present in their experiences with online honors education. Themes included serving as an early adopter, experimenting with online learning in honors, and moving online learning forward.

The results of this study have the potential to challenge current assumptions about the place of online learning within undergraduate honors education. A discussion of the

experiences as compared with relevant literature, as well as implications for the undergraduate honors community, and recommendations for future research and practice are included.

# CHAPTER 1
# INTRODUCTION

There has been an increased interest in revitalizing undergraduate education, specifically at research-focused institutions (Boyer, 1998; 2001). Boyer (1998) called for using more innovative methods of course delivery, moving away from the traditional lecture and toward inquiry-based learning. The National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC), the professional association for undergraduate honors programs and colleges across the United States, believes that undergraduate honors education is one arena where pedagogical innovation is taking place.

NCHC, the professional home to almost 650 honors programs and colleges (internal membership database), prides itself on spearheading innovative and experiential pedagogies within the field of honors; signature NCHC programs such as Honors Semesters, City as Text, and Partners in the Parks are prime examples. Honors Semesters were developed in 1976 to provide honors students across the country a semester-long opportunity for active, collaborative learning focused on multi-disciplinary, site-specific inquiry (Braid, 2000; Daniel, 2000).

City as Text (CAT) has been a feature of the Honors Semesters since 1981, but it also takes place as a mini-feature of annual NCHC conferences. Literally intended to use the city (or location in general) as the text for a learning experience, CAT allows students to “integrate their experiences of place, time, theory, practice, and self” (Braid, 2000, p. 14). Partners in the Parks (PITP) is a collaborative effort among NCHC, Southern Utah University and the National Park Service to create outdoor experiential learning opportunities in the national parks (Partners, 2010). Begun in 2008, PITP allows honors students across the country to study the educational, recreational, and

stewardship opportunities in the parks from honors faculty and National Park Service park rangers.

The honors community often notes that what makes honors “special” or unique is that honors courses serve as laboratories of curricular innovation and experiential learning (Braid, 2001; Braid, 2007; Bruce, 2008; Hutgett, 2003; Lacey, 2005; Schuman, 2001; Strikwerda, 2007; Werth, 2005; Wolfensberger, van Eijl & Pilot, 2004). Exemplary honors courses should include participatory learning, an emphasis on primary sources, interdisciplinary and experiential themes, and content that “thrive(s) at the cutting edge of curricular experimentation” (Schuman, 2006, p. 36). NCHC has devoted an entire monograph to providing examples of how experiential learning, including elements of the nationally-led programs such as City as Text, have been implemented into honors courses (Machonis, 2008).

The honors community is divided on how the use of technology fits into the innovative, experiential features of honors courses (Albert & Bruce, 2002; Allen, 2010; Braid, 2002; Carnicom, Harris, Draude, McDaniel, & Mathis, 2007; Clark & Crockett, 2002; Cobane, 2002; Doherty, 2010; Fuiks & Clark, 2002; Gresham, Bowles, Gibson, Robinson, Farris, & Felts, 2012; NCHC, 2012; Otero, 2008; Schuman, 2001; Schuman, 2008; Schlenker, 2002; Spurrier, 2002). Schuman (2008) does not mention technology in his handbook for developing honors programs and colleges. In the monograph *Teaching and Learning in Honors* (Fuiks & Clark, 2002), only one chapter is devoted to teaching with technology. In that chapter Clark and Crockett (2002) utilize web pages as a good resource to post course syllabi, schedules, and resources. They also describe the now-defunct National Satellite Seminar Series, which was an annual hour-long live

telecast for honors faculty across the country. The first of these satellite seminars took place in 1995 (Spurrier, 2002). The NCHC Technology and Honors committee was formed that same year, having grown out of the Task Force on Teleconferencing and Distance Learning Technology. As of 2012, that technology committee no longer exists (NCHC, 2012).

Perhaps there is a fear that technology will take away from the aims of liberal education, such as the cultivation of communication and analytical skills, responsibilities to the greater world, and an understanding of a global society (AAC&U, 2007) – the primary focus of honors education (Braid, 2001; Schuman, 2001). Online courses are sometimes seen as the antithesis of the small, intimate settings of traditional honors courses (Cobane, 2008).

Perhaps there is a lack of understanding of how technology might be implemented in the honors classroom. Otero (2008) notes that honors classrooms of the future utilizing technology might resemble *Star Trek* or *The Magic School Bus*. Her vision of the honors classroom of the future also includes wireless technology, sequenced instruction, contextual problem solving, and large-scale collaboration with colleagues around the world. While these advances are currently present in many college classrooms, it seems as though they have not made their way into the honors classroom.

Perhaps there is a lack of understanding of technology by the honors field as a whole. Aside from the short-lived NCHC technology committee and the satellite series, the national association's forays into technology have included hosting an email listserv for members since 1992, a web site since 1996, and Internet access at annual

conferences since 1998 (Spurrier, 2002). As of 2012, those technological offerings remain virtually unchanged, with few new additions.

A small body of literature has emerged, primarily descriptive, on the values of technology in the honors classroom. Albert and Bruce (2002) note that technology can add, not replace traditional classroom experiences. Carnicom, Harris, Draude, McDaniel and Mathis (2007) connect the concepts of pedagogical innovation as stated in Schuman's (2006) basic characteristics to the integration of technology into the classroom. Carnicom et al. (2007) agree with Albert and Bruce (2002) in noting the ability of technology to augment, not replace teaching.

Curious about the current usage of technology in honors courses, I embarked on a qualitative study during the summer of 2010 with five instructors at a large, public research university in the southeastern United States regarding their use of technology in their honors courses (Johnson, 2011). Their fields of study included economics (two instructors), physics, mathematics, and communication studies. All instructors had taught honors courses for several years and had taught in their respective fields for at least a decade.

The most common use of technology in the honors classroom was for communication or course administration. Four out of the five instructors had built a course website for the purpose of posting the syllabus and other course resources. All five instructors noted that they used email to communicate with students in their course. Two of the instructors used PowerPoint or the Internet during their lectures, while another commented that he had tried PowerPoint once and did not enjoy using it. One only used an overhead projector during his lectures. Two instructors introduced optional

software to help with homework assignments but did not require its use. One instructor required students to use editing software to complete peer reviews of papers.

I asked these instructors if there was a place for technology in the honors classroom. Three instructors resolutely stated that the nature of small classes in honors meant that technology was not necessary. In fact, one said that he did not think that in a small classroom, anything would replace interaction with an expert. Another commented that he could interact with each student individually in his honors course, so he did not see an immediate advantage of using technology. The third instructor agreed that the access to the instructor in a small class was so great that he did not see a need for technology. Of the other two instructors, one said she would use more technology in an non-honors course because those students needed access to more course resources, while the other simply said, "possibly."

Finally, I asked the instructors if their colleagues were discussing teaching with technology at conferences, or if teaching with technology was mentioned in the research literature for their fields. Four instructors noted that technology was being discussed in their fields. Two knew that there were journal articles dedicated to teaching with technology, although they were not following them. One observed that there were a lot of panels on technology at her national conference, although she had not attended them. The other instructor said there was quite a bit of discussion on teaching with technology in his field of mathematics – primarily regarding teaching online courses, and nearly all comments had been negative.

The last comment from the instructor intrigued me. Although he was referring to general math courses and not honors courses, I wondered how online honors courses

worked – how they were designed, how they were being utilized, how they might be different from traditional, face-to-face honors courses, and how they maintained the spirit of honors education.

While there was little data on the use of technology in the honors classroom, there was even less data on the nature of online honors courses. The former NCHC technology committee distributed a survey of member institutions to determine how technology was utilized in their honors courses (Schlenker, 2002). Out of 139 responding institutions, only 9 offered fully Internet-based courses. Seven institutions offered distance education via interactive television, and 7 offered distance education via a combination of satellite, email, compressed video and video conferencing. Because the technology committee is now defunct, an updated survey has not been released.

With very little data beyond that NCHC technology survey, I continued with my search and began to consider the possibilities of online courses within undergraduate honors education. Soon after I had collected data for my study on technology and the honors classroom, the following comments appeared on the unofficial NCHC email listserv responding to a query from an honors director about online honors courses:

> I am guessing that a distance learning honors course is almost a contradiction in terms. One of the great strengths of honors education is the one-on-one contact students have with teachers in a smaller seminar class where the interdisciplinary and interactive aspects are crucial. It would be difficult if not impossible to duplicate this in a distance education model. Another important aspect of honors education is the community of scholars that the honors students become a part of. Once again, this is next to impossible to duplicate in distance education. Since the ability to work in teams is becoming more important in all aspects of the work place, it may be that if honors education retains its current model, learning teamwork will become one of the crucial selling points for honors. Having distance education courses might run counter to working in teams and dilute the

> honors brand. I am sure there are high quality distance education classes, but it does not seem to me that the honors model would fit with distance learning (Allen, 2010).

Similar negative views toward online learning in honors have been noted in recent articles by Doherty (2010) and Gresham, Bowles, Gibson, Robinson, Farris, and Felts (2012). Doherty (2010) noted the bias towards face-to-face learning as prevalent in undergraduate honors education, as well as the view that online learning was less rigorous. Gresham et al. (2012) also observed negative comments about online learning both at the NCHC annual conference and on the unofficial listserv. In both articles, the authors believed there was a need to reexamine the potential benefits of online learning.

It was clear to me in this case that more information and education were needed about the nature of online learning, as well as how online courses might be adapted to fit the aims of honors education. I also determined that more examples were needed to showcase how online learning currently was being used in the honors setting. By interviewing some of the few instructors of online honors courses, those in the field could learn more about the phenomenon of online education, including how those courses might provide similar curricular innovations that serve as the hallmarks of undergraduate honors education.

## Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to describe the phenomenon of online honors courses from the perspective of the instructors teaching them. Through this qualitative study, I described how instructors perceived the design, implementation, and reflection process of teaching online honors courses.

## Research Question

This study was guided by the following research question:

How do instructors describe their experience teaching online honors courses?

## Significance of Study

Currently there is a dearth of empirical literature on most aspects of the undergraduate honors experience (Achterberg, 2005; Long, 2002; Rinn, 2005; Singell & Tang, 2012). From 1987-2006, there were only 49 dissertations published on honors education, with only 10 authors publishing follow-up articles or reviews on their topics (Holman & Banning, 2012).Particularly relevant to this study is the lack of information on the use of technology in honors courses, specifically related to online courses. None of the dissertations reviewed by Holman and Banning (2012) focused on the topic of this study.

This study has the potential to add to this work by describing how instructors design, implement, and reflect on their online honors courses. By providing these experiences, the honors community may begin to see how online courses could be one more outlet of the innovative classroom techniques that are the hallmark of honors. By describing how these participants were able to create online courses, future honors instructors and administrators may consider designing their own online courses – or at least opening a dialogue about the utility of online courses for honors students.

## Delimitations

This study was designed to describe the experiences of five honors instructors. As participants were recruited via the NCHC and other honors-related listservs, participation was limited to instructors who had access to these listservs or were notified of the study by someone who was a listserv member. Due to the qualitative nature of

this study, results of this study are only applicable to the context described in this study. While the findings may be of interest to other honors faculty and administrators, readers will need to determine those connections to the findings themselves. And finally the researcher's own experiences as an instructor and administrator for an honors program also impacted how she approached this study. The researcher's subjectivity is described further in Chapter 3.

## Definition of Terms

The following terms used throughout the study are defined below:

Faculty development: Activities designed for faculty members to improve student learning, as well as their own competencies in teaching and scholarship (Eble & McKeachie, 1985).

Honors college: An honors college includes all of the characteristics of an honors program, but exists as a separate academic unit – as other colleges and schools at an institution – headed by its own academic dean. Students in an honors college typically take a larger percentage of coursework within honors than in an honors program (Schuman, 2006).

Honors course: Common features of honors courses include small class sizes, interdisciplinary themes, highly qualified students, stimulating faculty, challenging course topics and assignments, independent study, and experiential learning (Schuman, 2006).

Honors program: An honors program is designed to meet the special needs of undergraduate students who have been identified by a set of criteria usually including GPA, SAT score, and / or written essay. Students in an honors program have the

opportunity to take specialized coursework and have access to specialized advising and facilities (Schuman, 2006).

Liberal education: The aims of liberal education include a holistic development of communication and analytical skills, responsibilities to the greater world, and an understanding of a global society. General education addresses many of these aims, although the major must address them as well (AAC&U, 2007).

Online course: Online courses are those courses in which at least 80 percent of the course content is delivered online (Allen & Seaman, 2010).

## Summary

This study is organized into six chapters. This first chapter has included an overview and significance of the phenomenon of teaching online honors courses from the instructor's perspective. The second chapter provides an overview of the literature serving as foundation for the study. The third chapter details the study's methodology, including the theoretical perspective, researcher's subjectivity, data collection and analysis methods, and the methods of rigor used. The fourth chapter supplies the results of the data analysis from an analytical perspective, or the in-depth descriptions of each participant's teaching experiences, as well as commonalities experienced by the participants. The fifth chapter supplies the results of data analysis from a thematic perspective, or themes related to the phenomenon of teaching honors courses online shared by all participants. The sixth and final chapter incorporates the discussion of the results, as well as implications for research and practice.

# CHAPTER 2
# LITERATURE REVIEW

The overarching framework for this study is Diffusion of Innovations (Rogers, 2003). The innovation in this case is developing and offering online honors courses. Online learning fits the description of an innovation as it has "gained acceptance and continues to grow within higher education" (Hixon, Buckenmeyer, Barczyk, Feldman & Zamojski, 2012, p. 102). Since online learning has not caught on in the mainstream honors community (see Doherty, 2010; Gresham, Bowles, Gibson, Robinson, Farris, and Felts (2012), those instructors who are developing and offering online courses could be considered innovators or early adopters according to Rogers (2003).

This chapter begins with an overview of the Diffusion of Innovations framework (Rogers, 2003). From there a broad overview of undergraduate honors education, serving as the social system within Rogers' (2003) framework, is described. This description includes the history, classifications, and curricular components of honors. Finally a description of the innovation, online learning, is provided with a focus on the characteristics of the instructors teaching those courses.

## The Framework: Diffusion of Innovations

Innovation diffusion research evolved around the mid-20$^{th}$ century, with individual disciplines such as agriculture and education finding similar results in their studies of relevant innovations (Rogers, 2003). Rogers first wrote about innovation diffusion research in 1962 with the fifth and latest edition published in 2003.

Rogers (2003) defined diffusion as the "process in which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system" (p. 5). There are four components of innovation diffusion: innovation,

communication channels, time, and social system. The innovation is any "idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new" (p. 12). The key word in this definition is perception; even if the idea is not new in terms of time since its creation, if an individual or organization perceives it as new, it is considered an innovation to that individual or organization. The communication channel is the medium through which information travels from one person to another. Time involves the rate of adoption, how long it takes from first learning of an innovation until the innovation ultimately is adopted or rejected. Finally, the social system is the environment in which the innovation travels. A variety of opinion leaders and change agents with the social system can exert great influence over the decision to adopt or reject an innovation.

The innovation-decision process is the process by which an individual considers advantages and disadvantages to adopting an innovation (Rogers, 2003). Attributes of innovations include relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability. Relative advantage is the degree to which the innovation is perceived as more advantageous than the current idea in place. The more advantageous an innovation is, the more likely it will be adopted. Compatibility is the degree to which the innovation is perceived as being in line with values of the members of the social system. An innovation closely aligned with the values of the group is more likely to be adopted.

Complexity is the degree to which the innovation is perceived as complicated. An innovation difficult to understand and use is less likely to be adopted. Trialability is the degree to which the innovation can be tested prior to adoption. The more the user can experiment with the innovation prior to adoption, the more likely they will adopt it. Finally, observability is the degree to which users can see the results or outcomes of the

innovation. The more users can see those results, the more likely they are to adopt the innovation.

Communication channels can impact the innovation-decision process based on the similarity (homophily) or differences (heterophily) between individuals in the social system. Individuals who share more similar characteristics are more likely to effectively communicate information about the innovation with each other. On the other hand, diffusion of the innovation throughout the system cannot occur if all of the individuals are identical and have no new information to share.

There are five steps in the innovation-decision process related to time: knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation (Rogers, 2003). Knowledge involves understanding the innovation and how it works. Persuasion is the development of a position or negative opinion related to the innovation. Decision is the point where the individual begins to make a choice about adoption or rejection of the innovation. Implementation is the point where the individual begins to use the innovation. Confirmation takes place when the individual validates their decision to adopt.

Also related to time is the concept of adopter categories (Rogers, 2003). Adopter categories are classifications of individuals in the system based on their levels of innovativeness, or degree to which they are relatively early in adopting an innovation. The five adopter categories include innovators, early adopters, early majority, later majority, and laggards. Innovators comprise 2.5% of the population and have high levels of interest in new ideas. They are comfortable with risks, setbacks, and uncertainty when it comes to interaction with an innovation. Innovators are seen as

gatekeepers of an innovation. While they may not earn a lot of respect by other members of the system, they are responsible for launching the innovation into the system.

Early adopters comprise 13.5% of the population and are more integrated into the social system than are innovators. They hold high amounts of opinion leadership among the group and carry the message of the innovation to the masses. Once they decide to adopt an innovation, the remainder of the group is more likely to adopt. The early majority, 34% of the population, are very deliberate in their decision-making and seldom serve as opinion leaders. Their innovation-decision process typically is longer than that of innovators or early adopters. Representing 1/3 of the population, they are a critical component in the process.

The late majority, another 34% of the population, are skeptical of innovation. They wait for the innovators, early adopters, and early majority to make their decisions before proceeding to adopt with caution. Their decision to adopt may come from peer pressure from more innovative groups. Finally the laggards comprise 16% of the population. Focusing on the past, laggards are not just skeptical, but are suspicious of change. Their innovation-decision process can be quite lengthy.

The social system impacts the innovation-decision process through its network of opinion leaders and change agents, as well as structural patterns (Rogers, 2003). As noted within the adopter categories, the innovator has low credibility within the majority of the social system. The opinion leaders, typically found within the early adopters, hold much more influence within the system. Change agents work closely with the opinion leaders to focus the innovation-decision process in their favor. The more hierarchical

the structural pattern is within the system, the more challenging it can be for innovations to diffuse through the system. More informal structures allow for interpersonal connections, thereby helping the opinion leaders spread their messages through the system. Finally, established behavior patterns within a system may become a barrier to change.

The following section describes the social system in which the innovation of online education is diffusing. The historical background provides a look at the established behavior patterns, structures, and opinion leaders within undergraduate honors education. The innovation of online education from the faculty members' perspective is further explained following the social system description. Of the four components of innovation diffusion, time and communication channels are not described in this chapter.

## The Social System: Undergraduate Honors Education

### History of Honors Education

One of the primary predecessors of honors education can be found in the British educational system, namely through Oxford University (Rinn, 2006). The Oxford tradition included a rich tutorial system, a pass / honors approach, and the implementation of the Rhodes Scholarship. Through the tutorial system, students were required to have tutors who served as educational advisors. Individual work and guidance, coupled with intellectual discussions in small groups, were hallmarks of that system (Rinn, 2006).

The pass / honors approach was developed in the early 1800's, whereby students were required to take a comprehensive final examination before graduation. Extraordinary examinations were given to students to separate themselves

academically. Finally the Rhodes Scholarship was developed to provide opportunities for students from the United States to study at Oxford. Created in 1899, the Rhodes Scholars were exposed to Oxford academic traditions, including the tutorial system and pass / honors approach. Those scholars then brought the Oxford traditions back to the United States, where many aspects were implemented within American higher education (Rinn, 2006).

Early attempts at an honors education similar to that found at Oxford were made in the United States, namely at Harvard University, the University of Michigan, Princeton University, and Columbia University (Rinn, 2006). Honors education as a field, however, developed in the early 20$^{th}$ century, starting at Swarthmore College by then-president Frank Aydelotte (Honors Program, 2011; Humphrey, 2008). Aydelotte modeled this new program in the 1920's after the tutorial system at Oxford University, with the intent to provide Swarthmore's "best students" with a richer educational experience. Aydelotte himself had been a Rhodes Scholar (Rinn, 2006). Key components of Swarthmore's honors program included close interaction between students and faculty, an emphasis on independent learning, and challenging coursework (Honors Program, 2011).

Aydelotte, through the National Research Council, published a report of the emerging field of honors, noting the types and characteristics of honors programs developing in the 1920's (1927). In this report Aydelotte noted the great need for high achieving students to have an opportunity to be pushed academically – something not necessarily found through their regular studies. His plan for American universities included a distinction between students "who are really interested in the intellectual life and those who are not" (p. 7), as well as the ability for those high achieving students to

take more ownership over their intellectual pursuits. Honors courses and programs, he believed, were the embodiment of those plans.

By the 1930's, more than 100 honors programs had developed in the United States (NCHC, 2011). The 1940's saw an emphasis on the "superior" student as institutions continued to focus on the educational enrichment of academically talented students (Humphrey, 2008). In the 1950's the Inter-University Committee on the Superior Student (ICSS) was formed as a national organization to distribute information about honors programs and activities. The ICSS met for the first time as a national conference in 1957 (Rinn, 2006). Many of the ideas that evolved from that meeting were based on features from both Oxford University and Swarthmore. That committee evolved into the National Collegiate Honors Council, a professional association of honors educators, in 1966 (NCHC, 2011; Schuman, 2006). By the 1980's, honors educators began to position themselves and their programs as a more central component to university life (Humphrey, 2008).

**Classifications of Honors Education**

As the presence of honors education has expanded over time, many of the characteristics of present-day honors programs and colleges have remained true to Aydelotte's founding principles. At the same time, honors education has expanded to incorporate a variety of models based on institutional needs and characteristics. Schuman (2006) noted several classifications of honors education currently found in higher education:

- Departmental honors - earn honors in major department, exclusive of college-wide requirements.
- General honors - university-wide features, open to students from all majors.

- Multi-departmental honors programs, often found at larger universities.
- Latin honors - graduating with honors - cum laude, magna cum laude, summa cum laude.
- Degree from honors college – in this case, the honors program has developed into a college with degree-granting abilities.

**Distinctions between Honors Programs and Colleges**

Aside from classifications within programs, two major distinctions have arisen in honors education – those between programs and colleges. Honors colleges have emerged as separate degree-granting entities, complete with academic deans and separate faculty. The National Collegiate Honors Council has developed separate characteristics for programs and colleges, noting the distinct differences and opportunities afforded by each (NCHC, 2010a; NCHC, 2010b). An honors program typically has specified criteria for admissions, institutional support, direct reporting structure to the chief academic officer, a variety of course offerings, faculty who support the honors mission, and student opportunities for advising, leadership, research, and other independent work.

An honors college typically includes most of the characteristics of honors programs. In addition, an honors college serves as an academic unit equivalent to other colleges on campus, complete with a dean and operational budget equivalent to similar academic units. The honors college also controls or coordinates much of its own curriculum, policies, and faculty. See Appendix A and B for the full list of characteristics for both programs and colleges.

In an NCHC study of 35 honors colleges across the country, Sederberg (2008) found that 80% of the honors colleges arose from pre-existing honors programs. All 35 colleges noted their motivation for establishing an honors college was to recruit stronger

students. They also noted a move to improve overall academic quality, improve the quality of honors educational opportunities, and to raise the profile of honors within the institution. For 91% of the honors colleges, the head of the college held the rank of full professor. The range of honors courses included: general education (97%), thesis or creative project credits (94%), independent study credits (80%), special topics for upper and lower division students (74%), and experimental courses (63%).

**Honors Education at 2-Year and Community Colleges**

Honors education is not limited to 4-year institutions. While the numbers have fluctuated, programs at 2-year colleges (often community colleges) started to increase steadily in the 1990's. As of 2006, 123 of the 773 institutional members of NCHC were 2-year colleges (James, 2006). In fact, NCHC has developed a monograph specifically for directors of programs at 2-year colleges (James, 2006). Honors programs at 2-year colleges typically expose students to material and pedagogies normally found in the junior or senior year of a four-year institution (Schuman 2006).

The Honors College at Miami Dade College is one such example of a program at a 2-year college that has been documented in the literature (Holloway, 2008). Through the honors curriculum, students can attain their Associate of Arts degree. Students are required to complete a minimum of 20 contact hours in service learning correlated with an instructional subject. Course options are similar to those offered in an honors program at a 4-year institution and include courses offered only through the Honors College, honors-extended courses, honors-option project contract. Faculty development opportunities are available, which include certification workshops for faculty who are interested in teaching for honors. As of 2008 nearly 280 faculty members have been

certified. There is also a biannual faculty retreat to review and plan curricular, programmatic, and creative initiatives.

**Honors Courses**

Honors faculty responded to the general education movement of the 1950's and 1960's by developing structures that individualized content and pedagogy for academically talented students in their courses. Students and faculty alike found the standard curriculum repetitive and confining. Instead, honors programs and courses involve students more directly in designing and implementing their educational program (Daniel, 2000).

Just as classifications of honors education have emerged to fit a variety of institutional models and needs, classifications of honors courses also have been developed. Schuman (2006) noted several types of honors courses typically found in honors education:

- Honors sections of regular courses: These courses may be similar to regular sections in that they cover similar material, but they may involve different assignments and pedagogy. Typically the honors sections are smaller than the regular sections.
- Enriched options w/in regular courses: In these courses, honors students typically attend the same lecture as other students, but they may contract with the professor to complete different, additional, or more in-depth assignments. They may also have a separate discussion group that meets. May also be referred to as a contract course.
- Special honors courses: These courses typically are interdisciplinary and taught as seminars. They may be team-taught by multiple faculty members.
- Honors projects: These courses represent credit for final projects or theses, or other independent / research work.

Despite the course classification, Schuman (2006) also noted that there were features common to almost all honors courses. Small class sizes, interdisciplinary themes, highly

qualified students, stimulating faculty, challenging course topics and assignments, independent study, and experiential learning all are considered hallmarks of honors courses.

## Honors Instructors

The criteria to teach honors courses are determined by each individual honors program or college, and as such are limited in the honors literature. Most instructors teach honors courses part-time, are reassigned from their academic departments, or teach honors as a course overload (Long, 1995). On rare occasions, an honors college might have its own faculty on full-time appointment (Schuman, 2006). Adjunct instructors or local experts might be appropriate to teach honors courses but only in a limited capacity, as faculty might “raise questions about the scholarly legitimacy of honors instruction” (Schuman, 2011, p. 25).

Teaching for an honors program or college can be seen as a form of faculty development, where instructors have the ability to “transgress boundaries, the risk and excitement of community, the synergy of sharing power” (West, 2002, p. 4). Honors administrators should seek instructors who understand the unique needs of honors students and the unique qualities of honors pedagogy (Schuman, 2011; Wolfensberger, 2008; Zubizarreta, 2008). Honors instructors should “exude enthusiasm for their discipline and inspire a curiosity on the part of the students” (James, 2006, p. 23). They also should be authentic instructors who dare to be different in their teaching approach and invest in their relationships with students (Wolfensberger, 2008).

## Experiential Education in Honors

The Honors approach to active learning includes: student serving as primary agent, expanded concept of “text,” integrated and collaborative approach to learning,

autonomy and community together (Daniel 2000). Honors Semesters serve as a living laboratory to help students in forging connections with their community (Braid & Long 2000). The location of the Honors semester serves as this expanded notion of text (Daniel 2000). Honors semesters first were offered in Washington, D.C. in 1976, although planning began in 1973. Honors semesters have taken place several times in domestic locations such as New York City and Washington, D.C., but also in international locations such as Puerto Rico, Mexico, Morocco, Czechoslovakia, Spain, and South Korea (Raia & Saltzman, 2000).

