

M.Ed. in Instructional Technology - Corporate Concentration (A White Paper)

The idea of an M.Ed. in IT with a non P-12 (corporate) focus has been floated within CLT for more than a year. This white paper examines environmental, systemic, and pedagogical factors affecting a possible shift in the M.Ed. in IT's target audience. This paper is not meant to be the end of a conversation but the beginning of one. For success in the proposed transition to occur, buy-in and participation must occur at several levels. As such, the content, scope, and viability of the ideas put forth in this document may change in the coming months. Should the ideas in this document be accepted, it is proposed that the rollout of a refocused M.Ed. program would occur by Fall 2016.

Suppliers of Instructional Programs

As of January 2015, there are seven institutions approved by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission to offer programs leading to certification in Instructional Technology, see table below. VSU is active in two of the certification programs – M.Ed. and Ed.S. All six of the other approved institutions also offer a masters degree leading to certification; and four of the six also offer a specialist degree leading to certification. With six immediate competitors, the marketplace isn't saturated with program suppliers but there is palpable pressure from some of these established programs.

	Cert Only	Bac.	Master	Specialist	Doctorate
GEORGIA COLLEGE AND STATE UNIVERSITY	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
GEORGIA SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
PIEDMONT COLLEGE	No	No	Yes	No	No
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
UNIVERSITY OF WEST GEORGIA	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
VALDOSTA STATE UNIVERSITY	No	No	Yes	Yes	No

In the state of Florida, there are four notable Instructional Technology programs – Florida State, University of Florida, University of Central Florida, and the University of South Florida. None of them are certificate affiliated and most of them cross-target educators in P-12 and corporate settings.

In addition to Instructional Technology programs, a review of Human Resource Development programs also was done. The reason for reviewing HRD programs is that HRD programs overlap many of the same content areas as IT (e.g., instructional design, web-based course development, learning theory, etc.). In addition, many graduates of IT programs enter training and development positions in corporate and higher education settings and many HRD graduates enter instructional technology positions. Bearing this in mind, suppliers of both IT and HRD programs were identified for review.

The Academy of Human Resource Development is a professional society focused on the field of human resource development. AHRD's newest (2013) *Directory of Programs* lists only two Georgia institutions offering programs targeting corporate trainers (e.g., Human Resource Development, Adult Education). Those institutions are the University of Georgia and Valdosta State. VSU offers a Master and Doctorate in Adult Education. UGA offers M.Ed. in Human Resource & Organizational Development, M.Ed. and M.S. in Adult Education, and Ph.D. in Adult Education.

Demand – Jobs & Growth Forecasts

In terms of market demand, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' Occupational Outlook Handbook (2014 Edition) is forecasting a nine percent (9%) national growth rate in education-related occupations through the year 2020, with a 1.1% increase in Georgia. The Bureau of Labor Statistics does not report data specifically for Instructional Technologists; the closest occupations are Instructional Coordinators and Training & Development Specialists. Demand for Instructional Coordinators is expected to see a 13% increase nationally (4.0% increase in Georgia) and demand for Training & Development Specialists is projected to grow 15.0% nationally (3.4% in Georgia) through 2020.

As of 2013, there were 257,600 'Education, Training, and Library' jobs in Georgia. Of those, 5,380 were library-related jobs and 4,030 Instructional Coordinator jobs (i.e., Instructional Designers). Conversely there are 7,550 Training & Development Specialists, plus 910 T&D Managers, 13,460 Human Resource Specialists, 3,420 HR Managers, and 4,480 HR Assistants in Georgia (29,820 total). In addition, within Florida there are 8,680 Instructional Coordinators, 12,430 T&D Specialists, 1,000 T&D Managers, 24,090 HR Specialists, 7,200 HR Assistants, and 3,560 HR Managers (56,960 total). By comparison, there are approximately 10,000 ID/Library jobs in Georgia for graduates of our current program versus 86,780 ID/HR jobs in Georgia and Florida for graduates of a corporate-focused M.Ed. in IT.