City as Text was designed as a pedagogical practice for honors semesters but has evolved for uses in other contexts, including side trips at annual NCHC conferences (Braid & Long 2000). More than 300 campus locations apply City as Text as a component to honors courses and other experiences. The primary component of City as Text is to help students examine their surrounding area, immersing themselves into local life. City as Text first was tested as part of Honors semesters in 1978 and became a regular feature of that program in 1981 (Braid 2000). The National Collegiate Honors Council provides multiple opportunities for honors faculty to learn City as Text pedagogy, including through monographs (e.g. Braid & Long, 2000), as well as through faculty institutes. The two institutes designed for Summer 2011 include an Arts, Musics, and Literatures session in New Mexico and an exploration of the Kentucky cave country (NCHC, 2011).

Partners in the Parks is the third experiential outlet advertised by the National Collegiate Honors Council. Focused on outdoor experiential learning, the week-long Partners programs are offered at select national parks throughout the country over the

summer. Coordinated by local honors faculty, with support nationally from Southern Utah University and the National Park Service, Partners programs offer honors students and faculty alike the opportunity to learn more about the educational, recreational, and stewardship aspects of the parks (Partners, 2010). The National Collegiate Honors Council recently published a monograph (Digby, 2010) as a guide for developing future Partners programs. More than twenty Partners programs have been instituted since 2008, including mini-Partners trips held in conjunction with the NCHC annual conference (Digby, 2010).

The rich tradition of openness towards experiential education and pedagogical innovation in undergraduate honors education lends itself to potential openness towards online learning. As demonstrated in Chapter 1, the honors community as a whole is not yet open to accepting online learning as a pedagogical innovation in honors courses. More information is needed on the nature of online learning, particularly from the faculty member's perspective as they will be the ones designing and delivering the content in honors courses. The following section includes an overview of faculty instruction of online courses, including the benefits derived from teaching online, concerns about online learning, and faculty development needs.

## The Innovation: Online Learning from the Faculty Perspective

### About Online Learning

Online learning falls under the broader category of distance education. There are a variety of definitions of distance and online learning, According to Schlosser and Simonson (2003), distance education is defined as "institution-based, formal education where the learning group is separated and where interaction telecommunications systems are used to connect learners, resources, and instructors" (p. 1). Moore and

Kearsley (2012) define it as “teaching and planned learning in which teaching normally occurs in a different place from learning, requiring communication through technologies as well as special institutional organization” (p. 2). Wedemeyer (1981) called distance education “independent study,” noting that the focus was the independence of the student who now had greater responsibility in an individualized learning environment.

Online learning is distance education using the Internet as the technology (Moore & Kearsley, 2012). Sener (2010) described online learning as the “use of online technologies in formal higher education for teaching and learning” (p. 4). Online learning is considered part of the fifth generation of distance education, with predecessors including correspondence, radio and television, open universities, and teleconferencing (Moore & Kearsley, 2012). One of the major benefits of online learning is the ability for students to access the course at any time, from any location (Ally, 2008) which may explain why more and more students are demanding access to it (Caplan & Graham, 2008; Instructional Technology Council, 2012).

There is no standard definition of what constitutes an online course (Caplan & Graham, 2008). For the purpose of this study, online courses are defined as those with at least 80 percent of the content delivered online (Allen & Seaman, 2010; Allen & Seaman, 2011). Enrollment in online courses has continued to increase annually, outpacing enrollment in traditional, face-to-face environments. During fall 2010, more than 6.1 million students took at least one online course. This number has increased by 560,000 students since the previous year’s survey. Finally, more than thirty percent of students have taken at least one online course at their higher education institution (Allen

& Seaman, 2011). Another study has found that 46% of students who have graduated in the past decade have taken an online course (Taylor, Parker, Lenhart, & Patten, 2011).

Online offerings increasingly are becoming part of institutional strategy across types of institutions (e.g. public, private, for-profit), with online growth coming more from existing, not new, courses and programs (Allen & Seaman, 2011). On the other hand, McCarthy and Samors (2009) found that while two-thirds of the institutional leaders they surveyed discussed the strategic importance of online programs, less than one half of the leaders actually included online programs in their institution's strategic plan. Sener (2010) predicts that the majority of students in higher education will take at least one online course by 2013-2014, with full scale adoption of online learning within higher education coming in 5-10 years.

**Who is Teaching Online and Why**

Seaman (2009) found that faculty teaching online represented a wide range of backgrounds and were not restricted to tenure status, full-time employment status, or length of time in career. One-third of faculty members surveyed previously had taught a course online, with one-fourth of faculty currently doing so. Overall, females were more likely to teach online than males.

Faculty provided a variety of reasons for deciding to teach online. The ability to outreach to students was one reason faculty were motivated to teach online. More specifically, meeting student needs for more flexible learning options (Seaman, 2009), reaching a more diverse audience (Hiltz, Shea, & Kim 2007), and the satisfaction of serving students who previously did not have access to traditional course options (Hiltz, Shea, & Kim, 2007; Moore & Kearsley, 2012) were cited as reasons for teaching online. Among those faculty who identified themselves as being hesitant to use technology or

had limited experience using technology, many were still willing to try online teaching if students would benefit from that option (Birch & Burnett, 2009).

Faculty also cited pedagogical reasons as motivation to teach online. Teaching online courses gave faculty an opportunity to reconceptualize their courses (Birch & Burnett, 2009) and well as to better manage their courses (Hiltz, Shea, & Kim, 2007). They also appreciated the flexibility of teaching online – anytime, anywhere (Hiltz, Shea, & Kim, 2007). Faculty were able to create a more meaningful and applicable learning environment (Birch & Burnett, 2009; Simonson, Smaldino, Albright, & Zvacek, 2012) while challenging their creativity (Hiltz, Shea, & Kim, 2007). The online environment made it easy to update their course information so it remained current (Simonson et al., 2012). Increased student and faculty engagement, as well as more personal interaction with students were seen as by-products of teaching online (Birch & Burnett, 2009; Coppola, Hiltz, & Rotter, 2001; Hiltz, Shea, & Kim, 2007).

Finally, personal satisfaction among faculty was listed as a motivator for teaching online. According to Seaman (2009), faculty with fewer than five years of experience teaching were more likely than faculty with more experience to cite personal and professional growth as a reason to teach online. Faculty also appreciated additional income or other rewards from teaching online (Hiltz, Shea, & Kim, 2007; Keengwe, Kidd, & Kyei-Blankson, 2009). Others simply felt a sense of satisfaction from teaching an online course, with the recognition that teaching online would become easier with more experience (Conceicao, 2006).

**Barriers to Teaching Online**

While faculty are motivated to teach online because of student needs, as well as an interest in developing their own teaching skills, there are quite a few causes of

resistance to teach online. Muilenburg and Berge (2001) developed a list of 10 constructs representing barriers to distance education, as reported by more than 2500 survey participants. Those constructs included administrative structure; organizational change; technical expertise, support, and infrastructure; social interaction and program quality; faculty compensation and time; threat of technology; legal issues; evaluation and effectiveness; access; and student-support services.

In much of the literature time, effort, and lack of institutional support are just three examples of barriers for faculty wanting to teach online. Berge and Muilenburg (2000) found that among instructors, the most frequently cited barrier to teaching online was the increased time commitment. McCarthy and Samors (2009) found that 64 percent of the faculty they surveyed believed that teaching online took more effort to teach than teaching face-to-face courses. In addition, 85 percent of faculty believed it took more effort to design an online course. Such time to develop and teach courses could detract from time needed to dedicate to research and funding proposals. Likewise, Seaman (2009) found that the perception of online classes taking more time and effort to teach was the most important barrier found to teaching online.

When making concessions for the difference in student enrollment, Bender, Wood, and Vredevoogd (2004) found that the workload for teaching an online course versus a face-to-face course was almost six times greater. This workload included answering twice as many emails per student, as well as assuming responsibility for all grading and communication. Hislop and Ellis (2004) reported similar findings, noting that there was an increase in student interaction.

Other time demands for teaching online included course conceptualization and design, planning, familiarizing selves with technology needed, training, course maintenance, and monitoring and assessing performance (Birch & Burnett, 2009; Conceicao, 2006; Coppola, Hiltz, & Rotter, 2001; Instructional Technology Council, 2012). Reading course postings and email was a particularly time-consuming task for faculty (Conceicao, 2006; Haber & Mills, 2008).

Compounded by the amount of time and effort needed to plan and teach an online course is the lack of institutional support perceived by faculty (Birch & Burnett, 2009; Hiltz, Shea, & Kim, 2007; McCarthy & Samors, 2009; Seaman, 2009). Lack of training, course release time, additional technology, and other incentives are included in that lack of support (Instructional Technology Council, 2012; McCarthy & Samors, 2009). The lack of faculty compensation was one of the top barriers to participating in distance education, along with time needed to teach (Berge and Muilenburg, 2011). Birch and Burnett (2009) also found that the lack of available mentors and access to exemplars created barriers to teaching online. Faculty also felt that they had little impact on decisions made about their online courses due to a lack of communication between faculty and administration (Haber & Mills, 2008).

The quality of online learning is another concern of faculty members. Seaman (2009) found that more than 80% of the faculty with no online teaching experience felt that learning outcomes for online courses were inferior to those in face-to-face courses. Others questioned whether deep understanding of material could occur in an online course (American Federation of Teachers, 2000). Coupled with the learning outcome issue is the concern about how online courses would be evaluated (Haber & Mills, 2008;

Hiltz, Shea, & Kim, 2007). Academic dishonesty and plagiarism were also issues to consider (Haber & Mills, 2008).

The views on technology itself had a mixed impact on barriers to teaching online (Moore & Kearsley, 2012). Birch and Burnett (2009) found that those faculty with negative attitudes towards technology and change were less likely to engage with online learning. Even faculty who perceived that technology use was easy were not always likely to accept its use in this environment (Gibson, Harris, & Colaric, 2008). On the other hand, Berge and Muilenburg (2011) and Haber and Mills (2008) found that technology threat was not a major concern to faculty. Those faculty who had adequate training and ongoing access to help experienced few barriers to teaching online related to technical issues (Haber & Mills, 2008).

**Faculty Development**

In evaluating online learning, the Sloan Consortium (2011) published a quality scorecard which adapted benchmarks identified by the Institute for Higher Education Policy (2000). Indicators related to faculty included technical support for course development and teaching, instructor preparation to teach online, legal and ethical training regarding course materials, ongoing professional development availability, clear standards for faculty engagement, and workshops on selecting and using various technologies and tools.

As part of the scorecard, Sloan (2011) made several recommendations for faculty based on each of the previous indicators. Technical support should be easily accessible and available for faculty to assist with their course development and teaching. Determining the location and organizational structure of that support is essential so as not to create additional barriers to access. Training should not be limited to course

preparation; ongoing support is needed throughout the process of designing, teaching, and evaluating the course. Training and support could include preparation of course materials, understanding the course management software, and shifting content and the teaching of that content from a face-to-face to virtual environment.

Hagenson and Castle (2003) found that faculty learned about technology usage from a variety of sources, including workshops, presentations, their graduate students, support staff, colleagues, and their own hands-on contact. Information in training sessions must be presented clearly, in a way that the user could understand. Guided practice and examples of how technology could be used were important for technology adoption (Keengwe, Kidd, & Kyei-Blankson, 2009).

Sloan (2011) also noted that specific training on fair use guidelines and copyright law were important for any faculty member, but particularly in an online environment as faculty gathered content from a variety of resources. Plagiarism is another ethical area faculty should consider. Faculty need to determine how they will educate their students about plagiarism, as well as how they will handle incidents. The importance of professional development in general should be stressed to faculty, with a focus on the continuous improvement of teaching and learning. Standards for faculty engagement should be developed that are tied to student learning outcomes for the course. Data then should be collected and analyzed, with feedback provided to the faculty member. Finally, face-to-face or online workshops should be provided to demonstrate the various technologies available for faculty to utilize as part of their courses. Such workshops should apply directly to the faculty members' work, and incentives could be provided to encourage more participation.

## Summary

The literature detailed in this chapter has provided a framework for understanding the background behind honors education and faculty experiences with online learning. Using Diffusion of Innovations (Rogers, 2003) as the guide, the purpose of this study was to describe the phenomenon of online honors courses from the perspective of the instructors teaching them. As such, undergraduate honors education serves as the social system and online learning is the innovation. In the next chapter the theoretical framework, data collection and data analysis methods used to conduct this study are described.

# CHAPTER 3
# METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to describe the phenomenon of online honors courses from the perspective of the instructors teaching them. The research question was:

How do instructors describe their experience teaching online honors courses?

This chapter provides a description of the methodology of the study. This chapter begins with an overview of the foundations for conducting phenomenological qualitative inquiry, including a description of hermeneutical phenomenology, the type of phenomenology employed in this study. Next an overview of the participant recruitment and sampling methods, data collection procedures, and analysis techniques are presented, followed by a statement of the researcher's subjectivity. Finally, a discussion of the methods of rigor and limitations associated with the study are provided.

## Foundations for Conducting Phenomenological Qualitative Inquiry

The methods used in this study were guided by a phenomenological theoretical perspective. The word phenomenology evolved from the Greek words "phainomenon" (appearance) and "logos" (reason, word) (Stewart & Mickunas, 1974). As such the aim of such a study is to "…reveal more fully the essences and meanings of human experience" (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenology falls under a constructionist epistemology, which according to Crotty (2003), indicates that meaning is constructed and not created. Meaning is not objective or subjective; rather, we interpret the information already present in the world through interactions we have with that information.

According to Patton (2002), there is not one single approach or perspective to phenomenology. Phenomenological traditions include, but are not limited to, transcendental, existential, and hermeneutic. Although Hegel was one of the first to make use of the actual word “phenomenology” (Stewart & Mickunas, 1974), Husserl is seen as the founder of phenomenology (Crotty, 1998), specifically the transcendental tradition. Husserl believed that phenomenology included a return to the things themselves, through the search for essence. The phenomenon, or experience, could include anything of which one is conscious (Steward & Mickunas, 1974).

There are several key components to Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology. Epoche allows the researcher to reflect on her personal biases and assumptions, gain clarity about her preconceptions, and set them all aside throughout the analysis process (Patton, 2002). Through phenomenological reduction, the researcher brackets out her presuppositions to focus solely on the data in its purist form. Traditional meanings of data are set aside – instead the researcher allows the meaning of the data to emerge on its own terms (Patton, 2002). This concept of bracketing was derived from Husserl’s experiences as a mathematician and is treated in much the same way as a mathematician might use brackets in an equation (Stewart & Mickunas, 1974). The preconceptions and presuppositions inside the brackets are not eliminated; rather they are set aside while the rest of the data is investigated.

Heidegger was a student of Husserl’s and became one of his critics through the emergence of his own work. Heidegger has been associated with both the existential (Stewart & Mickunas, 1974) and hermeneutic phenomenological traditions (Crotty, 1998). Through his work with existential phenomenology, Heidegger believed that a

researcher could not investigate a phenomenon through bracketing. Instead, he focused on the concept of “being-in-the-world” – of which Dasein, or “being-there” was a primary feature (Stewart & Mickunas, 1974). Dasein incorporated how human reality was situated in the world. Human existence meant existence in the world, and living an authentic life meant being able to choose freely their way of being-in-the-world. Whereas a transcendentalist described their world from the view of a detached observer, an existentialist could not separate themselves from their world (Stewart & Mickunas, 1974).

Three of the main components of existential phenomenology are: (a) importance of the body, (b) freedom and choice, and (c) intersubjectivity. Through these components the researcher believes that consciousness is embodied consciousness (importance of the body), one is responsible for their choices and actions which they are free to make (freedom and choice), and part of being-in-the-world is a social context (intersubjectivity) (Stewart & Mickunas, 1974).

Dasein also plays a role in Heidegger’s hermeneutic phenomenology (Crotty, 1998), seen here as the phenomenology of human being. Hermeneutics incorporates a mixture of interpretation and description, as human existence follows a circular movement from pre-understanding through an enlightened understanding. To understand Dasein, understanding its historical context is necessary.

Laverty (2003) provides a description of the difference between the phenomenological and hermeneutic phenomenological traditions:

> Phenomenological research is descriptive and focuses on the structure of experience, the organizing principles that give form and meaning to the life world. . . . Hermeneutic research is interpretive and concentrated on

historical meanings of experience their developmental and cumulative effects on individual and social levels. (p. 15).

van Manen (1990) provides the following considerations for conducting a hermeneutic phenomenological study (p. 30-31):

- Select a phenomenon which seriously interests you and commits you to the world;
- Investigate the experience as we live it rather than how we conceptualize it;
- Reflect on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon;
- Describe the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting;
- Maintain a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon; and
- Balance the research context by considering parts and whole.

This research study follows the hermeneutic phenomenological framework through the development of the research purpose and questions centered on the description of online teaching experience in undergraduate honors education. The data collection methods included a series of interactive interviews where the researcher allowed the participant openly to share their experience of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Historical meaning behind the phenomenon was highlighted throughout the interviews. A focus on the writing, reflecting, thinking, and rewriting, re-reflecting, and re-thinking (van Manen, 1990), followed in the hermeneutical traditions.

## Research Design

In order to gather a richer description of the essence of the experiences teaching online honors courses, extensive interviews with participants were conducted. Interviews served as the primary method of data collection, focusing on the design, implementation, and evaluation of online honors courses.

## Population and Setting

Following approval from the Institutional Review Board, participants initially were recruited via the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) email listserv. The recruitment email included a statement of the purpose of the study and the data

collection methods that would be used in the study. A copy of the recruitment email is included in Appendix D. Criterion sampling, a type of purposeful sampling, (Patton, 2002) was utilized to find honors faculty who were teaching honors courses that they had designed online. Online was defined as having at least 80% of the course content delivered online (Allen & Seaman, 2010). The minimum criteria for participants was experience teaching an online honors course for at least one semester. The participants must have designed their online course.

Only one potential participant responded via the initial recruitment email to NCHC, but follow up emails were not answered. Nine days later, the recruitment email was sent again to the NCHC listserv. One person responded that they were in the process of designing an online honors course and as such did not qualify for the study at this time. The recruitment email then was sent to the National Academic Advising Association's (NACADA) Commission on Advising High Achieving Students email listserv. Again, one person responded who qualified for the study, but follow up emails were not answered. Finally, I requested and was granted access to the membership contact list for the Florida Collegiate Honors Council, the state-level branch of NCHC. Four instructors responded who qualified for the study. One additional honors instructor from my own personal contacts who qualified for the study agreed to participate. This instructor also was from the state of Florida.

The common factor among all the participants was experience teaching an online honors course that they had designed, with preference given to those who had taught their course online for several semesters. Because part of the interviews focused on the reflection of their online courses, the opportunity to evaluate, reflect, and then

implement changes as needed into future iterations of their online courses was an important factor to consider. Diversity in other areas such as race / ethnicity, gender, institutional type, and structure of honors education was attempted, although it was difficult to achieve considering the small number of participants.

Sample size in qualitative research according to Patton (2002) is ambiguous and depends greatly on how many participants are needed to provide “expected reasonable coverage of the phenomenon” for the purpose of this study (p. 246). Lincoln and Guba (1985) also note that sample size is adequate when the information gathered from participants becomes redundant. Due to the uniqueness of this study topic, as well as the difficulty identifying participants who met the study criteria, it was determined that five participants would be adequate. An overview of participant demographics is included in Table 3-1.

The following section includes a brief description of each participant:

Harvey currently serves as a professor and administrator at a primarily associate’s-level institution in a rural area. He has served at this institution for almost two decades and teaches interdisciplinary courses in the humanities. He has taught for the Honors Program since the late 1990’s. Harvey taught one online honors course in the humanities during a recent summer term, although he has taught non-honors courses online for more than a decade. His institution is a member of the National Collegiate Honors Council.

Patrick is a doctoral student in education at a research university with very high research activity. His background is in secondary education and nonprofit work. He has taught a blended course in educational technology open to all students for the past

three years. He has taught for the Honors Program for two years, including his online course focusing on developing 21st century skills using a real-time strategy game as the learning environment, and a one credit face-to-face literature course. His institution is not a member of the National Collegiate Honors Council, although it has been in previous years.

Alma is a Professor Emerita at a research university with high research activity. Her background is in economics and women's studies, and her current online honors course focuses on that topic. She has taught for the Honors College for more than a decade, and recently retired several years ago. Prior to teaching a course in economics and women's studies, she taught a face-to-face research methods course for the Honors College. Her institution is a member of the National Collegiate Honors Council.

Mark is a faculty member for the virtual campus of a baccalaureate / associate's college. His background is in the humanities, although he has a doctorate in educational technology. After teaching secondary-level English for fifteen years, he transitioned to his current institution where he currently teaches humanities and philosophy courses primarily online. He has designed and taught online courses for several institutions. Because he works with a virtual campus for his institution, his exposure to the Honors College has been limited to those students who take his online courses through an honors contract system. He currently is teaching a course in non-western humanities which includes several honors students on contract. His institution is a member of the National Collegiate Honors Council.

Vicky is a Professor Emerita at an associate's level institution in an urban area. She has taught at this institution for her entire career in higher education and has

extensive experience serving as instructor and former administrator for their Honors Program. She teaches interdisciplinary humanities courses, as well as faculty development, and has participated in college governance and assessment areas. She started teaching non-honors courses online before teaching her current honors humanities course online. Her institution is a member of the National Collegiate Honors Council.

These participants represented a range of experiences teaching honors students in an online environment. Some participants have had previous experiences teaching non-honors courses online, while others began teaching online for their current honors course. At least two participants have had previous experiences as administrators for their honors programs, while the other three have served only as instructors. These five participants represented a range of institutional types, as well as a mixture of honors programs and honors colleges. Their disciplines include humanities and social sciences, although all have noted the interdisciplinary of their work.

## Data Collection

Each faculty member participated in three individual, semi-structured interviews. Interviews were the primary method of data collection for this study because they provide an understanding of the "lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (Seidman, 2006, p. 9) which matched the purpose of the study. An interview guide was developed and approved by the Institutional Review Board.

The interview questions were emailed to the participants in advance of the interview, so the participants were aware of what was being asked of them. By doing so, I hoped to reduce feelings of apprehension on the part of the participant (Spradley,

1979). Spradley (1979) notes that the “most important thing is to get informants talking” (p. 80).By providing questions in advance, participants had the opportunity to compose some of their thoughts so they would feel comfortable talking as soon as the interview started.

All of the questions on the interview guide were developed as singular questions, as opposed to multiple questions which might confuse the participant about what is really being asked (Patton, 2002). Furthermore, the questions were semi-structured, so participants could develop their own responses in their own words (Patton, 2002). Probes and follow up questions were asked throughout the interviews to clarify, explore, elaborate, contrast, and provide examples (Patton, 2002). The interview guides are included as Appendix E.

The series of three individual interviews is recommended for phenomenological studies by Seidman (2006). Rather than reconstruct an experience from one singular interview, this series of interviews allows the participant more time to reflect on their experience and continue building on their responses with each successive interview. According to Seidman (2006), the first interview establishes the context of the experience. In the second interview, the participant places their experience within the context developed in the first interview. During the third interview, the participant then reflects on their experience.

In the context of this study, each of the three interviews focused on a particular aspect of teaching an online honors course. During the first interview, the participants established the context of their online teaching experience, including an overview of the design and development of the course. During the second interview, the participants

described the implementation of their online honors course. And finally during the third interview, the participants reflected on their online teaching experience, as well as provided suggestions and implications for more widespread use of online learning in undergraduate honors education based on their experiences.

Because the participants were recruited from honors programs or colleges across the country, the interviews took place via phone for cost and time efficiency (Shuy, 2003). All interviews were recorded using a digital recorder. Prior to the first interview, each participant was e-mailed the consent form (see Appendix C). The interview did not take place until the consent form had been signed and returned to the researcher via email, fax, or mail. The first interview ranged from 20:02 to 54:11 minutes with an average length of 34 minutes. The second interview ranged from 19:58 to 1:01:42 minutes with an average length of 38 minutes. The third and final interview ranged from 20:02 to 1:03:00 minutes with an average length of 42 minutes.

## Data Analysis

The interview data was analyzed according to van Manen's (1990) hermeneutical phenomenology approach, in concert with Creswell's (2003) process for analyzing qualitative data. According to the hermeneutic phenomenological tradition (van Manen, 1990), there are five methods to analyze text: (a) thematically, (b) analytically, (c) exemplificatively, (d) exegetically, and (e) existentially. For the purpose of this study, I analyzed the data according to the first two methods, thematically and analytically.

The results of the analytical approach can be found in chapter 4. This approach is appropriate

> if the research involves in-depth conversational interviews with certain persons, then these interviews may be reworked into reconstructed life stories, or the conversations may be analyzed for relevant anecdotes, or

> one may use incidents described in the interviews for constructing fictionalized antinomous accounts that bring out contrasting ways of seeing or acting in concrete situations, and so forth. (van Manen, 1990, p. 170)

This approach took the form of in-depth descriptions of each of the participant's teaching experiences, constructed from data across their three interviews.

The results of the thematic approach can be found in chapter 5. van Manen (1990) described the thematic approach as a way to "elaborate on an essential aspect of the phenomenon under study" (p. 168). Themes describe the systematic investigation of the phenomenon and are presented with anecdotal stories reflecting those themes. As van Manen (1990) noted, themes should be viewed as fundamental to the meaning of the phenomenon. He asked, "Does the phenomenon without this theme lose its fundamental meaning?" (p. 107). Through this approach, themes across all participants' interviews emerged that spoke to the broader experience of teaching honors courses online.

van Manen's (1990) final consideration for conducting a hermeneutic phenomenological study was to consider both the parts and the whole. By providing two analysis methods, analytical and thematic, great consideration was given to the parts and the whole of the online teaching experience. The in-depth descriptions provided by the analytical approach allowed me to zoom in on individual parts of the phenomenon, specifically to write and reflect on those descriptions directly related to each participant's experiences teaching an online honors course. The themes generated by the thematic analysis approach allowed me to zoom out to look at the whole phenomenon of teaching online. As such I was able to write and reflect on the bigger picture of factors impacting the participants' teaching experiences as a whole.

Both approaches were followed using Creswell's (2003) qualitative analysis structure. Creswell's approach includes:

- Organizing and preparing the data.
- Reading through the data to get a sense of the participants' experiences.
- Coding and organizing the data into meaningful units.
- Formulating data into themes.
- Transforming themes into a descriptive narrative.
- Interpreting and making meaning of data.

For the first step, each interview was transcribed verbatim. Following transcription, I read through the transcriptions while listening to the audio recordings to get a better sense of the data. Then I began the process of dividing the data into segments of meaningful units, or codes (Tesch, 1990). For the third step, I created codes from the participant interviews. These codes served as the basis for the following analysis steps.

Following the development of codes, I began to form clusters that were labeled with a theme. Cover terms to describe the theme initially were developed to represent the clusters. From there, I began the process of "data reduction" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 10) and eliminated some of the cover terms and combined others. Appendix F provides examples of codes used to generate the in-depth teaching descriptions found in Chapter 4. I used theoretical comparisons when necessary by using personal experiences similar to those described in the data to think about it in terms of its properties (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). I looked both within and across clusters to discover themes and relationships (Hatch, 2002), provided those themes captured the phenomenological experience. The themes emerged into overarching categories.

After developing the overarching categories, I began to construct a descriptive narrative (van Manen, 1990), utilizing the themes, notes, and other research material. Writing, coupled with reflection, and then further writing and reflection, a hermeneutical

process, helped capture the online teaching experience in honors education according to the five participants. Finally, I engaged in Creswell's (2003) last analysis step through my interpretation and discussion of the findings, available in chapter six.

## Subjectivity

In qualitative research the researcher plays an active role in the research process. Therefore it is important for the researcher to divulge her own assumptions and beliefs in order to provide the reader with the framework that guides the researcher (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). Considerations include the researcher's values, beliefs, experiences with the study topic or participants, prior knowledge, and the ontological and epistemological assumptions related to the topic.

When I first began my position with the Honors Program in 2005, I quickly identified myself as the early adopter for teaching with technology among my honors colleagues. I coordinate an honors freshman experience course taught by several faculty members (including myself) affiliated with the Honors Program. With the first iteration of the course in 2005, I began utilizing blogs to serve as community discussion forums. In 2006, I used Facebook to share photos from class events and encouraged my teaching assistants to create groups for each class. I began using course management systems in 2008 to manage assignment submissions. In 2009 I started utilizing wikis, word clouds, YouTube, and Doodle polls in my courses. My advanced students coordinated a collaborative blog on student success that has included video interviews that they have filmed and edited each week (see Johnson, Plattner, & Hundley, 2011). In 2011 I began teaching my professional development course in a truly blended environment, with students working through course material online via a series of structured guides. We then used in-class time for activities and discussion.

With each of these iterations, my colleagues either have waited for me to pilot a certain tool and then implemented it a semester later, or they have opted not to use the tool at all. Blogs were the easiest tools for my colleagues to implement, and many continue to use blogs as community discussion forums. All of them have incorporated the course management system, but I typically work with them to set up parts of their site every semester. Facebook coordination is left to the teaching assistants. Most of the newer tools I have incorporated since 2009 have not been adopted by the other instructors yet. I have a couple of theories about why this is the case. Every instructor has been teaching this course for several years now, and many have their syllabus set the way they want and make very few revisions from semester to semester. My other theory is that my colleagues are simply late adopters with technology use in general, much less in the classroom.

Outside of the classroom, I am looked to as the “technology guru” of my honors office. I coordinate the daily e-newsletter sent to 2000+ honors students. I also manage our social media presence on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and other sites. Often I have to remind my colleagues that my experience is in educational technology and not IT, as I am asked to help fix a jammed copier, set up Outlook calendars for new employees, or troubleshoot computer issues.

Through the National Collegiate Honors Council, of which I am a non-institutional professional member, I have had the opportunity to publish and present on the use of technology in the honors community. I published an essay on the implementation of technology in an honors freshman experience course in the Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council (Johnson, 2009). I co-authored an article on the development

of the student success blog with my advanced students in the Honors in Practice journal (Johnson, Plattner, & Hundley, 2011). I also served on a Technology and Honors extended discussion panel as well as a technology consultant at the association's 2010 national conference. I served on the Honors Pedagogy and Technology panel, as well as presented on technology and online learning through the Honors Teaching and Learning strand at the 2011 national conference.

Because of my experiences as a current honors program administrator and instructor who utilizes technology in multiple facets of my position, I do approach this study with the belief that online learning can and should be included in the conversation about teaching and learning in undergraduate honors education. Having not taught a fully online honors course myself, I honestly do not know that I stand in favor of or opposed to online learning in honors actually taking place. Instead I am most interested in starting a dialogue about online learning in honors, not taking a stance in either direction at the start. Despite my views and experiences, I will take great care throughout the research process to remain open to the experiences of my participants.

## Methods of Rigor

Lincoln and Guba (1985) described several methods to demonstrate the rigor of a study, including credibility, transferability, and confirmability. Credibility can be established through member checking, triangulation and peer debriefing. Member checking in particular was used with this study. All participants had the opportunity to review the transcripts of their interviews to verify their accuracy. Transcripts from all three interviews were emailed to the participants following the completion of the interview process to confirm their agreement with the content. Participants were given two weeks to respond with any changes. Those who did not respond were assumed to

be in agreement. Four of the participants responded to the member checking process, with only one making minor changes to her transcripts.

Transferability can be demonstrated through the use of thick description. Thick description entails crafting a detailed account of the experiences as developed through the interview process. The purpose is to provide the reader with enough description of the experiences so that she may be able to place them in her own context as necessary.

Finally, confirmability is established through an audit trail and reflexivity. The audit trail is a clear and detailed description of all of the research steps taken throughout the research process. This detailed methodology chapter provides some of this description. Other parts of the audit trail, such as analysis products, may be found in the appendix. Reflexivity, or the description of how the researcher's perspective shapes her research, was utilized. The researcher's own experiences regarding this study were more fully described in the Subjectivity section.

## Limitations

There are several limitations as part of this study, including those related to setting, data collection, and data analysis / subjectivity.

### Participants and Setting

This study is designed to describe the experiences of five honors instructors. As participants were recruited via honors-related listservs, participation was limited to instructors who had access to the listserv or were notified of the study by someone who is a listserv member. Not every honors program or college is a member of NCHC, NACADA, or FCHC, so some potential participants were missed during the recruitment process. All participants were from the state of Florida, so the perspectives of

instructors working in other states were not included. All of the participants taught at a public two or four year institutions, so the experiences of instructors teaching at a private institution were missed. In addition, all of the participants taught in the humanities and social sciences disciplines, so the experiences of faculty teaching in areas such as math, science, or composition were not included.

It was extraordinarily difficult to find participants for this study, as evidenced by the recruitment process detailed earlier in this chapter. As online learning is still in the developing stages within undergraduate honors education, there are few potential participants who meet the study's criteria. Researchers who are interested in developing a similar study should note the challenges in finding participants.

There is much variation in honors programs and colleges across the United States (England, 2010; Singell & Tang, 2012). Despite NCHC's efforts to develop characteristics of highly developed honors programs and colleges (2010a; 2010b), members recognize that those characteristics represent the ideal, not necessarily the reality of honors education across the country. As such, each participant's experience teaching as part of an honors program or college may depend highly on the context of that individual's program or college. Applicability to other honors programs or colleges may be limited. While the findings may be of interest to other honors faculty and administrators, readers will need to determine those connections to the findings themselves.

**Data Collection**

Because the participants were recruited from across the United States, conducting a series of three in-person interviews for each participant was not feasible. Instead interviews were conducted via phone. Challenges for phone interviews include not

being able to see non-verbal expressions and potentially being distracted during the interview (Shuy, 2003).

### Data Analysis

And finally the researcher's own experiences as an academic advisor, instructor, and administrator for an honors program also impact how she approaches this study. Despite the researcher's use of member checking during the analysis stage, there is still the possibility of the researcher's experiences impacting the analysis of the participants' experiences, as the data analysis was conducted by the researcher alone. The subjectivity statement provides an upfront acknowledgement of the researcher's experiences.

## Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to highlight the background and traditions of phenomenology, as well as to document the data collection and analysis methods utilized within the hermeneutic phenomenological tradition. The next chapter will provide part one of the results, the individual descriptions of the participants following van Manen's (1990) analytical analysis. Chapter 5 will provide the second half of the results, following van Manen's (1990) thematic analysis. The discussion, implications, and conclusions will follow in Chapter 6.

Table 3-1. Participant demographics

| Name | Age | Gender | Race/Ethnicity | Title | Degree / Field |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Alma | ---[a] | Female | Hispanic | Professor Emeritus | Ph.D. Economics |
| Harvey | 43 | Male | Asian | Professor, Honors Coordinator | M.A. History |
| Mark | 56 | Male | Caucasian | Professor | Ed.D. Education |
| Patrick | 31 | Male | Asian | Doctoral Student | M.Ed. Education |
| Vicky | 64 | Female | Caucasian | Professor Emeritus | M.A. Humanities |

[a] Not reported by participant.

# CHAPTER 4
# INDIVIDUAL DESCRIPTIONS OF TEACHING

The purpose of this study was to describe the phenomenon of online honors courses from the perspective of the instructors teaching them. This chapter presents the first half of the results of this study. As noted in Chapter 3, a hermeneutic phenomenological approach was used to analyze the data. Of the five data analysis approaches described by van Manen (1990), two were utilized for this study – analytic and thematic. This chapter includes the findings that resulted from the analytic approach, as represented in in-depth descriptions of each participant's online teaching experiences in their honors program or college.

In using the analytic approach, I analyzed all three interviews from each participant to pull out anecdotes related to the design, teaching, and reflection of their online honors course. Those anecdotes were then reconstructed into a narrative of the participant's overall teaching experience. While the narratives have been written by me, they were based upon the series of three interviews conducted with each participant. Direct quotations from the participants are included in quotation marks.

The findings in this chapter are separated into two sections. Each individual participant's description is included first. The descriptions tell the story of the participants' experiences designing, teaching, and reflecting upon their online honors course. Following the individual descriptions is a composite picture of commonalities across the five participants' teaching experiences. Broader themes related to online learning and undergraduate honors education are highlighted in Chapter 5.

### Harvey's Teaching Experience

Harvey has been at his institution for close to two decades, currently serving as an honors administrator and humanities professor following a stint in an art gallery. He started teaching online courses for non-honors students more than a decade ago. Two years ago, as his institution pushed for more online courses, he volunteered to pilot an online course during a summer term. His course focused on the humanities and met an institutional general education requirement for honors students. The intended audience included honors students who needed to meet their general education humanities requirement but could not be on campus that summer for some reason. Harvey had taught the course previously online and face-to-face for non-honors students. Five honors students enrolled in the course.

**Designing the course.** Throughout the design and teaching of the course, Harvey noted that there were resources available through the academic technology office to help with software or training. Because he felt comfortable using the course management system, he opted not to utilize the technology office's services.

As Harvey began designing his online honors course, he struggled with the concept of equivalency – "how do we know that the online experience is equivalent to the in-person experience?" In particular, he worried about how to design class discussions in the online environment.

> It's very organic to do it in person, but it's not so much organic to do it in an online class, which relies on discussion boards. And even if you do chat, you'll lose some of the nuances in interpersonal communication with chat. And then combine that with the fact that some of our students – they just aren't technologically savvy.

As he continued to ponder this notion of equivalency in an online environment, he determined, "I don't know that I can or that I actually do."

Because he was serving as the guinea pig for online honors courses, he considered a lot of his design to be an experiment. His honors program had offered courses in a web-assisted format where students could access course materials through a course management system. They also were experimenting with blended courses, but his course was the sole online honors course being offered. There were no models at his institution for building an online honors course.

Harvey was concerned about how he would incorporate the qualities of a typical face-to-face honors course into his online course. Some of those issues sprung from observations he made while teaching the non-honors online course. “That’s the sense of community, participation. How do you do participation? How do you create that sense of community?” To address the community and participation concerns, he planned to incorporate both synchronous and asynchronous community channels in the course.

He also thought about his stance towards academic integrity. He knew from teaching face-to-face honors courses that honor code violations were less prevalent among honors students. Still, it was a concern.

> How do we be flexible enough with our students so somebody who is, say, abroad or somebody who, say, works during the day and can only take classes during the night – how can we be assured that they have access to our courses and still maintain some integrity in terms of the grading process? I think I’ve maintained flexibility, but in order to maintain flexibility, I’ve given up with that assurance about cheating.

In relation to the design of his course, the ability to provide 24/7 access to his course trumped the concerns about academic integrity.

Harvey also considered the flow and structure of information to be delivered in the course. Participation and community continued to plague him. He questioned how he might organize the material, as well as how he might integrate a research project into

the course. And with the research project came the added question of incorporating peer review. “Will I have to do peer review? Because peer review is something we do in our honors courses. And if I do peer review, how do I do peer review?”

Finally, Harvey developed learning outcomes to shape the tone of his course. He modeled the learning outcomes on the ones he had developed for the non-honors version, which included a “deeper understanding of the American experience.” Through that understanding, students would recognize that there were multiple American experiences “contingent upon number of different factors.” With learning outcomes in hand and concerns still spinning through his thoughts, Harvey set off to teach his experimental honors course.

**Teaching the course.** Harvey began teaching with an informal orientation to the course. He started with a discussion forum where students could post “any and all questions they may have about the course.” He also assigned students a quiz on the course syllabus, as he considered the syllabus a “must to read.” He did not provide an orientation to the actual course management system or tools used within the system. He did, however, provide an extended amount of time for students to complete their first assignment “to make sure that they could figure it out.”

The course was divided into two sections: content and research. Harvey created twelve modules of course content to cover in the first six weeks of the summer term. Those twelve modules included fifteen course topics, with each of the five students taking responsibility for covering five topics. Harvey acknowledged that there would be overlap with the topics, but that was okay. Students were responsible for

> developing teaching modules where they had to think about where they had to go research background; analyze the work based upon that background,

> based upon context; and then develop a series of questions that could be used in a seminar or even a standard online class with these topics.

Embedded in this assignment was the potential to take a final product from students to use at a later time as enhancement in a non-honors course.

The second half of the course was reserved for independent work on this research project. During this time students would have periodic deadlines that served as check-in points with Harvey so he could make sure they were "on the right track in terms of not only topic, but also the format that I wanted, presentation I wanted."

The content of the course during the first half of the term remained consistent from his previous iterations of the American humanities course. Even the order of topic covered was similar to the order he used in the other versions. To deliver the content, he utilized several functions of the course management system including quizzes, discussion forums, and chat. He also posted course content online, including videos, PDF's, and links to further resources.

Discussions were the centerpiece of the course. The discussion posts corresponded with the weekly topics. "I would pose a question, and students would respond, and we would try – just like we would in person, create essentially a discussion." Following his initial prompt, it was up to the students to respond to each other's messages. Harvey's hope was that conversation would flow as organically as possible within the limitations of the online environment. By stressing the importance of discussion in his course, Harvey wanted to alleviate his prior concerns about participation in the online environment. Other course assignments included weekly quizzes, the aforementioned research project, a final synthetic essay, and a cumulative final exam.

Harvey maintained a consistent teaching routine throughout the term.

> My role was to post the material online – that was easy, that's mechanical. The difficult part of teaching the course came with moderating the discussion boards, reading through all of the posts that came through, and then trying to stimulate the conversation based upon those posts that came through.

During the second half of the term, he was mentoring students independently through their research projects.

> Students would contact me. I would respond back to them. They would have material ready for me to look at. I would respond back to that material, and it would be the kind of give and take that you would have in a one-on-one mentoring situation.

Harvey had to schedule specific times to be online so he could "focus on online monitoring." He noted that feedback took considerably longer to deliver in an online environment than it did in a face-to-face environment where he could just verbalize his thoughts. Online, he had to focus on "typing it all out and making sure that it actually makes sense in written form." At the same time, he did not have to spend as much time on lectures or explaining concepts to students as he would have taken in a face-to-face course.

Students communicated with him primarily through the discussion forums or via email. He estimated that he received contact from students through these mechanisms at least every other day. Communication from students was limited to information about the course or course assignments. "There were no personal communications. Nobody wanted advice about a personal problem. Nobody wanted advice about which classes to take. It was all within the context of the course." If he found that a student was not responding to the discussion forums as often as recommended, he would take time to personally email the student to encourage them to participate.

As the course wrapped up, Harvey noted that the only feedback he received from students was through email or the discussion forums. Because of the length of time that had passed since he taught the course, Harvey could not recall the student response on the end of course evaluations. He did, however, vividly recall his own response to the end of the course.

**Reflecting on the course.** “It was worth trying.” Unfortunately, this experimental course did not live up to Harvey’s expectations. As the course was wrapping up, Harvey was ready for the course to end. He was mostly disappointed. While he felt the initial learning outcomes had been met as evidenced by completion of the work, he felt the level of participation in the course was frustrating. One of the assignments had fallen flat. And the research project was complete, but was not “superior level honors work.”

The size of the class was a challenge. With only five students in the course, there was no room for anyone to hide. “If you don’t do the readings, it’s noticeable. If you didn’t do the work, it’s noticeable. If you don’t participate in the discussion, it’s painfully noticeable.” Participation was one of the major concerns, along with community, that Harvey had had when he first agreed to teach an online honors course. With the discussion forums playing a focal point in the course, Harvey had hoped that students would engage meaningfully with the content, with each other, and with him as the instructor – a primary goal of any honors course at his institution.

Unfortunately, the discussions were unsatisfying. Students often repeated ideas or regurgitated information in their postings. Harvey was never quite sure if the students were actually reading each other’s posts or comprehending the entirety of the discussion.

> There's no way for me to really tell if a student is reading, somebody else is posting, if they're digesting somebody else's postings, if they're understanding it. They were responding to the top level question rather than digging down through the thread.

He tried to hold chats as a way to bring students together, but synchronous communication did not work either. Even with only five students, their commitments outside of class were so conflicting that the chat never happened the way Harvey had envisioned. He could not get everyone together at the same time to have a discussion. To him it seemed that the online class was "secondary in importance to all the other responsibilities the student has." While he attempted to make the class a higher priority for the students, "I don't think I succeeded."

Without making the class a higher priority, there was little chance of forming a learning community among the students. Harvey tried to get the students to be as active as they would be in a face-to-face course, helping them to respond to each other and develop that community feeling in the course. Despite the small size of the class and the focus on discussions, he did not get the sense that the students got to know each other at all. This challenge caused Harvey to reflect on what he missed most about teaching honors students face to face.

> I really miss the face to face. The face to face is the most important part of an honors course because that creates that sense of community, that sense of learning community. And it can't be replicated in an online course. At least, I haven't found a way to replicate it in an online course.

These challenges greatly impacted Harvey's outlook on teaching another honors course online. He noted that he struggled staying motivated even during the term he was teaching. "When the students aren't motivated, it's hard for you to stay motivated throughout that entire semester." Although he tried to remain enthusiastic in his response to students, deep down he was ready to move on.

> The difference is that I don't get the personal contact with the student. Teaching online is impersonal – it feels impersonal. I can't see in the student's face whether they get it or not. I can't see in the student's face whether they are struggling or not. There's not the immediacy of response and conversation.

What Harvey could see was that the online environment was not right for him or his students – at least through the honors program. Ultimately he determined that he would not teach an online honors course again because "the experience was so unsatisfying."

## Patrick's Teaching Experience

Patrick has been at his institution for several years as a doctoral student in education. He previously taught in secondary education as well as in the nonprofit sector. He started teaching a blended course in educational technology three years ago. Two years ago he had the opportunity to develop an online course for the honors program. This interdisciplinary course focuses on developing critical thinking, problem solving, and collaboration skills using a real-time strategy game as the medium. He has taught the course every fall and spring semester since he designed it. The course does not fulfill any general education requirements, and is open to any major provided the student has an interest in gaming. The course runs on an abbreviated 8-week term, with an average class size of 24. There are 21 students registered for the current term.

**Designing the course.** Patrick was first and foremost concerned with potential skepticism about using a real-time strategy game as the learning environment. He worried that students might think the course was just about playing a game, without any academic depth to it. He worried that students would be "coming in thinking that they're just going to sign up for the course, play some [name of game], and get a grade base on how well they play or how many people they beat. Or that they're going to get tested on specific strategies from a rote perspective."

To help alleviate this concern, Patrick planned two in-person meetings prior to the start of the course to cover realistic expectations with potential students. “I was afraid that if I don’t have at least an in-person meeting once or twice, then expectations will not be realistic on the part of students . . . and the course would ultimately not be successful.” As part of those meetings, he planned to overview the syllabus and show part of the course. He also planned to email the students who were registering for the course to make sure they clearly understood the course expectations.

He was also concerned that students’ expectations about playing a game might impact the student make-up of his course, particularly as it related to gender. “For this genre of game, it’s predominantly male. And even though female representation within gaming is becoming more balanced, it depends on the genre of game. Real-time strategy games, it’s overwhelmingly male.” He worried that the competitive nature of the game would turn away female students. This concern led him to redesign the course description to focus more on collaboration than on competition.

Patrick wondered how he might link the real-time strategy game to real world skills. Would the students “get it” when he tried to make that link? He opted to design the course around the development of professional skills that could be found within the game, but also were prevalent in real world situations students might encounter.

> The course encourages students to connect these skills with situations in the real world, and then connect those situations in the real world and the game world to their own professional lives. So we have a lot of – we’re trying to get students to think and link a lot of different skills into a lot of different contexts. And that’s what the course is centered around.

Many of Patrick’s design decisions were based on how he might help students make those connections from the game to their own lives.

Finally, Patrick was concerned about students' previous experiences taking online courses, noting "a lot of these students might not have had adequate or good experiences with online learning." To combat this issue, he planned to structure the course through a series of self-contained modules. Each assignment would have a "clear rationale statement . . . a background statement . . . and objectives of why they're doing this or that."

As he kept these concerns central in his mind, Patrick described the course design as a constant iterative process. He felt as though he was constantly making changes based on feedback he received while designing. He relied on instructional design materials, as well as scholarship on online teaching and collaboration, to build the theoretical basis for the course.

Through this process he was able to develop learning outcomes for the class. His primary goal was to "help students prepare for a fast-paced and professional world, and we want to give them these skills." Those skills included participating and communicating in groups, producing quality group products, and focusing on individual problem solving and critical thinking skills "that they will need as they transition through their academic and professional careers." Course assignments and activities would be mapped to developing those skills.

**Teaching the course.** Before Patrick began teaching, he held two formal meetings with students. As previously mentioned, he was concerned that students were registering for the course for the wrong reasons. The meetings were his opportunity to set the record straight about class expectations.

> There's always a danger of a misconception of a game-based course. One of the misconceptions is hey, I can play the game, and based on my

> performance I'll get an A, B, or C. Or I'll play a game and get a grade, which is one of the biggest misconceptions of courses like this: I play and I get a grade. So it [the course meeting] helps give students an accurate idea of what they're getting into before drop/add ends.

He scheduled this first meeting with prospective students soon after they registered for the course to introduce course expectations.

During the first week of the semester in which he was teaching the course, he would schedule another mandatory meeting with the students still enrolled in the course. Both meetings had been included in the course description that students allegedly reviewed prior to registering for the course, so neither meeting was a surprise. Patrick held this second meeting in a computer lab so he could demonstrate several aspects of the course, including the course management system and sample projects. Students were instructed to log into the course so they could explore the interface and ask questions with him in the room. "I try to give them as fair and comprehensive look as possible within the 45 minutes to an hour meeting that we do. So after these two meetings . . . they have a decent idea of what's going on."

Once the course actually started, students could access an introduction to the course within the course management system. The syllabus, course objectives, and course goals were included in the introduction, along with a reminder that the purpose of the course was to develop real-world applications to the game as opposed to becoming a better game player. Finally, Patrick included an introductory discussion forum post where students could introduce themselves, as well as respond to "a couple of their peers and the instructor." Patrick personally responded to each introduction and welcomed students to the course.

The course was divided into self-contained modules where "it's all there, packaged for them." The content focused "a lot on management and micromanagement and economic principles" in addition to professional skills such as "critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, things like that." Assignments and activities helped students develop the "professional skills that students will definitely need as they transition to grad school, med school, law school or wherever they end up in the professional world."

Students did not use a textbook for the course, but they did read academic articles including scholarship on gaming in education and popular consumer articles related to various business topics. Most of the articles used for the course were posted online, as "you can insert and delete different resources as you see fit. It gives you more flexibility in instruction."

A variety of technological tools in addition to the course management system and the real-time strategy game were incorporated into course assignments and activities. As he noted,

> I made the conscious decision not to [use many of the features within the course management system] because I have these students for only eight weeks, and I didn't want to spend too much time orienting them to how to use the course management system when a lot of them will never use it ever again. So what I focus on with given them tools that they could take with them afterwards such as Prezi, such as Skype, such as Voice Over IP, Google Docs, things like that. I thought that these tools were more useful for them than the course management system-specific tools.

He also used mind maps, infographic software, and a polling tool to help determine availability to work on group projects.

Many of the assignments related to students analyzing their game play. Group work was emphasized in assignments, as "learners do not play by themselves all the time." Students were randomly assigned to their groups, with Patrick noting that one

would not necessarily be able to choose their groups in the real world. He did allow time during the course orientation for those groups to meet in person and exchange contact information before moving into the fully online course environment. Patrick included resources on "conflict management, small group skills, small group dynamics" to help students strengthen their group work.

The activities focused on synthesis and analysis because the students were "getting enough experience with memorization and regurgitation in their [other] courses." Reflection was a major component of most assignments. "In this game, as in any new skills, you have to reflect and analyze your game play, or you're never going to get better. So that reflective process is key to becoming a better player, and when you think about it, becoming a better professional." Students also completed a leadership and personality inventory to tie into their development of professional skills.

On a daily basis Patrick would log into the course management system and first check for new discussion forum posts. He tried to individually respond to every forum post. He would check messages from students, and depending on how much time he had, he would look at submitted assignments and perhaps grade a few. For assignments that were just submitted for a completion grade, he opted not to give feedback on those. For larger projects, including group projects, he would "give a paragraph or two of constructive feedback." His goal was to return assignments within a week. If he was running behind with grading, he would inform the class via a forum post within the course management system.

Evaluation of student assignments was "tricky." Because Patrick was focusing on higher order thinking skills such as analysis and synthesis, he could not give multiple

choice or true / false tests. “It’s really, really notoriously difficult to test quantitatively critical thinking, problem solving, and collaboration.” He relied heavily on rubrics to evaluate the reflections students were completing as part of each assignment. “I’m looking for quality of work, quality of thought. Are they thinking their arguments through? Are they being rational about it? Have they really synthesized or analyzed their experiences?” He also incorporated self-evaluation into group projects so students could rate their contributions to the group.

Students communicated with Patrick primarily through email. Patrick noted that when he first started teaching the course, he would receive a lot of emails from students who had questions about assignments. More recently, he only received a few emails per week from students. Students mostly needed “clarification for an assignment or notification of a late submission and an explanation why.” Patrick also had a class policy that students had to troubleshoot technical problems on their own first.

> I encourage students to look up their own problems first. They Google the problem. They go to the frequently asked questions part of the tech tool, and they try to figure out their own issue before they come to me. That’s really cut down on a lot of technical questions. In a lot of ways, the burden of learning is on the student, and I’m available if they need help.

Students also could consult with the distance education office if they had any problems with the course management system.

**Reflecting on the course.** Patrick has determined that he would prefer to teach his course in person, as all of the complexities and nuances related to teaching with a real-time strategy game did not necessarily come out in the online environment. “I’d much rather it be in person in a full 16 weeks and either fully in person or at least blended where there’s a lab time. You miss out on a lot of stuff if you’re just individually typing a response.”

Interaction was a major challenge, whether it was within groups or among the entire class. Within groups, Patrick instituted a conflict management policy to help "smooth out differences between groups." Students had to utilize the conflict management resources he provided, try to work out differences on their own, and then come to him if necessary. He observed that sometimes groups just did not work together, but he has yet to have a group that could not negotiate a compromise.

While group interaction usually ended well, the larger class as a whole had challenges getting to know each other. As Patrick mused, "that's definitely a pitfall. . . . I guess it points to online education in general. One of the pitfalls of putting them in groups and having them work closely with these other people at the extent but not having a huge group." He continued to reflect on the lack of interaction among the entire class by saying that requiring large group activities might conflict with the flexibility provided by online learning.

Patrick struggled with some of the feedback students provided through their course evaluations. Despite requiring two in-person meetings prior to the start of the course, as well as information posted in the course management system, students' expectations were still inconsistent with the aims of the course. Some students complained that they no longer enjoyed playing the real-time strategy game featured in the course. Others thought the course was a lot more work, or that the work was more difficult, than expected.

At the same time, Patrick took into consideration that students might not have a frame of reference for evaluating a course like his.

> It's challenging for students to evaluate it because it's really like no other course that they've ever taken . . . and that's an interesting design thing

> because there aren't very many courses like this that they've taken. They'll probably – this is probably the first that they've ever taken, and it kind of defies classification.

Some students did feel that they were able to think about their game in different ways as a result of the course, as well as work together and apply the game to the real world. Ultimately, Patrick believed that he had to take feedback with a "grain of salt, especially in this case because it is just something totally different." He did go through and review requirements, eliminating repetitious assignments and reducing the workload in others in response to student feedback.

Despite some of the challenges related to interaction and student expectations, he did feel that the group assignments were some of the most successful aspects of the course. As part of the group assignment, students "play some [name of real-time strategy game]. They do planning sessions, and they reflect on their experiences, and link it to academic or professional skills." Students then analyzed their group decision making, strategies, and communication patterns. The leadership and personality inventory also helped students think more clearly about group dynamics, that "there are a lot more dynamics that go into being in a group, being a good group member." Collaboration among members was the intended outcome of these assignments, an outcome that Patrick believed to be one of the course's biggest successes.

Despite those successes, Patrick believed that course would not be offered much longer. He thought the course had been a "nice experiment" but he was ready to move on to new challenges after he had "proven that game-based courses can be offered at a major research institution."

## Alma's Teaching Experience

Alma has taught for the honors college at her institution for more than a decade. Her background is in economics, specifically looking at women's issues related to economics. When she retired from the university in 2008, students worried that no one else would be teaching a course on economics and women's studies. As such, she opted to continue teaching her honors course after retirement if she could offer it online.

All first and second year honors students at her institution take a required common course. Once they reach their junior and senior years, they must still take an honors course, but they have several topics from which to choose. Alma's honors course serves as one of the open topics available to upper division honors students. The course meets the aims of the honors college through its emphasis on research and writing, as well as its interdisciplinary focus. The course is open to all majors and currently has 30 students enrolled.

**Designing the course.** When Alma decided she was going to offer her course online, she opted to participate in every training workshop her institution provided. She previously had taught web-assisted courses, so she was familiar with the course management system. Teaching fully online, however, was new to her, so she decided the training was necessary. "I am always taking whatever course they teach, whatever training they offer, workshop, or whatever they do in terms of learning new things. I am always willing to go into that training."

She knew that first and foremost, she did not want to give exams in her course. By removing exams from the conversation, she hoped to remedy some concerns about cheating in the online environment. As an honors instructor, she knew that honors courses needed to incorporate research. And research appeared to be a good fit for an

online course, at least in terms of reducing instances of cheating. “Students have to do their own research and participate in class discussions, and that is something they have to do themselves. You know, they cannot copy from somebody else.” She then decided to require all research papers to be submitted to turnitin.com to ensure that the student’s work was original.

Alma also wanted the research topics to be flexible for students. Each student would be assigned a different country to study, but the topic related to the country would be open. “I give suggestions, but they can follow whatever path they want in terms of the research that they are going to be taking.” Her learning outcomes were designed to match the outcomes of any honors course through a focus on research and writing. She also designed the outcomes to focus on a global or international and interdisciplinary approach. “So in my course, the whole course is designed around those objectives. Whenever they submit their reports, I am getting the three learning objectives that are key at the same time.”

She decided to design the course assignments, including the research reports, around the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDG’s). She first looked at the MDG’s to see how they affected women.

> And then I said, okay, what other topics related to these goals? And so you have goals for education, for health, for maternal health . . . many, many MDG’s. And each one of them has a different target, and they have indicators for each one of the targets. And so you can be working with those goals, with the indicators, with the targets. So for me, developing the course is just applying what the United Nations is trying to do in order to achieve those goals.

As the students would each be assigned a country to research throughout the course, they could then apply the United Nations’ work to their own country.

Finally, as Alma prepared to teach her course, she worked closely with the online staff in the College of Business. “I submit the information, and then they put it all together for us.” The online staff created all of the elements of the course using the content she provided. Although she knew the online staff handled the course set-up, she still felt strongly that she know how to do everything herself. “But for me, it was very important that I had received the training so I knew what to expect and how to do it myself.” While she appreciated the assistance from the online staff, at times she wished she could design and implement everything herself.

**Teaching the course.** The entire course had been planned and submitted to the online staff prior to the first day of classes. Alma firmly believed that despite the amount of preparation doing so required, having the entire course planned allowed her to teach without surprises. “If you are there on a daily basis, in a face-to-face [course], then there could be surprises. But online, to me, I get everything ready ahead of time, and to me that’s better than trying to get new topics or something on a day to day basis.”

Alma began her course with an orientation to the course management system as well as to her expectations. In the course management system there was a link to getting started with the course, her syllabus, a course calendar, and the contact information for the online staff if needed. She provided students with a PowerPoint presentation explaining various details of her course, including “my own understanding of what they are going to be doing.”

The course itself was divided into units based on the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDG’s). Alma explained the framework she developed for each of the units:

> For each topic, I divide the course into four aspects. I give them an overview of the topic. I give them an objective that they are going to be focusing on. I give them the assignments, the readings, the due dates, everything. I follow the same approach for each unit.

The course followed the routine of students submitting a paper one week and then discussing it the next week via the discussion forums. She found that maintaining the unit frameworks and course routine helped the students know what to expect – "you know, no surprises."

In terms of content, she reviewed the eight MDG's and determined that six of them could relate to women's issues. She then analyzed the remaining six MDG's in terms of how they might affect women in the various countries the students would be studying through their individual research. She also provided relevant resources through online videos and links to external content for the students to review.

Aside from online links and videos, Alma utilized a variety of tools within the course management system as part of the course. "I use everything that is available." She primarily used discussion forums, but she also used the assignment submission area, email, and chat. Chat was available for virtual office hours, but students "haven't requested office hours. They never do." She included a separate discussion forum for students to ask general questions of each other. She also maintained a discussion forum to post news of interest related to the countries they were studying.

Students were responsible for earning up to 300 points through all of their assignments, "so 10 points here, and 10 points over there, and 25 points here, and 25 points over there. So they know that they have to accumulate that amount of points. They know that there is something going on all the time." Those points were earned

primarily through the research papers and discussions. The logistics of the research paper and discussion posts included:

> Each week they submit their reports on that specific topic, and then the following week they are going to discuss with a classmate. So each one of the students is going to submit their paper not only to my assignment drop box, but they are also going to post it on the discussion board so that the students have access to the reports that have been submitted.

Students then analyzed their peers' reports based on their own research and provided suggestions for improving conditions within their countries.

The research was based in part on the links Alma provided. "What I try to do is give them as many links as possible for the topic that we are analyzing. Then I leave them free to choose which links they want to visit." Finding and updating links was a constant task for her throughout the semester.

The concluding activity in the course involved students reading an article on cultural imperialism and then reflecting on the article and the course through final papers and discussions. "That's a very important point of view because we have been analyzing more than thirty different countries, and other countries have different experiences." She wanted students to determine whether they were critiquing their countries through the lens of the United States, or through their assigned country's point of view. Students then had to post their paper to the discussion board as usual, and comment on at least two of their peers' papers.

Alma used a grading rubric for each assignment. Included in the rubric was an evaluation of the quality of information, the amount of information, the organization of the report, the types of sources used, and the currency of the sources used. She linked the grading criteria to the learning outcomes for the course. Finally she subtracted points for papers not submitted on time or evaluated by turnitin.com. "I deduct so many

points just because it has not been evaluated by Turnitin. They know that, so they better not wait for the last minute."

Alma checked online for submitted assignments on a daily basis. It was important for her to grade assignments in a timely manner. "They submit the work to me on Friday at noon time, and by Friday midnight I have marked everything. My feedback is immediate on a continuous basis." She also responded to any messages from students in a similar timeframe during the week. "Although I tell them that I will take up to 48 hours to reply, I never take more than two hours."

Typically students would contact her regarding problems with the course management system. In one situation, the online staff set the assignment deadline three months earlier than it was scheduled to end. When students went to submit their assignments, it looked as though the deadline had passed. As a result, she had to communicate the issues with the online staff so they could update the deadline and alleviate the worries of the students trying to submit their work.

Working with the online staff was crucial, but Alma did run into problems when the instructional designer with whom she had been working left the institution. The new instructional designer became overwhelmed with Alma's needs:

> So she tells me, 'I am not used to this. I am used to one professor just asking for a course . . . [with a] midterm exam and a final exam.' I said, well that's not me. I require weekly activities, independent activities. And so the problem that I have at this time is basically she is new to the course. But I think she's getting it.

She did note later that the online staff was very accessible both to her and to the students when they needed to troubleshoot their own problems with the course management system.

Alma was intrigued by the other type of communication she often received from her students: requests for letters of recommendation. “I don’t know how they ask me for letters of recommendation since I have never met them. I can write a letter of recommendation based on the fact that I have never met them, but I am evaluating them in terms of the reports that they have submitted.” She was happy to help students in their quest for graduate school admission, scholarships, and internships. Happiness with teaching online in general was a common sentiment as she reflected on her experiences.

**Reflecting on the course.** Alma seemed genuinely thrilled with her online teaching experiences, even going so far as saying she thought the flexibility of teaching online was superior to being in a “given classroom, on a specific day, a specific time, and no flexibility at all.” The feedback she received from her students was glowing, noting that they often wanted to take more of her courses after completing her online honors course. They also believe her honors course should be available to more students. “I also find that sometimes the comments – this course should be taken by every student in the honors college. Yeah, that type of comment!” Unfortunately, because of the high demand for her course, she does have to turn students away each semester.

She has also learned from course evaluations that students enjoy the format of the course. They particularly appreciate the routine of having one week to submit their paper and one week to discuss it. In a previous iteration, students told her that they did not have enough time for interaction in the course. So she listened to her students and reevaluated the course structure.

> The interaction among the students, it's something that I have added because I thought that it was missing. There was not enough time for them to read all the papers and come up with solutions. And so what I have done is that the design of their course has changed. . . . I think my main lesson learned is that in order to discuss, you need time. . . . There is time to get all these concepts and discuss with classmates.

Students responded to the change with enthusiasm and "really, really participate."

One of the few challenges Alma noted was the propensity of her students to submit assignments at the last minute, sometimes to the detriment of their grade. Often students would wait until 11:45am to submit work due at 12:00pm, and problems could arise, particularly in trying to upload their papers to turnitin.com. She would hear from panicked students as they worried about not submitting their papers on time.

> Everybody's calling at the same time, and I say, well, I'm sorry you waited this long to call. . . . I tell students many, many times, don't wait for the last minute. Don't wait 15 minutes before the deadline to submit because problems are going to happen, and it's not my fault, it's your fault.

Papers submitted late were heavily penalized, especially if they had not been evaluated by turnitin.com.

The other challenge Alma mentioned was keeping the course current in terms of links to resources. Because she liked to provide the students with as many links as possible for their research papers, she was constantly searching for new links for this semester or for the next iteration of the course. "I am always searching and searching and searching. To me, being updated is a very important issue."

Finally, despite all of the overwhelming successes with the course, Alma did feel as though she and her students did not get to know each other as well in the online environment. "They don't know me. They've seen my photo, but who is going to recognize me?" She did take time to introduce herself to students at an honors activity, award ceremony, or graduation. "I do to them and when they call their name I say, well,

you are my student! I see in their faces that they are happy to finally meet me." Students, for their part, must have felt they knew each other on some level judging by the requests for letters of recommendation she received on a regular basis.

Ultimately, Alma found teaching online to be a "very, very rewarding experience" that she planned to teach until "I don't know how much longer, but at this moment I am planning to continue." She believed her students were producing the same quality work that they had produced in the face-to-face environment. Her course has been recognized for its quality, with Alma noting, "my course has always been showcased because I really pay attention to all those designs and details." Her course on women's issues and economics had in her words, "met the expectations" of teaching honors students online.

### Mark's Teaching Experience

Mark has been a faculty member at a virtual branch campus of a larger institution. His background includes teaching history, philosophy, and English both at the K-12 and higher education levels. He pursued a doctoral degree in educational technology due to his interests in technology and online learning. Although his experience teaching honors students has been limited to the few students taking his online courses via an honors contract, he is planning to teach his first fully honors course in Fall 2012. The course will be a blended version of his online non-western humanities course which he currently teaches.

For the purposes of this study, his experiences are based on teaching his online non-western humanities, including the 2-4 honors students taking the course via contract. Mark has offered this course year-round for more than a decade. Currently 35

students are registered for the course which counts as a general education humanities and world studies requirement.

**Designing the course.** Not surprising considering his degree in educational technology, Mark started the course design process using an instructional systems design approach. “I usually start cold . . . always starting with the course objectives.” He also thought about a needs assessment where he would be “figuring out where your students are coming from, figuring out what the objectives are, where you’re going to go with it.” He called this time a “pre-visualization” of the course.

He gathered existing syllabi for similar courses, as well as reviewed textbook options. Once he had compiled various resources, he began to map out his course based on the size of the semester. “I’ll map that out and kind of always be working towards those units, those lesson units.” He converted the lessons tab in the course management system into modules which then were developed for each unit or week in the semester. He created a guide for the textbook where he “kind of went through and made an outline of what I thought were key things and important things.” He also developed his own quiz bank for the textbook.

All of the design and construction of the course took place prior to the start of the semester.

> You have to have 99% of your work already complete. You need the complete product. You can’t make a course week by week. So a lot of work has to be done up front. And then the delivery . . . you really have to have an open ear, an open mind to students’ feedback.

Feedback, as he describes later, was very important to continuing to enhance his courses.

He developed specific learning outcomes for his non-western humanities course. His primary goals were student success and completion of the course. Students needed to be able to complete their quizzes, essays, midterm, and final. For the writing assignments, "I'm really looking at improvement" in each submission throughout the semester. In terms of class participation, he decided to measure active versus inactive in the discussions. Each of these outcomes was tied to specific activities or assignments in the course.

**Teaching the course.** Mark began his course with an elaborate orientation. He created his own guide to provide an overview of the course within the course management system. He referenced the orientation to the course management system for students who had not used it previously. He then provided an overview of his philosophy of teaching which he developed with the help of the instructional technology staff.

> I have an introduction to discovery learning. . . . We put together a little short stream video presentation on discovery learning. It's a split screen – I'm on the one side talking. It has a closed caption device if you're hearing impaired and so it has text that goes with it. As I talk on the split screen, there are graphic images that appear. And the whole purpose of this is to explain discovery learning, that each student is on their own, and you can make lots of choices. . . . You know, it's like choose your own path . . . and just basically everything they need to know about discovery learning in four minutes.

He said it took 40 or 50 hours to create that video with the instructional technology staff, but he knew he could use that video with every course he would teach.

The orientation also included minute-long audio clips about various topics, as well as information about the learning modules and video lectures. Specifics about quizzes and the course calendar were detailed in the guide. He linked to the writing assignments folder which included "resources on writing essays and academic writing and college

writing and then documentation and research." He outlined how students would communicate with him and with each other and how discussion forums would operate.

The final component of the orientation was an introductory discussion forum post. Mark even posted his own introduction within the discussion forum, as "that's one area where I feel like I need to model." He included his educational background, hobbies, and qualifications for teaching the course. After students completed their introductions, they were reminded that they needed to begin their first assignment in module one.

The course itself centered around Mark's philosophy of discovery learning. Students interacted with the course content through a series of cyber journeys created for each learning module.

> Each cyber journey is like a page of multiple text links and multimedia links, videos of related content. And then I send the students out to make their own discoveries. I don't tell them where to go. They kind of gravitate to areas of interest in humanities.

Students had to post at least 500 words per week in the discussion forum on their cyber journeys. However, students who wanted to get full credit for participation in discussion were encouraged to post at least 1000 words per week, including replies to their peers.

The beauty of the discussion postings was that students were not all posting about the same thing. "They're all finding different areas of interest and posting." Mark intentionally kept the discussion board student-centered and chose not to engage there himself. "I'm in enough other places in the course – sort of in my lectures and everything else."

Mark also had to use the discussion forums to measure attendance and participation. He considered discussion mandatory because "it takes a little thought, articulation, and other students can read it." Students who did not post in the first week's

discussion forum were flagged by the course management system. Mark sent those students an email reminding them to post in the first and second week's forums by the end of week 2, or they would be administratively withdrawn from the course. He considered not posting one week as an absence. Two absences in the first two weeks of classes would cause a student to be dropped from the course.

It was in the discussion forums and with essays that the honors students on contract were expected to stand out. At the beginning of the semester, any honors students in the course identified themselves as such and informally developed a contract with Mark to receive honors credit.

> Basically I tell them I want them to take more of a leadership role in discussion. Whereas other students, there might be a minimum of 500 words a week. Honors students, I want them to do a minimum of 1000 words a week. And then the same thing in papers. Instead of just going with the minimum requirements, I expect honors students to go a little bit above that. Instead of writing a 500, 600 word essay, go more like 1000. Instead of just using three sources, use six sources.

The expectation was that honors students would fulfill extra requirements in terms of quantity and quality of work. The students were included in a separate course section to help distinguish them while grading assignments.

Lectures took the form of streamed videos. He recorded more than 200 video lectures to post in the course. A text version of the videos was available for hearing impaired students. The lectures also were loaded into iTunes so students could access them easier. "You know they can actually listen to my lectures on their cell phones and stuff." Mark also used videos from YouTube, the Khan Academy, the college's library, and even videos from various museums to supplement content for his course.

Quizzes were incorporated into the course, but Mark allowed students to take them up to three times for mastery. He was available to help students if they got "caught

up, snaggled in a question they can't figure out" during the quizzes. Students could keep their highest score of the three attempts, something that he noted was possible thanks to the online environment. "That certainly isn't something I would do in the traditional setting. Nor would you have time for it."

Mark prided himself on returning work quickly to students. He listed essay due dates on Friday to encourage early submissions, but an assignment was not considered late until Sunday night. For the essays submitted on Friday or Saturday, he usually returned them graded within 24 hours. For the essays submitted on Sunday, "it never takes me more than two days to dig out and to get to the bottom of it." He felt that quick turn-around was important because "when you turn an assignment in and you don't get feedback for two or three weeks, you've almost forgotten about it. You know, it becomes irrelevant." He preferred to review papers in two-hour blocks. "I grade papers for two hours, then I'll take a bike ride. Grade papers for a couple of hours, make something to eat, take the dog for a walk, you know." He used the commenting tools in Microsoft Word to provide feedback to students.

Mark never felt as though he put in an entire eight hour day in the office on campus, but he was never offline for more than 24 hours. In fact, he felt as though he really worked all throughout the day. "I'm always, always open, like 24 / 7. I have virtual office hours, so my students can kind of expect feedback from me even on Saturday and Sunday. I'm always checking my emails in my courses 24 / 7." Often he put in 12-16 hour days on the weekends grading papers. "If you did a graph, my busiest time is Friday, Saturday, and Sunday when online students are the busiest."

When he was not grading papers on the weekends, he continued course maintenance, double-checking hyperlinks and tweaking content. He also made sure that students were on task and participating in their discussions and cyber journeys. Emails from students were constant. Students emailed when they had questions about the course, when they found broken hyperlinks in the cyber journeys, and even when they needed to complain about another student in discussion. “So maybe there’s a student that’s not really being very original, and they’re copy and pasting . . . another person’s discussion post to make it look like their own.”

To reduce the amount of emails he received, he added a discussion forum called “questions about the course.” He hoped that students who had had him previously would help troubleshoot new students’ questions about the course. Students also could use that forum to exchange information with each other. If there was a technical issue with the course management system, Mark highly recommended the instructional technology support team. “We’ve been online for a long time, so they get good support.” Often he could troubleshoot those issues himself as he started to recognize problems, but the help desk was always available as back-up.

**Reflecting on the course.** Mark’s course had evolved over the course of a decade or so. “I like the basic structure and the way it works – discovery learning – and it seems to be popular.” He solicited feedback from students throughout the semester, asking them formally and informally. He thought that an instructor needed to seek feedback with an open mind, especially when first starting a course. If he found that he was getting a lot of student questions in a certain area, he worked hard to make the course more user-friendly.

Students seemed to appreciate the effort he made as instructor. Mark based his success in part on his evaluations and information from ratings websites. “You’ll see that students by and large have a really high, high, high approval rating. Students love the convenience of online learning. I know my strengths and weaknesses on ratemyprofessor.com.” He noted that students liked the choices he provided in the course as part of discovery learning, but that students believed they had to write a lot in their various assignments. In any case, the demand for his course was far greater than the spots available for students. “I get a raft of email, students begging me, ‘can I add into your course?’ . . . my courses are in high demand.”

At the same time, Mark thought the course was a constant work in progress. “It requires continual attention. . . . I like to enrich the course as much as possible.” He ran into one major challenge with a cultural assignment that all humanities courses were encouraged to include. The humanities and fine arts departments wanted students to experience a cultural event that ideally tied into the course they were taking.

In the online environment, the challenge was determining how students might document their activity when they potentially were scattered across the globe.

> That’s real hard to do online, and it’s real hard to require online because I don’t know if students are way up in the Panhandle, or you know, down on the edge of the Everglades. It may be a little too much to ask them to attend a museum or concert because there’s none available. You don’t know where they are online. We have students that are deployed – in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Mark then worried how he would grade participation in an activity from a distance. His solution was to have students conduct background research on their activity. He decided to make the activity similar to other essays he required, and then he could grade it accordingly.

When he first started teaching the course more than a decade ago, he only had a few hyperlinks available to share with his students. “And then with multimedia, with YouTube videos, it suddenly exploded in possibility for humanities and performing arts.” As he continued to refine his online courses, he refined his own role within them. “Right now my class interaction is more like guided study. I’m kind of a guide. . . . certainly I decentralized my role a long time ago when I turned the whole thing into kind of student-centered discovery learning.” To him, “online [learning] has made me create a whole new learning paradigm.”

## Vicky’s Teaching Experience

Vicky has served as a faculty member and administrator at her institution throughout her entire professional career. Now she primarily focuses on faculty development, including assisting with the digital professor certificate program for faculty who want to teach online. She continues to teach humanities courses online for the honors program. She has taught her current course three times per year for the past five or six years. Most students in the course are sophomore-level students, although some are high school dual enrollment students where they take college courses concurrently with their high school work. Many of the students are the first in their families to attend college, and their ages range from 16 to 56. She has 19 students enrolled in the current term.

**Designing the course.** Vicky believed that her background in teaching humanities was ideal for preparing to teach online. “When you teach humanities courses, you must develop curriculum. Nothing comes to you ready-made. . . . it’s such a huge area you have to cover that you have to be able to pick and choose, tailor things, and make things work.” Her first consideration was how she would transfer her face-to-face course

into the online environment. With limited examples to use, design was mostly trial and error in the beginning.

She thought carefully about how she would present the syllabus in her online course. In her face-to-face course, she was accustomed to going over the syllabus with her students. “You embellish, add to, explain, get questions, but in an online class, none of that happens.” As a result, she had to create a syllabus that was extremely detailed and precise. Directions had to be much more detailed, as students would not necessarily have a chance to ask questions as they were reviewing them.

She also adapted the PowerPoint presentations she had created for her face-to-face course by recording narration for them. “Since I did already use lots of PowerPoints in class to do presentations in front of the class, it was really easy for me to adapt that to online.” She considered the learning styles of her students as well.

> The visual learners are going to be fine on their own. Kinesthetic learners are going to be pretty good because they have a keyboard to pound on and a mouse to move. The ones who prefer to learn orally are going to be more problematic, so that’s why there are recorded lectures.

In addition, everything in her online course was linked to what was coming next. “There is no extra stuff. Discussions prepare for tests and projects, and it’s very sequenced. The learning is very sequenced. Students probably don’t realize that as much as I do, but it is.”

Vicky also thought about the notion of equivalency – she knew that the students’ experiences would not be the same in an online course, but she wanted students to have the same quality of experience, as well as gain the same skill set. She knew that the course would be asynchronous. “I thought that one of the real needs in online learning was not to have to be online at the same time as everybody else.”

Knowing that honors students appreciated in their face-to-face courses was the interchange with other students, she questioned how she could replicate those interchanges in an asynchronous environment. Discussions would become a central component of her online courses, as an opportunity for students to “exchange their ideas about what they’ve been learning, but also where they try out the components of their projects and get feedback from the other people in the class on those components.”

Her final consideration was in thinking about the content she wanted to cover in her course. She noted that she would include less music instruction in an online environment because it was more difficult to cover. On the other hand, she would include more art, architecture, and literature online because those topics were more visual.

> I think sometimes when you’re picking content, the medium drives the message, and I found that to be true. I will tend sometimes to pick prose over say poetry or drama because it’s a little bit easier to access on your own. But that’s kind of based on the fact that I’m dealing with historical periods. If I was dealing with things that were more recent, I probably would not have to make those kinds of choices because they would come with a certain amount of familiarity. . . . I think what I pick is equivalent, but not necessarily the same thing.

She mentioned that she would not necessarily teach Shakespeare online, although she would in a face-to-face classroom. Instead, she might select political speeches as students could understand those easier with less help from the instructor.

The learning outcomes she developed for her course were based on general skills she wanted students to gain, rather than information mastery. She wanted the outcomes to be something that would “equip them to go on and do well in other courses as well as in their profession.” Industry standards, including communication skills, would

be important. She wanted to address higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy, particularly in the areas of application and synthesis. She also made sure that her outcomes were specifically written.

> I hate those [outcomes] – they'll learn to appreciate art. Yeah? Like what? So they're written at a level that they can understand and use the terminology of the discipline. That's pretty specific. You can measure that pretty easily. They will either understand what foreshortening is, or they won't. They'll either be able to explain it and use it in their project, or they won't…the learning outcomes being as specific as they are make it easy for me to see whether or not they're doing it.

Those outcomes then would be evaluated on the quality of the products that students delivered.

**Teaching the course.** Vicky began teaching with an orientation to her course. She used a recorded, narrated PowerPoint which included an introduction to the subject matter, as well as her expectations of her students and what her students could expect from her. The recording lasted 15-20 minutes. Following the recording, students were instructed to take their first test, a course treasure hunt.

> On the study guide for the course treasure hunt is the list of about 35 questions that they have to answer about the course. And so they have to go hunting around the course to find the answers. And that gives them a way of finding out where things are and finding out what the various course requirements are.

After completing the study guide, students could take the test.

Following the test, students also had to participate in an introductory discussion forum. Rather than just introduce themselves, Vicky had the students read an article related to student success and discuss their experiences with the topic. For the current term, she had students read an article about procrastination, discuss their previous experiences in online courses, and relate the article to their own lives. She was particularly interested in having students discuss how they might combat procrastination

in her course. “That produced a nice discussion on a very personal level” as well as provided students with an opportunity to practice using the discussion feature.

The course itself was divided into four units of study, including one orientation unit and three content units. Each content unit was four weeks long with the first week focusing on the assigned readings. A study guide was provided for each unit. Then students began a series of discussions on what they had read. They started with a general discussion about the period and moved to more specific discussions about the project they would be producing at the end of the unit.

Recorded lectures via PowerPoint were included in each unit. Each lecture lasted approximately an hour but was broken into sections for easier listening. Students could download the lectures via iTunes in video or audio formats. Notes from the PowerPoint lectures were included, so students could read the lectures rather than listen or watch. “They can pick their preferred mode of learning, so they have choices.”

Aside from the expected topics from the humanities, Vicky strongly believed in incorporating student success concepts into her course content. She had only taught a student success course once, but “it had a big impact on me in seeing what kinds of things students didn’t know what kinds of things are useful to them.” She included hints about test-taking and completing assignments, as well as advice on majors, colleges, and careers. “I try to make it a value-added environment where you’re not just learning about the subject matter. You’re learning how to be a better student, and you’re also learning how to get where you want to go.”

Within the course management system, Vicky utilized the discussion forums and uploaded course content such as the recorded lectures and notes. She also used a lot

of videos in her course – some from the college's library, and others from YouTube. If given a choice, she used videos from YouTube because they were "easier to get to." She opted not to use the chat feature in her course.

> I tell my students if you want to, we'll enable it. Or if you want it, I'll put it there for you to use. And they often say they'd like to have a time that everybody went on [chat], but it just doesn't work out well. That's very difficult.

As she had mentioned during the course design, she intentionally wanted her course to be completely asynchronous, so chat was purposely not included.

Students had the opportunity to add a creative element to their research essays. They could submit their research papers in the form of dialogues or short stories if interested. In earlier iterations of the course, she allowed students to mail physical creative projects. Unfortunately, those projects were too cumbersome.

> I opted out of that because one time one arrived in pieces after being manhandled by the post office. I said, 'No, I don't think so.' I think there are certain things that should belong in the face-to-face classroom, and that's one of them. I had a student who built a 300 pound stone arch one time.

Students posted the thesis to their essays in the discussion forums for feedback and peer review. Vicky provided her own feedback after the peer review was complete. If students submitted their essays on time, they could rewrite them for up to 90 out of 100 points after they had received feedback from her. Anywhere from 25-30% of the students would take advantage of that opportunity during the semester.

Vicky evaluated those papers based on the quality of the product. Each assignment included a grading rubric so it was easy for her to measure the quality. The rubric included items such as using accurate facts from scholarly sources, providing a deeper insight into the material, writing a clear thesis, and employed the scholarly format correctly. Students received the rubric prior to submitting their assignments, so

they knew what to expect from her evaluation. They also had to submit their papers to a plagiarism checking service.

Vicky then inserted comments into their papers and highlighted concerns, attached the graded rubric, and uploaded the file back to the students for review. She found it important to include specific comments in addition to what she had marked on the rubric, as it would save her time later. She had learned from experience that students would send her emails wanting to know why they had missed points, even if she had marked the reason on the rubric. It took her less time to add specific comments up front than to respond to those emails later.

Vicky also provided feedback on smaller assignments, including discussions. “When I grade a 20 point discussion, they get a comment about their grade if the grade was less than full credit. And sometimes they get a comment if it was full credit, and it was really good stuff.” With every assignment, Vicky felt she had to remind students that their grade was only a proportion of their final grade. She found that her students had a tendency to give up if they felt their grade was dropping, so the reminder served to keep their grade in perspective. She also provided smaller opportunities for extra credit, such as completing additional peer reviews, as opportunities to recoup points on assignments.

She believed that the quality of the assignments were a direct reflection on how well students had learned in the course. “If the products aren’t good, then there’s something wrong with the learning process I’ve described to them.” If students were not doing well, she wanted to know why so she could better facilitate their learning. With many of her students who were struggling, she would look deeper to determine why

they were struggling. “I will try to determine whether the difficulty they’re having in the course is that they’ve got themselves into an unworkable schedule, or they just don’t have the skill set.” For some of the students, she would pull their transcripts to review their backgrounds, courses taken, and previous grades. Based on that information, she might suggest various strategies for doing better in the course.

Aside from grading assignments, which she gave herself a week to complete for each assignment, her regular teaching routine included checking emails, monitoring discussions, and adjusting various aspects of the course. She regularly logged on to the course management system every morning of the week and sometimes on the weekends. She tried to find examples for students when they struggled with their thesis statements. She checked her tests to make sure they were scored properly, noting that “students will email me if they think there’s a question on the test that was coded improperly or the answers are ambiguous in any way.” She also spent time fixing broken links.

When she monitored discussion boards, she made sure students were staying on topic, using proper netiquette, and participating as required. Because her college required instructors to take attendance, even in online courses, she used participation in discussion as a way to monitor attendance. Students who fell two consecutive assignments behind could be withdrawn from the course. At the beginning of the course, she emailed students who had not logged on after the first day or two. If they did not respond to that email, she called them to ask, “Do you realize you have to open your computer to participate in the class?” Again, students who did not complete the first week were withdrawn from the course.

Vicky maintained a separate discussion board called “ask the class” where she or any other student could answer questions posted there.

> And they use that for a variety of different things to ask or to find something that they haven’t been able to find in the course, to ask for technical help with something, or to ask why they can’t see a particular file, can anybody else not see that or can anybody see it or tell me how to get to it?

For example, one student asked the group if the link to a discussion was incorrect. Vicky checked the link, discovered it was indeed incorrect, and then responded to the group so they could see the resolution. She also provided extra credit if students posted in that forum several times during the semester. She noticed that doing so encouraged students to respond to questions and get their answers faster from each other, thereby relieving her from answering so many questions.

Finally, Vicky noted that it was important to have established contacts within the technology office to assist with the course as needed. Although she was able to troubleshoot a lot of lower-level issues with the course management system, she relied on her “personal techie” to handle upper-level problems. She did not call the main help desk, as she found that they were trained to help at a “very basic level” and often “they’re not going to know enough to help me.” Her primary contact happened to be a former student who she could rely on to assist with her “pretty esoteric problems.” She also participated in roundtables with the course management system designers, so she was familiar with a lot of the tools and functions that she would need for her course.

**Reflecting on the course.** Vicky used her final discussion forum each semester to gather feedback from students. Students had to discuss at least one thing that was effective in helping them learn online, as well as suggestions they had for improvement in the course. She told students that any additions the students suggested had to

replace a current assignment or activity. “They always think they want more tests or . . . if they had five minutes of uncommitted time, they felt like they were slackers, so I tell them, no, we’re not making more work.”

After she reviewed all of the students’ suggestions, she selected the ones she wanted to implement for the next semester and shared those decisions within the discussion forum. One previous suggestion was to decrease the amount of responses students need to give in the forums from five to two. Students thought the quality of responses would be greater if they had fewer to provide. Vicky tried it and found that the students were right. In addition, the pace of the class was more comfortable as a result.

Another suggestion she received was to incorporate more relevant content for science majors. So she added a prompt option for each essay that dealt with the history of science – still maintaining the focus on the humanities, but providing an option for students in other majors to make the humanities more relevant to them. Vicky found that this final discussion really provided a solid closure to the course, where students felt their opinions and suggestions mattered.

Vicky noted a few challenges with the course overall, namely in helping students be successful in the course. She was afraid that students would quit if they thought the course was too difficult for them. “I have to be conscious of how much I need to prep them to be more persistent with skills that they are not already familiar with.” She also struggled with students who were not as mature in their thinking, often the dual enrollment students. Still, immaturity was difficult to identify when students were enrolling in the course, and she did have dual enrollment students who were quite good

in the course. On the other hand, she thought the completion rates of students in the course were the same as they had been in the face-to-face version.

Her other large challenge was with group work. While she normally included group work in her face-to-face courses, she dropped the requirement in her online courses. “I could not convince the online students that they could work virtually. They just absolutely felt like they had to see each other face-to-face.” She tried having the students coordinate their schedules at the beginning of the semester, but it never worked well. She gave up on the assignment because “it was too much trouble and too much hassle for me and for them.” Although she knew other instructors who had made it work, she decided her students simply were not prepared to do it at this point.

As she reflected on her time teaching online, Vicky asserted that

> I’ve come to the opinion that you can teach anything online as long as you take in mind the limitations of the technology, as well as what the technology offers that you don’t have when you’re teaching in the traditional classroom.

In fact, the longer she taught online, the fewer differences she saw between teaching online and teaching face-to-face. Although she never saw her students’ faces, she found that “you can tell by the tone of an email.”

The workload from her end was not more than it had been in a face-to-face course, but it was different. For example, she did not take a break between semesters, as that was when she was at her busiest preparing the course. She typically built the entire course before the class began so she had time to troubleshoot and deal with the students during the actual course. Once she got through the first month of the course, she found that the course could almost run itself, and she could take a break if needed. She also found that she did not need to be available to her students 24 / 7, but that she

did need to be timely in responding to them. It was a different pattern of work, but not more than what she had done in the classroom.

## Commonalities

Each of these five participants had varying experiences teaching online honors courses at their institutions. Some participants had in-depth experience teaching honors students, while others had more limited exposure to this population. One participant was at the very start of his career as an instructor, while two participants had formally retired but continued to teach online. Several participants had a very positive experience teaching online, but a few had mixed or negative results. Despite these differences, it is important to note the commonalities these participants had as a result of their online teaching experiences. Table 4-1 and Appendix G include an overview of these commonalities.

### Designing the Course

Four out of the five participants offered their online honors course to fulfill general education requirements, three in humanities. Only Patrick's course served as an elective for students. Two of the participants, Harvey and Vicky, struggled with the notion of equivalency before they started designing their courses. Both of them wanted to make their online courses equivalent to the face-to-face version, but encountered different results. Harvey never felt his online course was equivalent, whereas Vicky felt very satisfied that her students were producing similar results.

Two of the participants, Patrick and Mark, specifically mentioned using an instructional design approach in preparing their courses, which was not surprising considering their familiarity with educational technology. Alma worked in consultation with an instructional designer who then set up her course in the course management

system. Vicky also used an instructional design process, although she did not formally call it so. She considered the needs of her students and the learning environment, scaffolded assignments, and constantly utilized feedback.

Both Harvey and Alma worried about issues of academic integrity in their courses. Whereas Harvey opted to focus on other concerns such as having flexibility in his course, Alma maintained a strong focus on eliminating cheating as much as she could. She removed exams from the course in place of research papers that could be reviewed through turnitin.com. Vicky also required students to submit their papers to a similar site to verify the originality of their writing.

Three of the participants noted that the quality of the products submitted by students was a primary learning outcome for their courses. Harvey wanted to see a deeper engagement with the course content, although he did not feel students achieved that outcome in the end. Vicky also looked for quality products that included a deeper insight into the material. Patrick wanted his students to produce quality group products, as his course focused heavily on collaboration and teamwork.

**Teaching the Course**

All five participants included a course orientation as part of their course. Patrick held his orientation in person, as all of his students were still on campus together even though they were taking an online course. Both Vicky and Harvey tied an assignment into learning about the syllabus or course structure, with Vicky coordinating a course treasure hunt and Harvey giving a quiz on the syllabus. Vicky, Mark, and Patrick all used an introductory discussion post so students could get to know each other, although Vicky used an article to jumpstart conversation. Patrick, Alma, Mark, and Vicky

included information on how to use the course management system in their orientation, as well as included their expectations of the students in the course.

Although Mark said coined the term “discovery learning,” several of the participants utilized similar strategies with their assignments. Mark provided a multitude of links to his students who then could select their links of interest to complete their cyber journeys. In similar fashion, both Alma and Vicky allowed students the flexibility to determine what avenues their projects would take. Alma also provided links to her students, and they were allowed to choose which ones to use in their papers. Vicky provided enough flexibility to her students, that even non-humanities majors could mold their projects to fit their major interests.

Discussion forums played a major role in each participant’s course, with varying results. Harvey noted that the discussions were dissatisfying, in part because he only had five students in his course. Vicky, Mark, and Alma used discussion forums as part of a peer review process, where students would post their ideas or reactions to their readings and papers. Students then had the opportunity to continue their online dialogue through comments and feedback.

There were mixed views on group work. Harvey attempted a group project but said it did not work well. Vicky did not attempt a group assignment because her students did not believe they could work on a group project virtually. On the other hand, Patrick focused so much of his course on group projects that they did work well. He did have the benefit of students being on campus together while they were taking the online course, so it was easier for students to still get together in person to work on their

projects if needed. He also met with groups in person if there were any conflicts or challenges that needed to be worked through.

All of the participants provided ample, personalized feedback to their students. Vicky and Patrick typically took up to a week to provide feedback on submitted assignments, whereas Alma and Mark sometimes had feedback provided within a day. Mark felt very strongly that he maintain an online presence as much as possible during the day, so students could reach him at any time. Alma also maintained a regular routine with her communication with students. Vicky did not believe she needed to be available 24 / 7, but her students knew when to expect communication from her. All of the participants logged on to their course management systems on a daily basis during the week to stay updated on discussions, assignments, and email.

Finally, all of the participants had access to external technology consultants, although not all of them chose to utilize those resources. Harvey did not feel he needed to contact his technology office, and Patrick did not often contact his either. Vicky, Mark, and Alma all mentioned how useful the technology consultants could be as they worked through higher level issues. All three of those participants felt competent troubleshooting lower level concerns, but they appreciated having external assistance when needed. Alma and Vicky in particular had a specific consultant they relied on throughout the term.

**Reflecting on the Course**

Mark, Alma, and Vicky actively sought feedback from their students throughout the course. Vicky incorporated a discussion forum at the end of the semester to capture suggestions and reflections from her students. Patrick, Alma, and Vicky all made changes to their courses based on the feedback, including assignment reductions and

adjustments. Patrick reduced some of the redundant assignments, although he wanted to maintain a strong sense of academic rigor despite students complaining about the difficulty level. Alma added additional time for students to review each other's papers after students requested that time in their evaluations. And Vicky reduced the number of responses students had to make during their peer review discussions, as well as added paper options for non-majors.

Three of the participants recognized challenges with social interaction in their courses. Harvey was especially concerned and disappointed with the level of community that was not created within his course. He tried synchronous and asynchronous approaches, but neither seemed to help. Students rarely responded to each other in discussion forums, and no one seemed to get to know each other – even with only five students in the course. Patrick found that students got to know each other within their small groups, but they did not get to know the class as a whole. He was not sure how to make the class more social while maintaining a fully online course. Alma also missed the interaction that she previously found in her face-to-face courses, but that the benefits of the online environment outweighed that challenge.

Harvey, Patrick, and Mark all believed that a hybrid option might be better than a fully online honors course. The honors courses at Harvey's institution were mostly web-assisted, and they were starting to experiment with hybrid options. While Harvey said that he would not teach another honors course online, he would consider a hybrid option. Patrick also wished he could have more in-person connections with his course. Although he was not planning to offer his course much longer, he did think there would be more interaction among his students if they met in person for at least part of the

term. Mark’s situation was unique since he was teaching an honors contract course. He was in the process of developing a full honors course for the next term and had opted to make it a face-to-face course, although he would still utilize the course management system, online lectures, and cyber journeys. Both Alma and Vicky were very pleased with their honors courses in their current online format.

## Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to provide an extensive look into the teaching experiences of each participant. Each participant described their design considerations, as well as how they experienced their daily routines, communication with students, and evaluation of assignments. In addition, they reflected on their teaching experiences, including the feedback they received from students and how they dealt with particular challenges in the online environment. Finally, a series of commonalities across all five participants was provided. In the next chapter, the second half of the results is provided. These results include broader themes about the impact of online education in the honors community.

Table 4-1. Commonalities among participants' teaching experiences

| Commonality | Alma | Harvey | Mark | Patrick | Vicky |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Course fulfilled general education requirement | X | X | X | | X |
| Struggled with equivalency | | X | | | X |
| Used instructional design approach / worked with a designer | X | | X | X | X |
| Worried about / addressed academic integrity | X | X | | | X |
| Quality of products was a learning outcome | | X | | X | X |
| Included a course orientation | X | X | X | X | X |
| Allowed flexibility with projects / "discovery learning" | X | | X | | X |
| Used discussion forums | X | X | X | | X |
| Mixed views on group work | | X | | X | X |
| Provided personalized feedback | X | X | X | X | X |
| Had access to technical support even if not utilized | X | X | X | X | X |
| Actively sought feedback from students about course | X | | X | | X |
| Adjusted course based on feedback | X | | | X | X |
| Challenges with social interaction | X | X | | X | |
| Hybrid could have been a better options | | X | X | X | |
| Pleased with online format | X | | | | X |

# CHAPTER 5
# THEMATIC FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to describe the phenomenon of online honors courses from the perspective of the instructors teaching them. This chapter presents the second half of the results of this study. As noted in Chapter 3, a hermeneutic phenomenological approach was used to analyze the data. Of the five data analysis approaches described by van Manen (1990), two were utilized for this study – analytic and thematic. This chapter includes the findings that resulted from the thematic approach, where van Manen (1990) recommended elaborating on an essential aspect of the phenomenon being studied.

While the results from the analytic approach spoke directly to the descriptions of the participants' teaching experiences in the online environment, the results from the thematic approach represented major themes related to the diffusion of online learning into undergraduate honors education as found across all five participants. While not directly related to the daily task of designing and teaching their courses, these themes spoke to underlying issues, concerns, and recommendations the participants shared as early adopters of online honors education, an essential element of teaching online.

The three major themes that emerged included serving as an early adopter, experimenting with online learning in honors, and moving online learning forward. Serving as an early adopter signified the characteristics each participant felt they possessed that made them more likely than their peers to teach online honors courses. Experimenting with online learning in honors represented the needs met by offering online honors courses, the participants' observations of honors students in the online environment, and the ways in which they felt their courses met or did not meet the aims

of undergraduate honors education. Finally, moving online learning forward included the concerns of the participants' peers, suggestions for adopting online learning, resources needed for adoption, and implications for adoption in undergraduate honors education as a whole. Table 5-1 includes a summary of these themes, while Appendix H includes a summary of these themes and relevant participant codes.

## Serving as an Early Adopter

Throughout each of the interviews with the participants, it was clear that they saw themselves as pioneers of online honors courses, at least at their own institutions. The participants developed a variety of reasons why they felt they were early adopters, including their age, personality, and previous experiences. They also displayed a common desire to share their expertise with others.

### It's My Age – or is it?

Harvey supposed that he might be an early adopter because of his young age. He was 40 when he attempted his online honors course. "I haven't been here so long where I'm set in my ways, and I'm still young enough, willing to try new types of pedagogy." Patrick, who was the youngest participant, displayed a youthful idealism when it came to wanting to make a difference by offering a better version of an online course. He recalled his own experiences where he sat through "mindless lectures" and wanted to create something different.

Mark also believed his age played a significant role in wanting to be on the cutting edge. "Maybe it's in my generation, the Vietnam War generation kind of thing. I don't have this huge, I'm not in awe of these kinds of vested institutions, you know?" Alma noted that age did not relate to being innovative, at least in her case. "I'm retired, but it doesn't stop me from wanting to do new things all the time." Despite their differences in

age, Harvey, Patrick, and Mark all noted that their age might have something to do with their willingness to serve as an early adopter, while Alma did not believe that age was a factor.

**"This is Part of Me"**

Several of the participants felt as though they were early adopters due to various personality characteristics. Alma valued learning new things, as did Vicky. Alma took advantage of every training she had available to learn how to adapt her course online. She enjoyed learning more about how to teach online, and she stressed the importance of participating in those trainings. "I am always looking for new things to do, new learning for my own sake." Similarly, Vicky used the opportunity to teach online to learn new things.

> That was one of my motivations for going into online teaching to begin with. I felt like the technology was getting away from me, and I was becoming too old-fashioned. So I said, well, this is a way to find out about this stuff. And so I went into it . . . just to learn new things.

Harvey was willing to try anything, as he believed he kept his course material and teaching fresh by trying new pedagogy.

Both Mark and Vicky considered themselves natural troubleshooters. When Mark first started tinkering with a course management system early in his career, he spent a significant amount of time trying to work out the kinks for his colleagues. "I really mastered how to use Web CT because I'd run into these dead ends and stay up all night solving them." His students also looked to him for advice when they ran into problems with the technology. Because he was comfortable playing with technology, he could troubleshoot the students' problems without needing to go to the technology support office. Vicky also felt comfortable troubleshooting her students' technology

issues. “I know most of the routine things. I know how to troubleshoot and how to fix it.” She enjoyed understanding how things worked “because that way I have a better sense of what the tools can and can’t do.”

Patrick enjoyed pushing boundaries, while Alma liked a challenge. As Patrick noted,

> It’s not a rebellious streak. It’s more of a – kind of like I’m pushing the boundaries or whatnot. You see deficiencies in certain areas. . . . I guess the big thing is . . . the desire to do everything within one’s power – my power – to kind of address some of the concerns that I have with the way that I see education going.

Alma enjoyed the challenge of learning something new, even in retirement. “I am designed to get this challenge. . . . To me, this is part of me. This is being me, what I am doing, okay?”

Patrick felt he was self-motivated to be an innovator, motivated to develop solutions to problems rather than just complain about them. Alma and Vicky were both independent and liked being able to do things themselves. As Alma said, “I’d rather do it myself because I know what I want. I know how to do it.” Likewise, Vicky enjoyed being able to do things herself. “Maybe I wouldn’t be building all these pieces for my class myself . . . but I like to do that.”

In each of these situations, various personal characteristics played a role in depicting the participants as early adopters. A love of learning, an inquisitive nature, a tendency to be a problem solver, and an independent spirit all contributed to the participants’ outlooks on teaching an online honors course.

**Pioneers, Guinea Pigs, and Rebels**

Many of the participants noted a desire to be the first to try something, whether they saw themselves as pioneers, guinea pigs, or rebels in the realm of online learning.

Harvey saw himself as both a pioneer and as a guinea pig. Not only was he the first to attempt an online honors course, but he was one of the pioneers of online learning in general at his institution. When his institution pushed for more online courses, he stepped up on behalf of the honors program. “Honors wanted to be a part of that experiment, so I decided to be the guinea pig.”

Patrick saw himself as a groundbreaker in offering not only an online honors course, but also a course revolving around a real-time strategy game. “That’s what really excited me . . . doing something that not a lot of people have done before.” He believed that his work was setting a precedent for future gaming instructors. “I’ve proven that game-based courses can be offered at a major research institution. And I think now that ground’s been broken, it’s time to kind of refine the lessons learned and everything.”

Mark saw himself as a pioneer and a rebel. His interest in teaching with the internet began in the mid-1990’s as he started conducting searches for course content. He took courses in HTML and began designing websites for his AP English classes. He then became a product reviewer, playing with software as an adjunct at a local college. “They actually wanted me to go through it as a guinea pig almost.” The expertise he developed in technology helped him transition to a full-time position in higher education. “Technology and embracing the new online technology for learning was my ticket into the college.”

His rebellious streak caught fire through his service in the faculty senate as he argued for more fluid work schedules based on the needs of his online students. His comments at the time were not appreciated by other senators who displayed an “anti-

online ignorance and wrath against me." Still, he noted that "it doesn't bother me what others think." He reflected, "I guess there's a, maybe a little bit of a rebel and an innovator in me."

When Vicky began teaching in the online environment, she noted there were no models from which she could work. "There was nothing anybody could show me." She survived through a series of trial and error. While someone else might have been frustrated, Vicky seemed to enjoy the thrill of being the pioneer at her institution. "I am what they would call in the literature an early adopter or a pioneer. I like that. I like the challenge. I like the stimulation. I like trying it first."

All four of these participants recognized their role as an early adopter. They noted not only were they the first in their area to teach an honors course online, but also that they enjoyed being the first. They volunteered for the role and relished it.

**A Desire to Share**

Finally, many of the participants expressed a desire to share their knowledge with others, whether through convincing colleagues of the value of online honors courses, showcasing their courses, or disseminating research. Vicky was the one who convinced the honors director to offer an online honors course.

> I knew from talking to my face-to-face honors students the problems they had with scheduling, and so I went to the honors director and said, 'Are you interested in offering some online classes?' He said, 'Yes, a couple of people have mentioned this to me.' I said, 'Well, let's try one, and here's one that I think will work well online. We'll try it and see.'

Alma also had to convince her honors dean that online honors courses would work. Her dean was not in favor of offering online honors courses, but Alma believed "I have made her change her mind in the sense that the students really want to take online courses, and to me that's important."

As previously noted, Mark ran into problems when he tried to convince his colleagues of the utility of online learning. More than a decade ago while serving in faculty senate, he found that he was alone in advocating for online learning. “Professors were almost unequivocally anti-online. They were very traditional.” Mark faced harsh opposition when he tried to advocate for 24/7 availability to their online students. He felt he should be released from so many on-campus hours because he was constantly available to his students outside of the office.

> You would have thought I was asking everybody to give up their weekends and their free time and all. And I wasn’t. I was just saying that your time needs to be more fluid and structured around the needs of your students.

While he was met with resistance at the time, Mark maintained his insistence that faculty should think differently about their roles in the online environment.

Alma liked to share what she had learned from designing and teaching an online course by applying for various awards and honors. “My course has always been showcased because I really pay attention to all those designs and details.” She had submitted her online honors course to Quality Matters for feedback, and she demonstrated how to implement Quality Matters to other instructors. She noted that she had received many accolades for her courses, stating that “there is nobody who has won more awards than me.”

Patrick also wanted to share his expertise with others, primarily by disseminating research and answering inquiries about his course. “Another reason why we designed it is to give others who are interested in game-based learning an opportunity to see how something like this could happen.” He had shared his expertise and experiences with colleagues from across the country. He also planned to publish information about the course design to “advance the field of gaming and education.”

Each participant demonstrated several characteristics of being an early adopter in online honors education. Some attributed their willingness to experiment to their age, while others credited it to various aspects of their personalities. They liked learning and trying new things. They enjoyed tinkering with technology, as well as sharing their findings with others. And perhaps most importantly, they saw themselves in the role of early adopter – in their words, pioneers, guinea pigs, and rebels.

## Experimenting with Online Learning in Honors

Each of the online honors courses taught by the participants could be considered an experiment of sorts. As early adopters, each of the participants felt they were fulfilling a need or gap when they first started teaching their online honors course, whether that need was student, instructor, or content-oriented. Once they started teaching their courses, their observations of honors students in the online environment impacted their perspectives of whether or not honors courses might work online.

### Fulfilling a Need

Harvey, Vicky, and Mark all decided to offer an online honors course based on student need. Harvey offered his course during the summer term to provide a general education opportunity to honors students who would be working from a distance. He noted that although many of the students at his institution were from the local area, most of the honors students came from out-of-town and spent their summers away. "It was a way for those students in the honors program to fulfill the general education requirement while getting the flexibility to not be in town, to be somewhere else." By offering an online honors course, he was able to reach out to students who might not have had access otherwise.

Similarly, Vicky found that an online honors course would provide greater access to honors both for nontraditional students who might have conflicts with their work schedule, as well as other students who had complicated academic schedules. “We had so many adults who were working full-time, and that was already the big gap in honors when we offered face-to-face classes.” She also noted that students in the sciences did not have as much flexibility with their schedules and needed to supplement their face-to-face courses with online courses. She found one term that any student who wanted to take an advanced calculus course could not take an honors course because every honors course conflicted with the times that calculus was offered.

> Calculus III was a five hour course. That meant it met every day of the week – so it just knocked them out of everything. And so with that kind of restricted schedule, well, anybody can do an online honors class.

By offering an online honors course, Vicky was able to meet a significant need for her students.

On Mark’s satellite campus, they did not have enough honors students to fill an entire course. By allowing honors students into his online course through a contract system, those students could continue to fulfill honors requirements. “We may only have four, five, or six students in the honors college that are taking classes at our campus. We literally blend them into regular classes and have them work on what’s called an honors contract.” He also believed that online classes provided flexibility for students who were very involved with other classes, as well as with extracurricular activities. That sentiment was shared by Patrick:

> Honors students are very, very busy. They are highly motivated, but with high motivation also comes other responsibilities like honor societies or other volunteer opportunities. So online education can fill a niche there where they don’t have time to take other courses.

Alma found that her students appreciated the flexibility as well. Even though she did not mention access as a specific need, she found that students wanted online courses anyway.

In addition to providing more access to honors courses, participants found that students registered for the courses regardless of format. Patrick found that his course always filled, while Alma noted that “I have thirty five [in the course], and if I let it, there could be fifty of them.” The online courses at Vicky’s institution filled “lickety split,” as did Mark’s courses. Harvey alone had a challenge in this area, as only five students enrolled in his summer honors course.

Offering an honors course online also benefited the participants. Alma retired in 2008, but told her honors college that she would continue to teach her honors course if she could offer it online. “Because it is an online course it allows me to take care of the course while I keep doing those other things, other things that I have to do with my granddaughter and my house and my home.” Vicky found that teaching online was very appealing to an instructor, as she did not have to deal with any classroom management issues such as checking cell phones or surfing the internet. “I don’t have to worry about all those things that teachers complain and complain and complain about today. That makes it very attractive. At the same time, she simply enjoyed teaching online. “The institutional need is the first criteria, and the second criteria is because I like it.”

Finally, several participants saw the content as a reason to teach an online honors course. Patrick wanted his students to gain skills in online collaboration.

> In this connected and fast-paced world, online collaboration is expected as we move towards distance learning or training. And these students might have to collaborate across the globe, continent, states, time zones, or whatnot. Collaborating online is a big deal.

Mark also believed that students needed experience developing the digital skills that came with uploading attachments and managing their time online. Online courses provided a great opportunity for students to gain experience with such skills.

Alma continued to teach her honors course after retirement because students would not have had access to her course content otherwise. “No other course is dealing with women’s issues, and there is a need to get to know this type of topic. And to me, the students are really interested.” For Patrick, he had the opportunity to develop a gaming course that was relatively unheard of at a major university. Having his course offered “shows that game-based courses can survive and thrive at even major institutions. That’s what really excited me.”

### Honors Students in the Online Environment

After a need was determined, the participants embarked on their online honors course experiments. While they wanted to increase access to honors courses for students or expose students to content or skill development, they found mixed results once students actually started working within the online environment. It is difficult to determine whether or not these student characteristics were caused by the online environment or were indicative of honors students in general. Regardless, these challenges and successes with students are presented as shared by the participants.

Harvey found that his students had too many commitments outside of class to concentrate fully on the discussions. “For half the class, it was just one of other commitments that they fit in whenever they could.” Mark also observed that his students only had so many hours that they could dedicate to any one class, including his. Patrick had to offer in-person mediation for groups in his class when they had difficulty working

together online. Vicky refused to incorporate group work, noting that honors students resisted group work in general.

Honors students particularly faltered when it came to participation in online discussions. As Mark had noted in previously-taught face-to-face courses that honors students were self-confident, got involved, raised their hands, and asked questions. In the online environment, however, he found that they did not distinguish themselves from other students. “They generally do well, but they don’t necessarily stand out in the online classes. I think there is a difference when you’re in a face-to-face class in a face-to-face environment.” He also believed that “honors students are probably experts at manipulating the system” so they can “get by with a minimal amount of work, effort, and time.”

Harvey would agree with Mark’s sentiment, as he found that his students were not even meeting minimum expectations for discussions. Students regurgitated ideas without reading their peers’ contributions. He could not get his five students together at the same time for a synchronous discussion either. By the end of the course, Harvey was dissatisfied with much of the products submitted by his students.

Vicky was concerned about the persistence of her honors students, commenting that she had to build in places for students to recoup lost points so they would not withdraw from the course. Students were very grade-conscious. “One of my other students will be real happy to get a ‘C,’ and the honors students will not tolerate it.” They also would quibble with her over test questions.

> Honors students are more challenging. They are more willing to challenge your authority, and that’s a feature of online learning. . . . the honors students will call me to task over five or six questions on every test. . . . I learned how to be more specific and precise in giving feedback to students.

Vicky also found that her honors students liked online learning less than their peers, but in general, they were not dissatisfied with it. Alma's students were very receptive to her online course and actively participated in it. She also believed that her students got to know her in the online environment, as evidenced by their numerous requests for letters of recommendation. Patrick's students also got to know each other, albeit in their small groups. They did feel disconnected to the class as a whole, although Patrick was not sure how to rectify that concern in an online course.

Both Vicky and Alma thought their students appreciated the routine and structure inherent in their online courses. Alma's students would contact her if they perceived a change in the routine. "They are very much aware of my pattern, and if I break my pattern, they immediately send me a note asking what's going on or what's wrong." Vicky found that students liked the organization of course, that they "appreciate the fact that there's a pattern that's developed - a pattern of assignments, but also a pattern of learning that I establish."

Learning to use the technology was not much of an issue with Harvey's students, and challenges using the technology in the online course never came up as a concern with the other participants. Vicky did observe that her students were not necessarily impressed by a lot of tools though. After reviewing a few tools that she could have used in her course, she recognized that her students did not care much about them.

> It didn't seem to be as spiffy to them as it was to teachers. It's like when they used to do these educational animations, and they'd show it to me, and I'd go to the administrators and say, 'That's awful' and they'd say, 'Oh, no, that's really cool.' I said, 'No, it's not. Haven't you looked at a video game?' They have to be at least as good as that graphically or else it's not good. . . . you're better off to use something more straightforward.

As such, she preferred to keep the tools she used simple and straightforward.

Each of the participants had different experiences with their honors students. They felt that students did not always devote enough time to their course, sometimes doing the minimum to achieve a certain grade or giving up if they felt their grade would not be salvageable. On the other hand, some students enjoyed the online environment, particularly the structure and routine that the course provided them. Students did not appear to have any challenges related to using the technology.

**Meeting the Aims of Honors Education**

Following their initial experiments, the participants had varying opinions on whether or not their courses truly met the aims of honors education. All of the participants seemed to agree that functions of honors courses included small class size, deeper engagement, and innovative pedagogies. Harvey's honors courses all included some aspect of peer review, in addition to having the students gain a deeper understanding of their course material. He also expected a high level of scholarship and critical thinking from his students.

Patrick thought that an experiential approach was key for an honors course, as well as having a one-on-one relationship with the instructor. Alma thought honors courses needed to be interdisciplinary and research-oriented. Vicky focused on application and synthesis in her honors course and believed that the nature of the work her students did was indicative of their honors status.

Harvey held the strongest negative opinions about online honors courses.

> From my honors students I expect self-motivation. I expect a lot of ability to do independent work. I expect preparation. I expect a deeper level of discussion. And I just didn't get that from my online class. And again, it may have been a product of summer. It may have been a product of online. It may have been a product of there were only five students in the class. I don't know. It may have been a product of all of that.

His experience teaching the online honors course led him to believe that online was not necessarily a good environment for honors students. He liked the idea of being able to see a response in his students' faces, seeing if they understood the material. He did think that a hybrid course environment might work "especially if you have them complete the content online, assessments online, and then come in and have totally seminar-type discussion." Otherwise, he did not see how an online honors course might work.

Patrick also questioned whether or not online was the best format for his honors course. He did feel as though his course was highly participatory and experiential, which were aims of honors courses at his institution. But he conceded that the online environment did hinder engagement among peers.

> It really puts sort of a damper on the social interactions, which I think should be a major part of honors education. But again, you could have a bad honors course that's in person. So I think that it's possible to facilitate richer dialogue via an online forum.

While he wondered if a face-to-face or hybrid course might work better, he did believe that ultimately his course met the aims of honors education. "Honors education is all about experimenting, giving students a different perspective or allowing them to experience different things on their own. And I think the course really, really hits that."

Mark was not entirely convinced either. Although honors students had performed well in his course, he had not found their work to be outstanding as compared to some of the other students. At the same time he thought online courses should be an option for honors students because "it simply provides an alternative modality." He thought all students needed to be savvy about being an online learner, including all of the skills they could gain by experiencing an online course.

Vicky recognized that only offering online honors courses would be a mistake, but that online courses filled enough of a need for students that they should be an option. She believed that honors students would flourish with the mentoring they could receive in a face-to-face environment, especially considering these students often went on to become leaders in their fields. On the other hand, online honors courses could allow students to see a broader spectrum of honors education, in addition to greater access when schedules were restricted. She felt that online honors courses met the aims of honors education, and that they were "qualitatively as good as a face-to-face class, but it's different."

Finally, Alma had no qualms about offering online honors courses and continued to convince her dean that the courses were worthwhile. While she did not get to know her students as well online, she felt she could teach the same content regardless of format. "I could do the same topic on a person-to-person basis, face-to-face or online. For me, the topic is no different." As she believed the quality of the work she received from the students was the same in her online course as it had been in her face-to-face course, she saw no reason not to endorse online honors courses.

Identifying a need was an important first step in offering an online honors course. In most cases, that need was related to student access or demand, although faculty interests and content delivery also played a role. Once each participant started teaching their online honors courses, their observations of the students in the online environment impacted their future stance on online honors courses. Ultimately, one participant opted not to continue his online honors course, two were cautiously optimistic about future

iterations of their courses, and two strongly believed that online honors courses absolutely met the aims of honors education.

## Moving Online Learning Forward

Despite their personal experiences with online honors courses, the participants all contributed their thoughts on how to move online learning forward within undergraduate honors education. They indicated common concerns of online learning from their peers in honors, and there were many. They discussed various suggestions for implementing online honors courses, as well as the resources needed for implementation. Finally, they reflected on the greater implications of online learning for the honors community.

### Addressing Concerns of Peers

All of the participants had met resistance to online honors courses either at their own institution or among peers in professional communities. Harvey found that no one at his institution wanted to teach an honors course online because they valued the contact hours with the students. “There’s a feeling amongst many of the faculty that once you let them go online, you lose all control of their time.” He also knew that colleagues had concerns about not being able to build community or conduct meaningful discussions within the class.

Vicky recalled a particular colleague who could not be convinced that an online honors course could work. At the same time “this man had trouble operating the PowerPoint presentations in the classroom.” She knew that there was nothing she could say to make him believe that an online course was possible. She estimated that perhaps 25% of her colleagues viewed online learning positively, and that number included the colleagues already teaching online.

She thought the biggest concerns her peers had included whether or not students were actually learning online, as well as how they could ensure that students were doing their own work. She tried to help peers think about minimizing academic integrity issues, as they could not eliminate those issues even in a face-to-face environment. Once they had a better understanding of academic integrity, their concerns shifted to "how do I actually go about doing it and getting the kinds of outcomes that I want?" Vicky believed that faculty were too focused on content as opposed to pedagogy. "The content decisions are, to me, the easiest decisions to make. The pedagogy decisions are the complicated decisions. Where am I going to position the test? What function is that test going to have? Why is it there?"

Alma knew that her dean was very much in favor of face-to-face honors courses, but she continued to convince her that online honors courses were needed due to student demand. "Students really want to take more online courses." She found that her colleagues were concerned about academic integrity issues. "But I have solved that problem because I ask them to submit their work to Turnitin."

At a national level, Harvey felt there was a "begrudging acceptance of it. But it's not something that we're flocking to." Patrick posited that some colleagues just had "highly rigid views of what education should be." He believed that "maybe it's not necessarily only an honors problem…maybe the honors program is just more resistant to it" especially considering that honors faculty traditionally were used to teaching such small classes.

Mark witnessed the strongest anti-online campaign as he presented about online learning at a national honors conference. During the question and answer portion of his

presentation, he found that students were being coached by their faculty behind the scenes to “tirade on why they hated online” learning. He was disgusted by the faculty members who he felt were just “furthering some of their own prejudices and fears.”

> Faculty feel threatened, you know. It’s like, oh, this is a new animal. This is going to replace the classroom. We better draw a line in the sand against it. . . . the idea of the sacred professor and student-teacher relationship is going to be a thing of the past, and online is going to replace everything. . . . we’re all going to turn into robots.

More realistically, he found that faculty members were concerned about how they would get started to teach online.

**Suggestions for Implementation**

“Don’t do it” – Harvey.

Each of the participants shared various suggestions for their colleagues interested in teaching an online honors course. Harvey recommended having a critical mass of students, as well as setting aside time for synchronous communication. He wondered if having video chats available when he taught might have made a difference in the level of engagement his students with the course. Patrick agreed that synchronous chat opportunities would be helpful, noting that Skype was one particular tool he recommended.

Alma, Vicky, Mark, and Patrick all believed that it was important to consult others as part of their planning process. As Alma suggested, “You cannot do this without training.” Vicky encouraged faculty to look to the pioneers in the area for guidance. As Mark noted, “you need to look and see what others have done online. You need to see models . . . so you don’t reinvent the wheel.” Patrick agreed, “If you take the time and put the effort and consult the experts on it, then I think your course has a much higher chance of success, and students will appreciate that.”

Many of the participants stressed that faculty could not simply move their face-to-face course into an online environment with few modifications. As Patrick observed, "You can't just cut and paste." Alma believed that training would help faculty understand this principle and better prepare their courses for the transition. She also found that faculty needed to plan far in advance for their online courses. She typically submitted her course content months in advance to the online staff. Mark agreed that faculty needed to "try to get 99% of all the work done before the course ever starts. You can't do it on the fly."

Vicky relied on her experiences in faculty development to provide advice on preparing to teach online. Throughout the process, she thought it was necessary to have access to good faculty development and technical support available. She believed that faculty interested in teaching online should first start by moving some of their course materials online. "Most faculty can make that step pretty easily." Then, they could move to a hybrid course by considering "what am I doing right now, and how is that going to work as well online?" Gradually, faculty could begin to think about moving other components online. "I think having a program that allows them to evolve naturally is better."

At the national level, Harvey and Patrick both believed that there needed to be a compilation of best practices or examples of online honors courses. Vicky recommended a list of "ten things that successful online honors teachers do," as well as a resource page with potential online learning consultants. She also thought a blog could be used as a place to share ideas, challenges, and successes among online honors instructors.

> I could see that working really well to have blogs and a place where people could go and share ideas. Might be asynchronous discussion, something about honors education, and get some feedback or connect with somebody that knew something about the subject from doing it. This would save enumerable hours.

To Vicky, developing partnerships was very important.

Mark and Vicky both had similar views about developing an online pedagogy for honors. Mark believed more research was needed about teaching in honors and the needs of honors students so they could apply that knowledge to online pedagogy. “We need to gather more research on what distinguishes honors students and honors colleges . . . from the regular, larger population. And then design those sorts of experiences in online learning.” Vicky agreed, stating “there’s a lot of literature about best practices in online teaching and learning, but it doesn’t deal with honors.”

**Implications for Undergraduate Honors Education**

Four of the participants provided their take on the impact of adopting or failing to adopt online learning within honors. Vicky thought it would be a “negative implication for honors to turn its back on online education. I think that would be a serious mistake.” Alma agreed that “it’s the future.” She believed that honors would have to provide more online courses eventually.

Patrick reiterated that “honors education is supposedly such a free and open to experimentation program . . . instead of . . . automatically dismissing it as inferior, maybe more work needs to be done to see how you can improve it.” He cautioned that “if honors education refuses to at least address some of these issues, then they risk being left behind.” He worried that honors might become irrelevant if it did not cater to the needs of its students.

Mark also argued that honors could not “bury our heads in the sand and just ignore it, and it will go away.” He believed that online education in honors could be “made a very enriching experience.” He acknowledged that faculty would have to relinquish some of their authority and become more of a guide, but those changes could be exciting. As Patrick concluded, “you’ve got the opportunity to change on your terms.”

Although their online teaching experiences varied, most of the participants recognized the potential for online learning in honors. They acknowledged the concerns of their peers and made recommendations for alleviating them. They also contributed suggestions and resources that had worked for them or that they wish they had implemented. Finally, they provided their reasons why online learning should be considered as part of undergraduate honors education.

## Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to elaborate on major themes related to the diffusion of online learning into undergraduate honors education. The first theme focused on the participants’ views of themselves as early adopters, while the second theme highlighted their online teaching experiments. Finally, the third theme provided a look into what was needed to move online learning forward within honors education. The sixth and final chapter will include a discussion of the findings from Chapters 4 and 5, implications for online learning within undergraduate honors education, and recommendations for future research and practice.

Table 5-1. Summary of thematic findings

| Theme | Alma | Harvey | Mark | Patrick | Vicky |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| It's my age – or is it? | X | X | X | X | |
| "This is part of me" | X | X | X | X | X |
| Pioneers, Guinea Pigs, and Rebels | | X | X | X | X |
| Desire to share | X | | X | X | X |
| Fulfilling a need | X | X | X | X | X |
| Honors students in the online environment | X | X | X | X | X |
| Meeting the aims of honors education | X | X | X | X | X |
| Addressing concerns of peers | X | X | X | X | X |
| Suggestions for implementation | X | X | X | X | X |
| Implications for undergraduate honors education | X | | X | X | X |

# CHAPTER 6
# DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to describe the phenomenon of online honors courses from the perspectives of the instructors teaching them. Five honors instructors from various institutions were interviewed on three different occasions to discuss their experiences designing and teaching an online honors course. All five of the participants considered themselves to be early adopters in online honors education. The study was guided by the following research question:

How do instructors describe their experiences teaching online honors courses?

While online learning is an established phenomenon in undergraduate education (see Allen & Seaman, 2011), it has been met with some resistance within undergraduate honors education, both at the instructor and administrative level. Despite a strong interest in utilizing innovative and experiential pedagogies (Braid, 2001; Braid, 2007; Bruce, 2008; Hutgett, 2003; Lacey, 2005; Schuman, 2001; Strikwerda, 2007; Werth, 2005; Wolfensberger, van Eijl, & Pilot, 2004), the undergraduate honors community has yet to embrace online learning as one such method. As such it was important to find early adopters to further explore possibilities at the intersection of online learning and honors education.

Participants who had experience designing and teaching an online honors course for the duration of at least one semester were recruited through various honors listservs. Five participants who met the criteria were interviewed three times as recommended by Seidman (2006) to allow them to reflect on their experiences designing and teaching their online honors course.

Even though there were only five participants, they represented a wide range of experiences within honors and online education. Two represented large research universities, while three taught at associate's level institutions. Three participants were part of an honors program, while two were part of an honors college. Three participants had taught online courses prior to their experience teaching an online honors course. One participant was an early career instructor, two were mid-career, and two were retired.

Interview data was analyzed according to two methods of van Manen's (1990) hermeneutical phenomenology approach, analytically and thematically. The results of the analytical analysis were displayed in Chapter 4 as in-depth descriptions of each participant's individual teaching experiences. Commonalities among teaching experiences also were described as part of this chapter. Common experiences with course design included struggling with equivalency in moving face-to-face courses into the online environment, using an instructional design approach, facing fears of academic integrity, and focusing on the quality of products as a primary learning outcome.

Common experiences while teaching their courses included implementing an orientation at the start of their course, providing flexibility to students in completing assignments, utilizing discussion forums and peer reviews, providing extensive feedback to students, and having access to external technology consultants. Common experiences upon reflecting on their teaching experiences included seeking feedback from their students and adjusting assignments, recognizing challenges with social

interaction, and considering hybrid courses as a potential option for future iterations of their courses.

The results of the thematic analysis were displayed in Chapter 5 as overarching themes representative of the diffusion of online learning into undergraduate honors education, an essential aspect of the online teaching experience. These themes included the underlying issues, concerns, and recommendations the participants shared as early adopters of online honors education. Serving as an early adopter, experimenting with online learning in honors, and moving online learning forward all emerged as themes in this area.

The remainder of this chapter includes a discussion of the results, implications for undergraduate honors education, and recommendations for future research and practice.

## Discussion

There is not one common honors experience across the United States. While the National Collegiate Honors Council has developed basic characteristics of honors program and colleges, administrators recognize that it would be impossible to expect every program and college to be the same (NCHC, 2010a; NCHC, 2010b). Upon reviewing the findings from this study, that sentiment holds true. Each instructor, while participating in a common experience of teaching an online honors course, encountered different challenges and successes while designing and teaching their course. There were some commonalities, however, shared among participants. The following discussion includes a look at these common components of the teaching experience as related to previous literature on the subject.

## Participants as Innovators and Early Adopters

In considering diffusion of innovations (Rogers, 2003) as a guiding framework for this study, it was important to note where online learning in honors fit as a potential innovation. Although online learning might not be considered an innovation within higher education at this point in its adoption, all of the participants recognized online learning as an innovation within honors education. According to Rogers (2003), the perception that something is an innovation within a social system warrants it being considered an innovation.

Each participant noted they were one of the few, if not the only, instructor teaching online for their honors program or college. Their experiences held weight in determining future adoption of online learning within honors. Four of the participants were able to continue teaching their online course for honors students after their first experience teaching it, demonstrating their ability to move online learning into honors, even if their colleagues had not yet adopted it as a teaching option. The fifth participant, Harvey, opted not to continue based on his experience.

All five of the participants in this study fit within the first two of Rogers' (2003) adopter categories of innovators and early adopters. Rogers described innovators as people with a high interest in new ideas who were comfortable taking risks when it came to innovations. He also noted that while innovators served as gatekeepers of an innovation, they were not always respected by other members of their social system.

Of the five participants, Mark most closely fit within the category of innovator and had the most experience with online learning. He liked being considered a "guinea pig" when it came to playing with new technologies on behalf of his institution and spent hours at a time troubleshooting various products. He very eagerly was ready to open

the door to online learning for his colleagues, even though they were not always ready to hear his message. He often described himself as challenging his colleagues about aspects of online education, especially during his tenure with the faculty senate. He mentioned the “wrath” against him when he challenged the notion of an 8-5 office routine instead of a more fluid work schedule to better meet the needs of online students.

Harvey was in an interesting place serving as both a faculty member and administrator for his honors program. While his directive to offer an online honors course came from higher institutional administration, he was quick to volunteer to teach it considering his previous experiences teaching online courses. He was enthusiastic at first about trying something new for his students, about experimenting with an online honors course. When the experience did not turn out well for him, however, he was able to shut the gate on online honors courses by nature of his position as administrator.

Patrick also could be considered an innovator, as he had to deal with a lot of uncertainty planning a course around a real-time strategy game. Not only was he teaching one of the first online honors courses for his program, but he also was teaching a gaming course – an unusual platform in any department. He knew that not only would colleagues be skeptical about his course design, but his students might be as well. He took this skepticism into consideration as he developed his course description, planned his course orientation, and designed challenging academically-oriented assignments.

Rogers (2003) described the next category of the population as early adopters. Early adopters are opinion leaders and carry a great deal of weight with the rest of the

population. They are on the front end of the innovation, but are more integrated into the population than the innovators. Vicky and Alma both held considerable influence with the honors administration and were able to convince their deans and directors that online learning was worth trying for honors students. Vicky, who called herself an early adopter, deftly convinced her director that there were too many challenges with scheduling not to consider online honors courses. Alma noted that while her dean was not in favor of online honors courses, she was able to convince her to try a few courses. Alma continued to share her experiences teaching online by promoting training opportunities to her colleagues who might be interested in developing their own online courses.

**Faculty Development and Support in the Online Environment**

The Sloan Consortium (2011) highly recommended that ongoing technical support be available to faculty interested in teaching online. In this study, each participant mentioned that technical support had been available both before and during their teaching experience. Alma, however, was the only participant who actively sought faculty development opportunities prior to teaching her course. This finding is not surprising considering she had no prior experience teaching online before she taught online for her honors college. She attended workshops and training sessions (Allen & Seaman, 2011; Hagenson & Castle, 2003; Lackey, 2011; Moloney & Oakley, 2006) prior to her first course iteration, and she continued seeking additional opportunities to further enhance her course in later iterations. She also worked closely with an instructional designer to develop the online environment for her course (Lackey, 2011).

The other participants relied on their own backgrounds teaching online or in hybrid environments to develop their online honors courses. In describing potential formats of

faculty development, Hagenson and Castle (2003) noted that instructors' own experiences could play a role in this area. Harvey in particular believed that he did not need additional assistance in developing his course because he already knew how to teach online. Mark also relied on his own experiences and his background in educational technology, as did Patrick, although Mark did rely on extra assistance to produce the videos he wanted to create for his students. Vicky created faculty development opportunities for other faculty at her institution, so she also was well-versed in course development.

Once the participants had designed their courses, more of them utilized faculty support resources during the semester in which they taught their course. The Sloan Consortium (2011) recommended that technical support not be limited to the course preparation process, but instead be available throughout the life of the course. Alma and Vicky both discussed the importance of having someone they could rely on as a contact with the technical support office (Lackey, 2011). When Alma's contact left, she struggled to work with a new staff member who was unfamiliar with her needs as an instructor. Vicky refused to work with anyone other than her personal contact. Mark also relied on support if he could not troubleshoot the problems his students were having online. All of the participants connected their students to technical support as needed.

Keengwe, Kidd, and Kyei-Blankson (2009) found that having examples available was important for faculty considering teaching online. In this study, the participants did not have examples available within honors to review when developing their course, further demonstrating how new online learning was within honors education. Vicky especially wanted examples, but instead she adapted to a method of trial and error as

she taught her course. Patrick did not have examples for online honors courses or for credit-bearing courses using the gaming platform he was using.

Mark's situation was unusual in that he was teaching an honors contract course, so his honors students were filtered into his regular online course. He did not, however, have a formalized plan for developing extra expectations of honors students in the online environment, perhaps explaining some of his disappointment in their performance.

The participants believed that having these examples would be critical for moving online learning forward within honors education. As innovators and early adopters, they were more comfortable dealing with uncertainty and taking risks in teaching, but they knew other colleagues in later adopter categories would not be as comfortable doing so. As such, they recognized that having examples and guidance in the form of mentoring or consulting would help with faculty support for future online honors courses.

**Addressing Faculty Concerns with Online Learning**

The participants shared their own concerns about teaching an honors course online, as well as discussed the concerns their colleagues had about teaching online. Academic integrity was one of the primary concerns participants had prior to teaching online (Haber & Mills, 2008; Schulte, 2010; Wa-Mbaleka, 2012; Watson & Sottile, 2010). Alma and Vicky chose to confront issues of academic integrity by requiring their students to submit assignments to plagiarism detection software (Wa-Mbaleka, 2012; Watson & Sottile, 2010).

By moving from tests to papers as the primary assessment, Alma believed she had removed academic dishonesty as a major issue in her course (Schulte, 2010; Wa-Mbaleka, 2012). She did not have to worry about proctoring exams or students gaining

unauthorized access to test material. By using papers, she could use the technology already available and synchronized with her course management system to check the originality of her students' work.

Harvey struggled with the concept of academic integrity, but decided that having an asynchronous class with the flexibility of anytime, anywhere learning was more important in the big picture of his course. He was willing to sacrifice potential issues with dishonesty in order to provide a more accessible course. Patrick focused more on authentic assessments in his course, where students had to relate course content to their own situations and experiences (Schulte, 2010). As such, he did not have to worry about students cheating on tests.

To their colleagues, academic integrity was not the primary barrier to teaching online, perhaps because there were larger concerns about the equivalency of online and face-to-face honors courses. The participants also struggled with this notion of equivalency, with Harvey and Vicky having most of the concerns in those areas. Because they did not have other models of online honors courses to review, there was not a sense of what honors might look like in an online environment.

Simonson (2000) found that a mistake instructors often made in developing their online course was trying to make their course equal to what it was in the face-to-face environment. He noted that face-to-face and online learning environments were fundamentally different (1999). Instead, instructors needed to make the overall learning experiences in each environment equivalent and tailored to the actual environment (Simonson, 1999; Simonson, Scholloser, & Hanson, 1999).

Three of the participants, Harvey, Vicky, and Alma, converted their face-to-face course to an online course. Patrick designed his online course from scratch, and Mark taught honors students via contract option so he did not change his course design. Of the three who converted their existing courses, Alma did not express concerns about equivalency. Perhaps because she was so invested in participating in training and working with an instructional designer, she was able to work through that process.

Vicky relied on her experiences with curriculum design and prior online courses outside of honors to think through how she would tailor learning events and assessments to better fit the online environment. She thought about whether or not she wanted online communication to be synchronous or asynchronous and designed activities accordingly. She also relied very heavily on rubrics and authentic outcomes (Simonson, 2000).

Harvey was not convinced that he had created an equivalent learning experience online and was the most skeptical that he could do so in the future. He questioned a lot of the typical activities and assessments that were part of the honors experience and how they might look in an online course, but he was not able to find a resolution. Nor did many of the activities he included in the course seem to promote the same outcomes and deliverables he had found in his face-to-face course. Although he had volunteered to teach an honors course online, it seemed as though a variety of internal and external factors impeded his progress and greatly impacted his outlook on equivalency.

Equivalency was also an issue for the participants' peers who were unconvinced that students would actually learn anything in an online environment. There were fears that instructors would lose control of the class and of the students. Some colleagues

simply believed that honors would not work online. As more honors instructors experiment with online learning and share their experiences publicly, perhaps online learning slowly will begin to trickle through the majority of the honors community.

A variety of studies found that a large barrier to teaching online was the perception of online courses taking more time and effort to teach (Bender, Wood, & Vredevoogd, 2004; Hislop & Ellis, 2004; Instructional Technology Council, 2011; McCarthy & Samors, 2009; Seaman, 2009). None of the participants found the time and effort they spent teaching online to be a problem. They recognized that they spent a considerable amount of time corresponding with students and reviewing discussions (Conceicao, 2006; Haber & Mills, 2008), but they also believed that their workload had only shifted rather than increased.

Many of the participants knew that they would spend a significant amount of time in course planning and development prior to the start of the term, but that once the term started they moved more into a course maintenance pattern. None of the participants seemed bothered or turned off from teaching online because of these patterns. Because honors courses of any type often take a significant investment of time and effort to design and teach (Clark & Zubizarreta, 2008; Fuiks & Clark, 2002), this finding is not surprising.

This section has included a discussion of major themes related to online learning in undergraduate honors education, as found through the participants' experiences teaching online. The participants' views of themselves as early adopters were compared to innovation adopter categories (Rogers, 2003). Their stance towards faculty development and support was compared to previous literature on faculty development

needs. Finally, their concerns about teaching online – and those concerns actualized – were related to literature on academic integrity, course assessments, equivalency, and workload. The next section includes implications for the primary constituents of this study, the undergraduate honors community.

## Implications for Undergraduate Honors Education

Based on the experiences of these participants as they taught their honors courses online, there are several implications for administrators and faculty in the honors community. Understanding the access to honors education which can be enhanced by online learning is one important consideration. Another implication is the need to develop an online pedagogy that meets the aims of honors education without sacrificing the integrity of the honors experience. Adopting hybrid or blended courses as a stepping stone to online learning is a final consideration.

### Creating Access

Based on the finding that many of the participants first offered to teach an online honors course based on meeting a need for their students, it is important to further explore issues of access within honors programs and colleges. At institutions with multiple campus sites, it is important to consider where and when honors courses are scheduled in order to provide maximum access for students who may be traveling between campuses, who may have conflicts with other courses, activities, and outside commitments, and who may be away from campus during the term.

In Mark's situation, there were not enough honors students on his campus to warrant a full honors course, so he added students to his online course as part of an honors contract. As Vicky found on her campus, a course required for many honors students in particular majors conflicted with every face-to-face honors course that was

offered one term. Harvey's students typically were not in the same city as the institution during the summer. Vicky and Harvey also found that their students had work and family obligations that prevented them from taking a face-to-face course, not surprising for non-traditional students. Mark and Patrick, who taught more traditional-aged honors students, found that competing obligations with other courses and activities made it difficult to take face-to-face honors courses.

Online courses should be an option to meet the needs of students who are not able to access honors courses for these very reasons. Issues of conflicting schedules and obligations and the inability to attend classes when not in the same physical location become moot when the honors course is moved into an online environment. Understanding the access needs of honors students is important for administrators to consider before discounting online learning as an option (Kampov-Polevoi, 2010; Lesht & Windes, 2011).

These issues of access are most apparent at two-year institutions, where a larger proportion of non-traditional students and multiple campus sites may be found. With a growing number of honors programs and colleges appearing at two-year institutions (James, 2006), it is important to consider the needs of the unique population that attends those institutions. Online honors courses will help these students remain an active and engaged member of the program or college, while still being able to balance multiple responsibilities outside of the classroom.

At both the two-year and four-year level, honors students are encouraged to seek out opportunities for global engagement, internships, and research with faculty members (NCHC, 2010b). Such opportunities may take students away from campus for

a semester or summer, thereby limiting their access to honors courses. According to the Basic Characteristics of Fully Developed Honors Programs / Colleges (NCHC, 2010a; NCHC, 2010b), honors courses form the academic core of any honors program or college, with requirements including a substantial amount of coursework. Online honors courses should be offered as a way to continue meeting honors course requirements without regard for time or distance limitations.

On a related note, online learning has been seen as a solution to declining enrollments in programs (Lesht & Windes, 2011). Honors programs and colleges are not immune to declining enrollments or shrinking budgets which impact the opportunity for or availability of faculty to teach intimate, face-to-face honors courses for a select few students (Wilson, 2012). The Associated Colleges of the South recently announced a New Paradigm Initiative, designed to share online or blended courses among their 16 colleges (Selingo, 2012).

The honors community should look to this model to create unique online honors courses that could be shared among various programs or colleges. Honors students would have greater access to a variety of honors courses, again, without time or distance limitations. The collaboration that would be involved in undertaking such a venture falls well within the spirit of the honors community. Even without consideration of budget and enrollment reductions, the ability to increase access to undergraduate honors education through these course sharing opportunities is an exciting prospect worthy of further exploration.

**Meeting the Aims of Honors Online**

Perhaps the largest barrier to online learning in undergraduate honors education is the fear that the aims of honors education will not be met in an online environment. The

National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC, 2012) has provided guidelines for honors course objectives that include developing written and oral communication skills, developing the ability to analyze, synthesize, and understand scholarly work, and helping students become independent and critical thinkers. Of these outcomes, all of them could be met in an online environment, including oral communication skills. The challenge is helping honors faculty understand the links between such outcomes and the online environment.

The Community of Inquiry (COI) framework (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000) provides one way to consider addressing the aims of honors in an online environment. The three core elements of COI include social, cognitive, and teaching presence (Garrison, 2006). Social presence involves the way students connect with each other on a personal level online. While not included specifically in NCHC's (2012) course outcomes, many of the participants of this study noted the importance of building community among students. Harvey struggled in this area. Even with only five students, he did not feel as though they formed any type of learning community online that he typically found in his face-to-face courses. Patrick was able to form smaller communities within work groups, but in the larger class, he noted the lack of social interaction among students. Alma also feared that students did not get to know each other as well online, although she was willing to move past that issue due to other factors.

In an online environment communication is structured differently – it happens less frequently but with more deliberation (Garrison, 2006). The beginning of the course is the ideal time to set expectations about communication and community. Social presence can be increased online by setting the tone through student introductions,

discussing expectations for communication in online forums, and including ways for students to see each other's faces through pictures or synchronous communication activities (Garrison, 2006; Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000).

The participants all started strong by including an orientation to their course. Many of these orientations included a discussion forum for introductions, as well as expectations of student performance. To increase social presence, the instructors could have had students create multimedia introductions, rather than text-based introductions, as well as had students discuss course expectations in small groups. Quality of interaction, timely responses, message length, and group size are seen as important factors for instructors to consider (Garrrison, 2007; Tu & McIsaac, 2002).

Instructors also could increase social presence through the use of synchronous communication tools (Hrastinski, Keller, & Carlsson, 2010; Leo, Manganello, Pennacchietti, Pistoia, Kinshuk, & Chen, 2009; McBrien, Jones, & Cheng, 2009). Although many of the participants were hesitant to use chat or hold virtual office hours, Harvey did mention that if he ever taught again, he would consider adding more synchronous communication tools to help build community. Synchronous communication still allows participants to be in any location, but they have the opportunity to interact in real-time through the use of text, audio, and video chat, whiteboards, and screen-sharing (Bower, 2011; Hrastinski, et al., 2010; Martin, 2010). Such tools also aid students in small group collaboration (Hrastinski, et al., 2010; Marjanovic, 1999), clarification of course content (Leo, et al., 2009), immediacy of feedback (Martin, 2010), and comfort in expressing opinions (McBrien, Jones, & Cheng, 2009).

Cognitive presence is the manner in which students construct meaning through reflection and discourse (Garrison, 2006). Critical thinking, one of the outcomes of honors courses (NCHC, 2012) is the desired process and outcome of cognitive presence as well (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2001). Four phases of critical inquiry include triggering events, exploration, integration, and resolution (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2001) and can be explored by studying messages and responses within the discussion forums.

Harvey and Mark both were concerned about the depth of critical analysis demonstrated in their online discussions. While Mark's honors students performed well in discussions, he did not find that their work was exemplary. Harvey was disappointed in all aspects of his students' discussions. On the other hand, Alma and Vicky both found their students' critical thinking skills to be on par with their previous experiences teaching face-to-face.

The online environment is an ideal place for reflection, much more so than the face-to-face environment where external factors can influence a student's ability to speak up (Garrison, 2006). The types of questions instructors pose in discussion forums should allow for more reflection and in-depth responses (Bangert, 2008; Ertmer, Sadaf, & Ertmer, 2011). Creating expectations for discussion responses, as well as rubrics to evaluate them, can help improve the types of responses given by students (Gilbert & Dabbagh, 2005; Swan, Shen, & Hiltz, 2006). Activities need to be selected that match the various phases of critical inquiry (Garrison, 2006) and should be meaningful and purposeful to the student (Ke, Chavez, Causarano, & Causarano, 2011; Young & Bruce, 2011).

The final component of the COI model involves teaching presence, or the design and facilitation of the course in a way that supports the social and cognitive presence (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000). It is the instructor who creates the opportunity for students to develop their written and oral communication skills, to interact with scholarly material, and to become critical thinkers. Shea (2006) found that instructors who exhibited stronger behaviors in this area, including instructional design, course organization, and directed facilitation, were able to create a stronger sense of community in their courses.

All of the participants except for Harvey used either an instructional design approach or worked with an instructional designer to plan their courses. Alma's and Vicky's classes in particular were exemplary models of organization and facilitation. That their courses were the two with the highest success rates in meeting the aims of honors education is not surprising due to the time and effort they put into planning and teaching their course.

The discussion forum is one of the most evident displays of teacher presence, and instructors have an opportunity to really define their role as facilitator in this area (DeNoyelles, 2012; Shea, Vickers, & Hayes, 2010). Too much involvement in discussion might stifle students, while too little involvement might turn off students as well (Garrison, 2006; Shea, 2006). Teacher presence can be exhibited outside of the realm of discussion, through a focus on assignment feedback and opportunities to communicate with the instructor (Shea, Vickers, & Hayes, 2010).

In addition, students could develop their own forms of teacher presence if the instructor allows them to take leadership roles within the online environment (Shea,

Vickers, & Hayes, 2010). Such an opportunity sounds ideal for honors students who enjoy taking leadership roles in the classroom. Mark had a great opportunity through his honors contract requirements to set more formal expectations of students taking a leadership role. Without setting such expectations, it can be difficult for students to know what expectations they should be meeting, especially in the midst of competing obligations. By delineating specific roles for his honors students online, as he was planning to develop in his upcoming face-to-face honors course, he might have been much more satisfied with their performance as they took more ownership of class leadership.

As previously mentioned Harvey also struggled with his students' performance. Within the Community of Inquiry framework, it should be noted that Harvey was resistant to seeking assistance in designing and teaching his course. Relying solely on his previous experiences teaching online, the burden of converting his honors course to an online environment was left to him alone. An instructional designer might have provided valuable guidance in crafting discussion questions and other assessments that got to the core of the critical inquiry Harvey desired. The very small class size likely hindered the social bonds that students could form, and instead he focused on the individual projects throughout the second half of the term. Finally, his teaching presence might have been impacted as he got more discouraged with the products his students were submitting.

While it is not the only way to meet the aims of honors education online, the Community of Inquiry framework does provide a more intentional method of designing and delivering the online experience. At the intersection of social, cognitive, and

teaching presence is a solid foundation for providing a more equivalent learning experience for honors students.

**Blending Online Instruction into Honors**

Many of the participants believed that hybrid or blended courses could be either a good gateway into online learning or a more reasonable approach to meeting the aims of honors education through technology. While Harvey was not planning to consider teaching an online honors course again, he did think that a hybrid course could be a compromise. Patrick and Mark also believed that a hybrid format might be a better fit for their honors courses. Vicky was content with her completely online format, but she did note that faculty interested in teaching online might start slowly by gradually moving from a web-assisted to hybrid to online format.

Blended learning includes a wide range of options to integrate online and face-to-face instruction. Allen, Seaman, and Garrett (2007) defined a blended course as a learning environment where 30-79% of course content is delivered online. Similar definitions described blended learning as a “learning environment that combines face-to-face instruction with technology-mediated instruction” (Graham & Dziuban, 2008, p. 270), or courses that do so with a reduction in classroom contact hours (Dziuban, Hartman, & Moskal, 2004).

Garrison and Vaughan (2008) defined blended learning as the “thoughtful fusion of face-to-face and online learning experiences” (p. 5). It is the “thoughtful fusion” that warrants consideration here. Although many faculty and administrators believe that hybrid instruction is a middle ground between face-to-face and online instruction (Allen, Seaman, & Garrett, 2007; Dziuban, Hartman & Moskal, 2004; Garrison & Vaughan, 2008; Niemiec & Otte, 2009), it carries with it its own set of unique features and

characteristics. Determining the strengths of both the face-to-face and online environments, as well as creating a seamless integration of both environments, add more dimensions to course design and delivery (Dziuban, Hartman, & Moskal, 2004; Garrison & Vaughan, 2008; Graham & Dziuban, 2008).

There should be a purpose for deciding to teach a blended course, including meeting a need to increase access to courses, growing enrollment in certain areas, improving program completion rates, and enhancing an instructor's teaching and learning (Niemiec & Otte, 2009), all of which apply to honors faculty. Kenney and Newcombe (2011) recommend starting small, perhaps by piloting a content unit and studying its effectiveness in this new format. By taking small steps such as these, honors faculty who resist fully online courses should find a blended environment more acceptable (Niemiec & Otte, 2009).

The Community of Inquiry framework also works in the blended environment (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008). Creating social, cognitive, and teaching presence while balancing the social strengths of the face-to-face environment with the more reflective strengths of the online environment is important in building a successful blended course. The face-to-face environment can be the place to develop social presence through the use of icebreakers and brainstorming sessions. Social presence can be sustained online through discussions where students have an opportunity to more deeply reflect on the content (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008).

To develop cognitive presence, it is important to determine which phases of critical inquiry (triggering events, exploration, integration, and resolution) (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2001) and learning activities that support them might work best in an online

versus a face-to-face environment (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008). All content and activities should be delivered from an inquiry perspective. In the face-to-face environment, lectures, brainstorming, role plays, and debates might be appropriate. Online, activities could include discussions, critiques, and case studies where students have an opportunity for more in-depth reflection (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008).

Similar to the fully online environment, teaching presence in a blended course is a delicate balance between facilitating discussion and directly influencing the flow and content of discussion (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008). Selecting appropriate course materials and assessments, as well as determining when to interrupt a discussion to answer a question versus letting students determine a resolution on their own, are important considerations (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008).

There have been two recent documentations of a blended honors course in the literature. Doherty (2010) recognized the need to address the intersection of technology and honors as he redesigned his honors course. While he was not concerned about access to honors courses, as his students were all on-campus and traditional-aged, he saw an opportunity to rethink his pedagogy by taking advantage of the course management system he was required to use for posting course materials.

Doherty based his changes on observations he had made in his face-to-face courses. He noticed that honors students were resistant to in-class icebreakers, mainly because they were doing the same icebreakers at orientation, in classes, and with their student organizations, and they were tired of doing them. As a result he moved the icebreaker into a discussion format online. He also opted not to spend class time reviewing the syllabus on the first day, or any subsequent day. Students had to review

the syllabus within the course management system and complete a quiz demonstrating their awareness of course requirements and expectations. Students also had to earn at least a 90% in two attempts of an online quiz on their readings in order to gain access to the assignment dropbox for that unit. Finally, Doherty noted that he could extend the due date on assignments by making them due on the weekends via the course management system versus having students submit them in class.

Gresham, Bowles, Gibson, Robinson, Farris, and Felts (2012) believed that online and blended honors courses deserved serious consideration in the honors community in order to “remain relevant in a connected world” (p. 44). In their blended honors course, students completed all reading and writing assignments online in order to create classroom time for activities, discussions, and other active learning opportunities. They found blended to be a worthwhile investment because they noted their students were more introverted and less likely to speak up in class. By opening dialogue in the online environment, those students had more of an opportunity to participate and engage in the class. Students appreciated the new course structure, as did the faculty.

In both examples (Doherty, 2010; Gresham et al., 2010) honors instructors were interested in enhancing the honors course experience for their students. Without completely doing away with face-to-face class time, they were able to incorporate online elements into their course, a strategy more hesitant honors instructors might be willing to consider. Keeping in mind that a blended course requires just as much course redesign as an online course, potential instructors should take advantage of faculty development and support to make the transition as purposeful and intentional as possible.

Outside of the formal classroom, blended learning has potential with other NCHC programs. Incorporating an online component to Partners in the Parks or City as Text programs could be a powerful opportunity for students and faculty to connect before and after their experience. Partners in the Parks participants could discuss literature related to the area surrounding their natural park. City as Text participants could plot their travel itineraries on Google maps prior to their trip and then post reviews following the trip. Both groups could develop wiki pages chronicling the areas they explored. Students participating in honors semesters could be connected through an online medium to honors students who are unable to participate in the on-site experience. Students could share course lectures and discussions, with home-based students participating in local activities that complement the experiences taking place at a distance.

As the primary stakeholders of this study were members of the undergraduate honors community, three primary implications arose from the findings. Keeping an eye to access to honors education is an important consideration for online learning. If honors programs and colleges are going to mandate that students take honors courses in order to complete requirements, those honors courses must be available. Online courses allow honors students to fulfill their requirements without regard to time or distance.

Using the Community of Inquiry framework as a guide to meeting the aims of honors education is another implication. Social presence lends itself to the community-building aspect of honors courses, while cognitive presence meshes with the focus on critical inquiry. Teaching presence is similar to the teaching styles often preferred by honors faculty. Finally, blended learning could be an important first step for hesitant

honors instructors to explore the online realms of education. As honors moves slowly towards the consideration and adoption of blended or online learning, the following recommendations for future research and practice should be considered.

## Recommendations for Future Research

Currently there is limited research on undergraduate honors education, especially as it relates to pedagogy and technology. This study was designed to explore online honors courses from the perspectives of early adopters. There are a variety of other related qualitative studies that could be conducted, including researching the perspectives of honors administrators who serve as gatekeepers to online course adoption, faculty at the other end of the adoption curve, and students who have taken these courses.

This study focused on the teaching experiences of five early adopters of online learning in undergraduate honors education. Although the participants included their observations of honors students in the online environment, the perspectives of the students themselves were not included. Focus groups should be conducted with students who have taken an online honors course to examine what factors they believe have led to a positive online learning experience and vice versa.

Honors deans and directors determine their program or college's course offerings on a semester-by-semester basis. As such, they serve as gatekeepers for future involvement in online learning. Studying their perspectives on online learning, including potential concerns, is useful for addressing their needs through future online course proposals. Finally, there is no shortage of opposition to online learning among honors faculty. Studying their concerns through interviews or focus groups could help early adopters better address those concerns through faculty development and support.

From the mixed methods perspective, studies should be conducted on a variety of related topics. A comprehensive case study including interviews, focus groups, surveys, and assessment data with an honors program or college will provide rich data on the potential for online learning. The assessment data might provide evidence for a need to offer online courses, including scheduling conflicts with other required courses, current enrollments in honors courses, ability to complete honors course requirements, students studying from a distance, and competing obligations outside of the classroom. Combined with interviews and focus groups with students, the need to create access to honors courses via online learning could develop.

The need to develop an online pedagogy for honors was reiterated by several participants. Design studies should be conducted to study the actual design and development of online or hybrid course options for honors. Formative assessments could take the form of focus groups, interviews, and analytics collected internally by the course management system. Feedback on content scaffolding, assessments, and course materials and products would be helpful in further enhancing these types of courses.

Quantitatively, this topic should be explored through content analysis of online discussion forums, surveys of students and faculty about their experiences with online learning, and studies of social, cognitive, and teaching presence using the community of inquiry model. Some of the participants were troubled particularly by the lack of in-depth analysis exhibited by students in the online discussion forums. A content analysis could be used to examine critical thinking skills or various levels of Bloom's taxonomy exhibited through online discussion dialogues. Results might impact the type of

questions asked in the discussion forums, the amount of teacher presence to guide discussion or provide feedback, or the rubrics designed to evaluate discussion participation.

## Recommendations for Practice

There are a variety of recommendations for practice aimed towards the undergraduate honors community. As many of the participants stated, honors faculty need access to resources, whether that entails examples from online or hybrid honors courses, or experienced instructors who can serve as mentors and support. While innovators and early adopters may find it somewhat easier to experiment and troubleshoot problems on their own without access to examples or mentors, the rest of the population of honors faculty will need much more guidance if they are going to adopt online learning.

From the national level, the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) or another interested party should create resources for honors faculty. Two models already in existence through the University of Central Florida's Teaching Online Pedagogical Repository (TOPR) and the National Institute for Technology in Liberal Education (NITLE) are excellent examples for NCHC. TOPR (Thompson & Chen, 2012) is a public wiki in beta release where instructors contribute pedagogical practices, including actual artifacts from online and hybrid courses. Current contributions include methods of social interaction, discussion prompts, assessments, and presentation of course content. The site is guided by an editorial board and will include a formal submission and review process once it is in full release.

NITLE (2012) is a national network of liberal arts colleges and universities originally founded to help integrate technology use into teaching and learning at those

institutions. NITLE provides consulting services to help liberal arts institutions plan strategically for technology decisions related to teaching and learning. NITLE Labs has created an Innovation Studio in concert with their symposium for participants to tackle challenges, develop solutions, and build models related to issues in liberal education. Participants are guided by mentors throughout the process. In addition NITLE provides listservs focused on a variety of technology topics as applied to liberal arts-focused disciplines, and case studies on effective models and practices.

The honors community needs a learning space that combines many of the aspects of TOPR and NITLE, including a repository of peer-reviewed artifacts from online or hybrid honors courses. Case studies or even blog posts, as Vicky suggested, on online or hybrid course implementation should be highlighted on the site to further describe how the artifacts were utilized. A special listserv or internal discussion board related to honors and technology should be created for interested parties. Experienced instructors should volunteer to serve as consultants from a distance or in-person at regional and national conferences. These conferences must include a learning space for instructors to experiment with various tools and discuss how they might implement such tools in their own courses.

Unfortunately, it can be difficult to enact change when the majority is not ready for it. Prior personal experience and the experiences of several of this study's participants, as well as evidence from national conferences and the NCHC listserv, have shown that there is still great opposition to online learning at the national level of the honors community. Highlights from the most recent NCHC Board of Directors meeting do show that online learning currently is being discussed, although it is not clear how serious the

association is about pursuing a direction (Lanier, 2012). Deciding how to incorporate many of these suggestions outside of NCHC if they are unresponsive will be an important next step. Perhaps some of the participants of this study and other technology-focused honors faculty might be willing to create such resources independently.

## Final Thoughts

In the lead essay from a recent Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council forum on “The Institutional Impact of Honors,” Carnicorn (2011) argued that undergraduate honors education “preserves the value of innovation by maintaining a tradition that affords our best students the opportunity to practice thinking and communicating creatively, something that is best facilitated in small, face-to-face environments” (p. 52). He continues by arguing against the “new distance-learning models heavily favored by the for-profits” (p. 52).

In Carnicorn’s view, innovation in honors education remains a product of the face-to-face classroom environment, not to be disrupted by something that the “for-profits” do. Unfortunately, his view is echoed by many in the honors community – or at least by many of the vocal members of the honors community. But the face-to-face classroom does not hold an exclusive grasp on the market of creativity, critical thinking, and communication.

Online learning proponents, with the backing of evidence-based research, must begin advocating louder and clearer to demonstrate their place at the table of honors education. While it may come as a surprise to many of the detractors of online learning, innovation within honors education will cease to happen without the use of technology. As many of this study’s participants stated, the honors community’s refusal to

acknowledge and incorporate online learning will be to its detriment long-term as students look elsewhere to meet their academic needs.

The purpose of this study was to describe the phenomenon of online honors courses from the perspectives of the instructors teaching them. While the participants' teaching experiences were mixed, the findings indicate great potential for online learning as an additional method of course delivery in honors. With an eye towards increasing access for students, coupled with an openness for experimentation and examples and support from experienced faculty, online learning should soon make further inroads within the undergraduate honors community.

## APPENDIX A
## BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF A FULLY DEVELOPED HONORS PROGRAM

Although no single or definitive honors program model can or should be superimposed on all types of institutions, the National Collegiate Honors Council has identified a number of best practices that are common to successful and fully developed honors programs.

1. The honors program offers carefully designed educational experiences that meet the needs and abilities of the undergraduate students it serves. A clearly articulated set of admission criteria (e.g., GPA, SAT score, a written essay, satisfactory progress, etc.) identifies the targeted student population served by the honors program. The program clearly specifies the requirements needed for retention and satisfactory completion.

2. The program has a clear mandate from the institution's administration in the form of a mission statement or charter document that includes the objectives and responsibilities of honors and defines the place of honors in the administrative and academic structure of the institution. The statement ensures the permanence and stability of honors by guaranteeing that adequate infrastructure resources, including an appropriate budget as well as appropriate faculty, staff, and administrative support when necessary, are allocated to honors so that the program avoids dependence on the good will and energy of particular faculty members or administrators for survival. In other words, the program is fully institutionalized (like comparable units on campus) so that it can build a lasting tradition of excellence.

3. The honors director reports to the chief academic officer of the institution.

4. The honors curriculum, established in harmony with the mission statement, meets the needs of the students in the program and features special courses, seminars, colloquia, experiential learning opportunities, undergraduate research opportunities, or other independent-study options.

5. The program requirements constitute a substantial portion of the participants' undergraduate work, typically 20% to 25% of the total course work and certainly no less than 15%.

6. The curriculum of the program is designed so that honors requirements can, when appropriate, also satisfy general education requirements, major or disciplinary requirements, and preprofessional or professional training requirements.

7. The program provides a locus of visible and highly reputed standards and models of excellence for students and faculty across the campus.

8. The criteria for selection of honors faculty include exceptional teaching skills, the ability to provide intellectual leadership and mentoring for able students, and support for the mission of honors education.

9. The program is located in suitable, preferably prominent, quarters on campus that provide both access for the students and a focal point for honors activity. Those accommodations include space for honors administrative, faculty, and support staff functions as appropriate. They may include space for an honors lounge, library, reading rooms, and computer facilities. If the honors program has a significant residential component, the honors housing and residential life functions are designed to meet the academic and social needs of honors students.

10. The program has a standing committee or council of faculty members that works with the director or other administrative officer and is involved in honors curriculum, governance, policy, development, and evaluation deliberations. The composition of that group represents the colleges and/or departments served by the program and also elicits support for the program from across the campus.

11. Honors students are assured a voice in the governance and direction of the honors program. This can be achieved through a student committee that conducts its business with as much autonomy as possible but works in collaboration with the administration and faculty to maintain excellence in the program. Honors students are included in governance, serving on the advisory/policy committee as well as constituting the group that governs the student association.

12. Honors students receive honors-related academic advising from qualified faculty and/or staff.

13. The program serves as a laboratory within which faculty feel welcome to experiment with new subjects, approaches, and pedagogies. When proven successful, such efforts in curriculum and pedagogical development can serve as prototypes for initiatives that can become institutionalized across the campus.

14. The program engages in continuous assessment and evaluation and is open to the need for change in order to maintain its distinctive position of offering exceptional and enhanced educational opportunities to honors students.

15. The program emphasizes active learning and participatory education by offering opportunities for students to participate in regional and national conferences, Honors Semesters, international programs, community service, internships, undergraduate research, and other types of experiential education.

16. When appropriate, two-year and four-year programs have articulation agreements by which honors graduates from two-year programs who meet previously agreed-upon requirements are accepted into four-year honors programs.

17. The program provides priority enrollment for active honors students in recognition of scheduling difficulties caused by the need to satisfy both honors and major program(s) requirements.

Approved by the NCHC Executive Committee on March 4, 1994; amended by the NCHC Board of Directors on November 23, 2007; further amended by the NCHC Board of Directors on February 19, 2010. Retrieved May 22, 2012, from: http://nchchonors.org/faculty-directors/basic-characteristics-of-a-fully-developed-honors-program/

The NCHC Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors College and Honors Program are reprinted by permission of the National Collegiate Honors Council. For official permission from NCHC, see Appendix I.

## APPENDIX B
## BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF A FULLY DEVELOPED HONORS COLLEGE

The National Collegiate Honors Council has identified these best practices that are common to successful and fully developed honors colleges.

1. An honors college incorporates the relevant characteristics of a fully developed honors program.

2. The honors college exists as an equal collegiate unit within a multi-collegiate university structure.

3. The head of the honors college is a dean reporting directly to the chief academic officer of the institution and serving as a full member of the Council of Deans if one exists. The dean has a fulltime, 12-month appointment.

4. The operational and staff budgets of honors colleges provide resources at least comparable to those of other collegiate units of equivalent size.

5. The honors college exercises increased coordination and control of departmental honors where the college has emerged out of a decentralized system.

6. The honors college exercises considerable control over honors recruitment and admissions, including the appropriate size of the incoming class. Admission to the honors college may be by separate application.

7. The honors college exercises considerable control over its policies, curriculum, and selection of faculty.

8. The curriculum of the honors college offers significant course opportunities across all four years of study.

9. The curriculum of the honors college constitutes at least 20% of a student’s degree program. The honors college requires an honors thesis or honors capstone project.

10. Where the home university has a significant residential component, the honors college offers substantial honors residential opportunities.

11. The distinction achieved by the completion of the honors college requirements is publically announced and recorded, and methods may include announcement at commencement ceremonies, notations on the diploma and/or the student’s final transcript, or other similar actions.

12. Like other colleges within the university, the honors college may be involved in alumni affairs and development and may have an external advisory board.

Approved by the NCHC Executive Committee on June 25, 2005, and amended by the NCHC Board of Directors on February 19, 2010. Retrieved May 22, 2012, from http://nchchonors.org/faculty-directors/basic-characteristics-of-a-fully-developed-honors-college/

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# APPENDIX C
# CONSENT FORM

***Please read this consent document carefully before you decide to participate in this study.***

**Protocol Title:** The essence of the online teaching experience in undergraduate honors education

**Purpose of the research study:** The purpose of the study is to describe the experiences of faculty members who teach honors courses online at their respective institutions

**What you will be asked to do in the study:** To participate in three individual interviews during late fall 2011 and early spring 2012.

**Time required:** 60-90 minutes

**Risks and Benefits:** No more than minimal risk. There is no direct benefit to the participant in this research. However, this research can add to the understanding of the experiences of faculty members teaching online honors courses, and it can help to understand the challenges, goals, interactions, and motivations experienced during this experience. No more than minimum risks are anticipated.

**Compensation:** None.

**Confidentiality:** Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. The final results may be presented in a paper submitted to education journals and magazines for possible publication, as well as in poster sessions or presentations at professional conferences. Data will be maintained by the researcher in a secure environment and will be destroyed at the end of the study.

**Voluntary participation:** Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There is no penalty for not participating.

**Right to withdraw from the study:** You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

**Whom to contact if you have questions about the study:**

Principal Investigator: Melissa L. Johnson, University Honors Program, 343 Infirmary, 352-392-1519.

**Whom to contact about your rights as a research participant in the study:**

UFIRB Office, Box 112250, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611-2250; 352-392-0433.

**I have read the procedure outlined above. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study and have received a copy of this description.**

Participant’s signature and date ______________________________________________

Principle investigator’s signature and date ______________________________________________

# APPENDIX D
# RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Dear Colleagues,

I am in the process of completing my dissertation study on the phenomenon of online courses in honors. While I recognize that the response to online education may be mixed within our community, I seek to understand what online honors courses might look like – how they are created, taught, and evaluated – as well as what the implications might be for our profession.

As part of my study I would like to find at least five faculty members who have designed and taught an online honors course for more than one semester. An online course is defined as a course in which at least 80 percent of the course content is delivered online (Allen & Seaman, 2010). In addition, the faculty member must have designed the course that is taught online.

The type of institution (2-year / 4-year, public / private, program / college) and course subject do not matter, although I would like to find instructors from a variety of backgrounds for breadth of knowledge and experience.

Instructors will be asked to participate in three phone interviews during the early spring of 2012. Interviews will focus on their course design process, course delivery (the actual teaching of the course) and evaluation, and implications for the honors community.

I hope to share the results of this study with NCHC through possible publications and/or annual conference presentations.

If you meet the study criteria and are interested in participating, please contact me at mjohnson@honors.ufl.edu or (352) 392-1519. If you know of another faculty member at your institution who has taught an online honors course, please pass along this information or have them contact me.

Thank you in advance for your support and participation!

Sincerely,

Melissa L. Johnson
Assistant Director, University Honors Program
Doctoral Candidate, Educational Technology
University of Florida

# APPENDIX E
# INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

Interview 1: Designing Your Course

1. Purpose of study

2. Instructor background – discipline, experience with/teaching honors, experience teaching online

3. Course information – describe your course, intended audience, requirements fulfilled, etc.

4. Course design – possible probes:

   Why teach online?

   Concerns about teaching online – prior to teaching?

   What did you have to consider before planning course online? (resources, learners, etc.)

   What were some of the learning outcomes you developed for course?

   How did you develop activities / assignments for course?

   How did you plan to evaluate the learning in your course?

   What resources did you utilize to assist with course design?

   Other aspects of course design?

Interview 2: Teaching Your Course

1. Follow-up from previous interview (if necessary)

2. Course teaching – possible probes:

   Describe the actual process of teaching your course via a typical week or class module

What did you have to consider while teaching your course? (learners, technology, time for feedback, etc)

What were some of the technologies you used in your course? How were they used?

How did students communicate with you outside of class?

What support resources did you utilize while teaching the course?

What were some of the challenges you faced in teaching this course?

What were some of the successes you found in teaching this course?

What were some of the similarities between teaching an online course and a face-to-face honors course?

What were some of the differences between teaching an online course and a face-to-face honors course?

Other aspects of teaching the course

Interview 3: Reflecting on Your Course

1. Follow up from previous interviews (if necessary)
2. Reflection – possible probes:

What were some of your considerations as you wrapped up the semester?

How do you know you met the initial learning outcomes you designed for your course?

How did you get student feedback before, during, and/or after the course?

What was the student response to your course based on their feedback?

What were some of the "lessons learned" from your course?

How do you feel this course has / has not met the aims of honors education?

How do you feel this course met / did not meet your expectations for teaching honors students online?

What made you decide to continue / discontinue teaching this course for honors students?

How has this course changed since your first iteration of the course? (if applicable)

Other evaluation / reflection

3. What was it about you that made you willing to pioneer honors course online?

4. Implications – possible probes:

How do you think online education currently is viewed among colleagues in honors (at institution or across state / country)?

What do you think are some of the general concerns about teaching honors courses online?

What suggestions do you have for colleagues thinking about teaching honors courses online?

What resources (national, institutional, departmental) are needed to better guide colleagues in teaching online?

Other implications

# APPENDIX F
# EXAMPLES OF PARTICIPANTS' CODES – IN-DEPTH TEACHING DESCRIPTIONS

## Harvey's Teaching Experience

Designing the Course
Focus on maintaining flexibility over trying to control cheating
How to organize material
Participation
Community
How to integrate research project
Peer review
Time – how to balance work with other student commitments
Deeper understanding of the American experience
Deeper engagement with research project
Passed final
Ok on projects
Minimal on discussion

Teaching the Course
Informal
Open discussion board
Post questions about course
Syllabus quiz
Extended time to complete first assignment
Nothing on using CMS
12 modules of content in 1st six weeks
Research projects in 2nd six weeks
15 topics to cover
Each student took 5
Some overlap
First half of semester – content
Second half of semester – project
Same course material
Same assignments except participation
Weekly quizzes
Research project
Final synthetic essay
Final cumulative exam
Discussion – purpose to create community
Community not happening
Time on task – created quizzes
Weekly discussions
Post question
Students respond
Try to be organic
Respond to messages, ideas, issues
Develop teaching modules
Research background
Analyze work
Develop questions that could be used for topics
Independent work with deadlines and check-ins

Reflecting on the Course
Struggle – creating community
Tried synchronous discussions
Didn't work
Students had other commitments
Asynchronous discussions didn't work
Students didn't get to know each other
Discussion not satisfying – dropped it as assignment
Tried chat, synchronous / asynchronous – didn't work
Replaced discussion with quizzes – focus on time on task
Small class size – no room to hide
Couldn't get everyone together for synchronous discussions
Chat didn't work
Students didn't have time for synchronous
Discussion boards – did they really read other posts?
Trying to get students to be active

Trying to get students to respond to each other
Form community
Feels secondary in importance
Tried to make class a top priority for students
Doesn't think succeeded
Trying to keep self motivated
Set aside time to work on course
Respond to students enthusiastically
Contact students via email to encourage them
Staying motivated – just what you do professionally
General equivalency struggle w/ online and F2F at institution
How to do discussions online
Doesn't feel organic online
Lose nuances in interpersonal communication
Some students not tech savvy
How to make experience equivalent
Doesn't know if it can be
Equivalency – take it literally in terms of curriculum design
College pushing for more online
Struggle with cheating (less so with honors)
Students – trouble with CMS (less so with honors)
Only offered honors course once
Bad experience for me
Couldn't create sense of community
Experience was so unsatisfying
I'll teach the course again online, but not through honors
No community happening
Struggle – access vs integrity
Maintain flexibility
Given up on trying to control cheating
Wouldn't teach again
Missed F2F
Missed learning community
Decided not to teach another online course in honors
Would consider hybrid
Mostly have web-assisted honors courses
Experimenting with hybrid
No other online courses
Research project worked well online
Splitting courses into content and focused research worked well online
Not sure if online is a good environment for honors
Hybrid might work
End of course – ready to get it over with
Disappointed in participation
Group assignment didn't work well
Research projects not superior
Ready to move on

Patrick's Teaching Experience

Designing the Course
Skepticism about using game
Students might think course is just about playing game
Have in-person meeting about expectations
Show course modules
Show syllabus
Put expectations up front
Major concern – student expectations
Previous experiences with online courses
Make it highly structured
Modules – self-contained
Clear rationale for assignments
Background statement
Objectives
Concern – linking game to real world skills
Will students get it?
Connect skills used in game to real world situations
Connect with own experiences
Gender

Might turn away females due to competition
Try to focus on collaboration
Reduce competition
Reduce focus on prior experience
Work load
Feel like academic course
Anticipate student questions and concerns before class starts
Constant iterative process
Constantly making changes based on feedback
Prepare for fast-paced, professional world
Participate in groups
Produce quality group products
Group skills
Individual problem solving skills
Critical thinking skills
Students apply to real world
Difficult to test critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration

Teaching the Course
Meeting with prospective students after they register semester prior
Meeting at beginning of semester
Meetings included in course description
Students ask questions
Course overview
CMS overview
Syllabus
Project examples
45 min – 1 hr
Chance to drop course if it doesn't meet expectations
Assign small groups so they can meet
Talk to each other
Exchange contact information
Intro section in CMS
Syllabus
Expectations
Objectives and goals
Introductory forum post
Students respond to each other
Instructor responds to each
At meeting students log into CMS and explore it
Show them various features
No lecture
Module contains materials needed
Link what they've learned in other classes, internships, etc
Focus on management, economics, business
Professional skills
Critical thinking
Problem solving
Collaboration
Practical Applications
Skills that can be used in a variety of fields
Projects on game play analysis
Group work analysis
Teamwork
Group work randomly assigned to foster collaboration
Most revolve around game
Focus on higher order thinking skills
Reflection added to assignments
Collaboration
Leadership and personality inventories
Online links
Academic articles
Popular consumer articles
Gaming in education articles
Links – can insert or delete as needed
Group work
Information on conflict resolution
Group skills
Group dynamics
Randomly assigned
Equal footing
Meet each other during 2nd meeting
Preferred modes of communication
Show tools to help with group work

Reflecting on the Course
Misconception – grade based on game performance
Differences within groups
Conflict management policy

Reduced requirements that were repetitive
Hard for students to evaluation course – no other experiences like this
Doesn't meet student expectations
Fully disclosed – won't be all fun and games
Includes more group work now
Group assignment
Personality and leadership inventory
Group dynamics
May not use CMS again
Focus on tools they can use later
No big challenges related to teaching
Would rather teach in person
Not all nuances online
Difficult to teach very complex info
Would have more interaction between groups if F2F
Students work well within own group online
Don't get to know those outside group
Do we make it more social?
Need more objective quantitative measurements
Need more effective ways to assess course
Difficult to assess soft skills
Online might not be best way to do it
Probably won't offer much longer
Everything runs course
Need to address gender
Is it unfair to offer course in gaming?
Has proven it will work

Alma's Teaching Experience

Designing the Course
Didn't want to use exams
Honors should be research-oriented
Research can't be copied
Give suggestions on approach to research
Students can follow whatever path
How do you get students to participate themselves
Do their own work
Incorporate UN Millennium Development Goals
How do goals affect women
Apply UN's approach to achieve goals
Submit information to online staff and they put together
Online staff creates all elements of course
Research
Write
Global or interdisciplinary approach

Teaching the Course
Orientation PowerPoint
Syllabus
Calendar
Contact information for online staff
Links to all details
Instructor expectations
What students will do
Submit research papers every other week
Discuss papers on alternate weeks
Students know the routine – submit work 1 week, discuss the next
Can't say you don't know
Gives calendar each week – no surprises
A lot of preparation
By first day – whole semester is planned
No surprises
Topic in 4 chunks – overview, objective, assignments, reading
Honors hour
Share information from honors hour
Always something going on
UN Millennium Development Goals
Article – Case for Contamination
Impost views on other countries
Cultural imperialism
Students reflect on article and course content over whole semester

Reflect on year of activities
Should we be open or implement our view
Are we critiquing countries from US standards or basic human rights
Whose point of view
8 Millennium Development Goals – 6 related to women's issues
Analyze goals
How they will affect women
Videos – cultural content in countries
Submit research papers every other week
Discuss papers on alternate weeks
Topic – how developed in 30 different countries
Share knowledge
30 countries – each student assigned to 1
Grading rubric to evaluate
Research paper for each topic
Submit every other week
Post to discussion board
Discussions
Suggestions based on own research
Free to choose which links to visit
Look at specific reports or documents
300 points total
Must accumulate points
Divided discussion into 2 parts
Mini-essay on what they learned
2-3 days later – communicate with 2-4 peers
Give suggestions
Write paper on cultural imperialism article
Discuss paper in discussion board
Choose at least 2 papers to discuss

<u>Reflecting on the Course</u>
Get students to do their own work
Use turnitin.com to evaluate reports
Students wait until last minute to submit assignments
Everyone calls tech support
With tech anything can happen
Tells students not to wait until last minute
Providing as many links as possible
Always searching for links
Updating links
Missing interaction
Not enough time for students to read all of the papers
Changed structure – 1 week to process, 1 week to discuss
Needed time to discuss
Not enough time for interaction
Built in one week for discussion with each paper
There is time to get it all done and discuss
So many want to take course
Students think everyone should take it
Positive evaluations
Met expectations
Getting same quality of work
Very rewarding experience

Mark's Teaching Experience

<u>Designing the Course</u>
Instructional systems design approach
Cyclical approach
Start with course objectives
Look at existing syllabi for ideas
Available text
Map it out
Look at size of semester
Work towards units
Turn lessons in CMS into modules
Learning module for each unit / week
Provide text notes from book
Make quizzes
Focus on mastery
Needs assessment
Where students are coming from

Objectives
Where will you go with it
Pre-visualization
Must construct before semester starts
Can't make it week by week
Student success
Overall completion
Looking for improvement in writing
Participation – measure of active vs inactive in discussions
Quizzes, exams

Teaching the Course
Created own course guide
1 page
Explains overview of course
Orientation to CMS – click on link if new user
Introduction to discovery learning
Video presentation with split screen
Him talking
Images that correspond to all concepts
Audio clips
Information about learning modules
Try to point out things that might be overlooked
Specifics about quizzes
Information about video lectures
Course calendar
Writing assignments folder
Pages linking to resources on writing essays, documentation, research
Notes on communication
Guidelines for discussion
Week 1 discussion – introduce self and interest in course
Instructor also participates
Reminder there are also assignments due for Week 1
Lessons broken into 4-5 cyber journeys
Journey = page of multiple links, videos of related content
Don't tell them where to go
Report on journeys in discussion
Scaffolded approach to writing
Informal
Student initiates contact
Identifies self as honors student
Must take leadership role in discussion
Minimum of 1000 words / week
Go above minimum in papers
More sources
More words
Separate section for grades
Don't have full honors courses
Students can't take honors-only course
Negotiate with professor to justify extra honors credit
Informal
Little extra work
Quantity, quality
Do the maximum
Discovery learning
Multimedia, links
Cyber journeys
Take in different directions
Condense lectures into streaming videos
Recorded 220 little video lectures
Provide text version for hearing impaired
Online tours of pieces of art in museums
Cyber journeys with videos, lectures, commentary
Cyber journeys
Surf different links
Choose between dozens of videos
It's a matter of choice
Must promote cultural events
Excitement of videos – enough interest generated by content / presentation to draw them in and invest more time
Must post 500 words / week on each discovery
Discussion post – 500 words / week
If want full credit, 1000 words / week
Replies to posts count towards word count
Can take quizzes at any time
Can take quizzes 3 times for mastery
Report on cyber journeys in discussion
Discussion postings aren't everyone posting on same thing

Read each other's posts
Share in discussion
Discussion board – very student-centered
Must measure participation to tie into attendance
If students don't post in Week 1, compose message that will be marked absent for Week 1
Must post Week 1 and 2 by end of Week 2 or be dropped from course

<u>Reflecting on the Course</u>
Want students to participate in cultural event
Tie event into course
Hard to document participation
Students may not have anything available in area
Don't know where they are online
Papers on cultural events were a stretch
How do you grade an activity
How do you know they really did it
Must do background research on event
Make it similar to other papers
Grade accordingly
Slide in criteria of academic writing
Online has made me create a whole new learning paradigm
I decentralized my role a long time ago
Humanities shouldn't be one set path
Open for students to pursue own interests
Choose own directions and pathways
Online requires more self-motivation
Any online course can be successful
10-12 years teaching it
Likes basic structure
Requires continued orientation
Replacing links
Adding more links
Enrich course as much as possible
Continual improvement process

Vicky's Teaching Experience

<u>Designing the Course</u>
How to transfer from F2F to online
How to adapt online
Syllabus – can answer questions in class
Doesn't work in online course
Syllabus must be very detailed
Very little chance for students to ask questions
Easy to adapt powerpoints – already used some in class
Record narration for powerpoints
Wanted to be equivalent to F2F
Experience wouldn't be exactly the same
Wanted class to be asynchronous
Real need in online not to be online at same time
Same quality
Come out with same skill set
What works well
What doesn't
What students like
How to have interchange asynchronously
Discussion – big feature
Exchange ideas
Try out components of projects and get feedback
Visual learners will be fine on own
Kinesthetic learner will be ok
Auditory learners are more problematic
Strategy – recorded lectures to introduce each unit
Save time not driving to campus
More time for navigating material
Make video content optional
Not enough time to view it all
Medium drives the message re: content
Select prose over poetry or drama because easier to understand on own

Experience in humanities with curriculum development
Nothing is ready made
Practical experience
Pick and choose
Natural fit to teach online
Everything linked to what's coming next
Very sequenced
Wasn't as difficult for her
General skills
Not information mastery
Equip students to go well in other courses and in profession
Standards in industry
Communication is important to employers – translated to class via writing assignments
Apply and synthesize what they know from experience and research
Pretty specifically written
Quality of products
Rubric
Accurate facts
Deeper insight into material
Clear thesis
Appropriate format

Teaching the Course
Subject of course
Expectations from / of instructor
15-20 minutes
Recorded powerpoint
Course treasure hunt
35 questions about course
Helps find out where things are, requirements, etc.
Introductory discussion on topic of instructor's choice
Introductory discussion on procrastination
Read article
Talk about experiences with it
Answer questions
Plans to do things differently
Got to get students to website and get them to log on
Takes about a week to get going
Time to get textbook
Divide into units of study
4 units in honors section
Orientation and 3 content units
Each unit – 4 weeks long
1$^{st}$ week – read materials from text
Study guide to fill out
Discussion – general – what they've read
Subsequent discussion – more specific about project they'll produce at end of unit
Recorded, narrated powerpoints
View of beginning of unit
Lectures broken into sections
Typically 1hr – 1hr, 15 min
Linked to iTunes
Can download in video or audio format
Set of notes
Pick preferred mode of learning – watch, listen, read
Educational videos from YouTube
Sometimes less educational videos
Incorporate student success
Build in hints about test taking
How to attack an assignment
Advice on majors, transferring, career planning
Value-added
How to be a better student
How to get where you want to go
Advice on scheduling
Chances to recover from low grade
Traditional research essay or creative application
Post thesis for unit project
Will be awful
Transition to learning how to write thesis
Peer review
Instructor feedback
Repeat process 2 times
Test – instrument to get them to read book
Project

Turn in project on time, can rewrite for up to 90/100 points based on feedback
Tried creative projects that were mailed in
Didn't work – broken, etc.
Can rewrite paper after graded up to 90 points
Only if turned in on time
Built in places to earn extra credit

Reflecting on the Course
Students can get behind
Hard to catch up
Fall 2 consecutive assignments behind – can drop them
Need to prep students to be persistent
If it looks difficult, they will quit
How to manage email traffic
Ask the class discussion board
Immature students who enroll for wrong reasons
Dropped group work
Couldn't convince online students that they could work virtually
Students felt they had to see each other F2F
Many problems
Too much trouble / hassle
Sees fewer differences between online and F2F the longer she teaches
At end – think about changes to make that students can't see
Swap out material
Change prompts
Always more willing to experiment in honors courses
Would take back things tried in honors to regular courses
Honors is more complex work
Requires deeper level of critical analysis
Teaching online not mysterious or complicated
Can teach anything online
Consider limitations of technology
Advantages of technology when you're not in the classroom
Don't get to see look in person's face
Judge solely on product
Person doesn't figure into product
More objective
No classroom management issues
No worries about cell phones / surfing web
Attractive to teaching online
Students not prepared for online usually gone by 3rd week
Leaves with committed group of serious students
Students don't find tools as spiffy as teachers do
Tools need to be as good as video games graphically
Need something more straightforward
Less gimmicky
Workload is different
Doesn't do more work than F2F
Work at different times in term

APPENDIX G
EXAMPLES OF COMMONALITIES AMONG IN-DEPTH TEACHING EXPERIENCES

## Designing the Course

Course fulfilled general education requirement: Harvey, Alma, Mark, Vicky

Struggled with equivalency prior to course design: Harvey, Vicky

Used instructional design approach / worked with designer: Patrick, Alma, Mark, Vicky

Worried about / addressed academic integrity: Harvey, Alma, Vicky

Quality of products was learning outcome: Harvey, Patrick, Vicky

## Teaching the Course

Included a course orientation: Harvey, Patrick, Alma, Mark, Vicky

Allowed flexibility with projects / "discovery learning": Alma, Mark, Vicky

Used discussion forums: Harvey, Alma, Mark, Vicky

Mixed views on group work: Harvey, Patrick, Vicky

Provided personalized feedback: Harvey, Patrick, Alma, Mark, Vicky

Had access to technical support even if not utilized: Harvey, Patrick, Alma, Mark, Vicky

## Reflecting on the Course

Actively sought feedback from students about course: Alma, Mark, Vicky

Adjusted course based on feedback: Patrick, Alma, Vicky

Challenges with social interaction: Harvey, Patrick, Alma

Hybrid could have been better option: Harvey, Patrick, Mark

Pleased with online format: Alma, Vicky

# APPENDIX H
# SHARED THEMES RELATED TO DIFFUSION OF ONLINE LEARNING

| Examples of Individual Codes | Shared Cover Terms | Overarching Theme |
|---|---|---|
| Harvey: Youth; Not set in ways | It's my age – or is it? | Serving as an Early Adopter |
| Patrick: Desire to make a difference | | |
| Mark: Could be my generation; Not in awe of vested institutions | | |
| Alma: Retired but doesn't stop me from wanting to do new things | | |
| Alma: Always looking for new things; This is part of me | "This is part of me" | |
| Vicky: Teaching online was way to get hold on technology; Taught online just to learn new things | | |
| Harvey: Willing to try anything; Keep teaching fresh | | |
| Mark: Stay up all night trying to solve problems | | |
| Patrick: Pushing the boundaries; Self-motivation | | |
| Harvey: Pioneer of teaching online at institution; I decided to be the guinea pig | Pioneers, Guinea Pigs, & Rebels | |
| Patrick: No one has really done this from this perspective before | | |
| Mark: Guinea pig for using Web CT; Little bit of rebel and innovator in me | | |
| Vicky: I am an early adopter; Pioneer | | |
| Vicky: Approached director – let's try it | Desire to share | |
| Alma: Course has always been showcased | | |
| Mark: Advocated for 24/7 work ethic; Change agent | | |
| Patrick: Shared expertise with others; Hope to publish | | |
| Harvey: Students couldn't come to campus but needed gen ed | Fulfilling a Need | Experimenting with Online Learning in Honors |
| Vicky: Online offers equal access especially to nontraditionals and those with restricted schedules | | |
| Mark: Only 4-6 honors students on campus | | |
| Patrick: Don't have time for a F2F course | | |
| Alma: Students asking for online courses but not offered | | |

<table>
<tr><td>Harvey: Online secondary in importance to all other responsibilities</td><td rowspan="5">Honors Students in the Online Environment</td><td rowspan="10"></td></tr>
<tr><td>Mark: Very savvy in knowing what they have to do and what they don't</td></tr>
<tr><td>Vicky: Will give up faster if perceive grade is dropping; Performance comparable</td></tr>
<tr><td>Patrick: Groups don't always work well</td></tr>
<tr><td>Alma: Same quality of work; They really participate</td></tr>
<tr><td>Harvey: Aims of honors not really met</td><td rowspan="5">Meeting the Aims of Honors Education</td></tr>
<tr><td>Patrick: Course is about learning by doing & collaboration; Puts damper on social interaction</td></tr>
<tr><td>Mark: Honors students need to be savvy about online learning</td></tr>
<tr><td>Vicky: Different kind of work</td></tr>
<tr><td>Alma: Participation; Interdisciplinary approach</td></tr>
<tr><td>Harvey: Value contact hours; Begrudging acceptance of it elsewhere</td><td rowspan="5">Addressing Concerns of Peers</td><td rowspan="14">Moving Online Learning Forward</td></tr>
<tr><td>Vicky: Colleagues convinced it could never be as good as F2F</td></tr>
<tr><td>Alma: F2F interaction is very important; Concerns about cheating</td></tr>
<tr><td>Patrick: Highly rigid views of education</td></tr>
<tr><td>Mark: Faculty feel threatened; Online will replace the classroom</td></tr>
<tr><td>Harvey: Personalize it; Set aside time for synchronous activities</td><td rowspan="5">Suggestions for Implementation</td></tr>
<tr><td>Patrick: Consult experts; Can't just cut and paste from F2F course</td></tr>
<tr><td>Alma: Can't do it without training</td></tr>
<tr><td>Vicky: Find pioneers and get them to go first; Need more guidance with pedagogy</td></tr>
<tr><td>Mark: 99% of work done before course starts; More research on teaching in honors</td></tr>
<tr><td>Vicky: Mistake to turn back on online education</td><td rowspan="4">Implications for Undergraduate Honors Education</td></tr>
<tr><td>Alma: This is the future; Will have to do online eventually</td></tr>
<tr><td>Patrick: Honors risks being left behind</td></tr>
<tr><td>Mark: Don't want to bury our head in the sand</td></tr>
</table>

APPENDIX I
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May 21, 2012

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