Job Requirements

To define employers' expectations regarding the knowledge and skills of individuals entering instructional technology jobs in corporate as well as educational settings, research was gathered from multiple sources (IT and HRD job announcements), locales (US and European jobs), and time periods (2009-2012 job postings as well as AECT historical standards from 2005). In total, more 800 job postings were analyzed and 250 corporate and education professionals were surveyed or impaneled. The results are organized into five categories: (i) Multimedia Production, (ii) Instructional Design, (iii) Hardware, (iv) Project Management, and (v) Interpersonal Communications. Within each of these categories, a variety of knowledge and skills is identified.

Multimedia Production

Graphics (Photoshop & Illustrator)
Video (Premiere)
LMS/Web Authoring (e.g., HTML, Blackboard)
Audio (Audacity)
Misc (Camtasia/Captivate, Flash, Acrobat)

Instructional Design

Cognition & Learning Theories
Instructional Strategies (for F2F and online)
Instructional Design Principles (ADDIE/ISD)

Hardware

Selecting Appropriate Technologies
Troubleshooting (Hardware, Software, Network)

Project/Program Related

Project Management
Program Evaluation

Interpersonal Communications

Team Building
Diversity Management
Writing Skills

Working from the premise that the above breakdown of knowledge and skills represents the majority — albeit not all — of the content that should appear in a corporate-focused M.Ed. in IT program, a review of current M.Ed. course offerings was conducted and mapped back to the above list. This was done to determine the scope and make-up of any reforms to the existing M.Ed. program in order to fulfill employer expectations by graduates of the revised program.

Mapping of Current Course Objectives to Employer Expectations

The syllabi from the courses offered as part of the current M.Ed. in IT program were reviewed to identify those areas of employer expectations that are being addressed and those areas where gaps still exist.

NOTE: not every current course objective is included in the breakdown, below; objectives such as “Demonstrate skill in organizing, documenting and reflecting upon assigned and self-generated activities” were viewed as too generic to map back to a specific topic.

Hardware

Selecting Appropriate Technologies

ITED 7100 - Critically examine organizations as environments for incorporating technology for learning.

ITED 7400 - Apply basic facility planning guidelines.

ITED 7400 - Evaluate computers and related technology systems from end-users’ perspectives.

Troubleshooting (Hardware, Software, & Net)

ITED 7400 - Describe functional parts of a personal computer.

ITED 7400 - Apply safety rules when working around computers.

ITED 7400 - Correctly and safely install computer components, connections and devices.

ITED 7400 - Apply troubleshooting techniques for computer components.

ITED 7400 - Document a typical building or system network.

Project/Program Related

Project Management

ITED 7070 - Develop and implement a plan for evaluating a training or education program which incorporates effective strategies, techniques, and tools.

ITED 7070 - Use a variety of research tools, including electronic resources, to investigate possible evaluation approaches, data gathering instruments, and methods of data analysis.

ITED 7500 - Evaluate the design, development, and implementation of strategic plans related to technology integration in a variety of environments.

ITED 7500 - Describe and analyze processes for planning, implementing, managing, and evaluating the change process in instructional technology programs.

ITED 7500 - Use technology to manage project activities.

Evaluation

ITED 7070 - Create an evaluation report for a training or education program.

Multimedia Production

LMS/Web Authoring (e.g., Blackboard, Moodle)

ITED 7200 - Design and develop Web pages that incorporate Internet resources for meaningful learning.

Graphics (Photoshop & Illustrator)

Video (Premiere)

Audio (Audacity)

Misc (Camtasia/Captivate, Flash, Acrobat)

No courses addressed any of these four elements in depth

Instructional Design

Cognition & Learning Theories

ITED 7100 - Define, discuss and analyze the application of learning and instructional theory, systems theory, communications theory and information theory to research and practice in instructional technology.

Instructional Strategies (for F2F and online)

ITED 7300 - Model and facilitate the design and implementation of technology-enhanced learning experiences aligned with student content standards and student technology standards.

ITED 7300 - Model and facilitate the use of research-based, learner-centered strategies addressing the diversity of all students. *((also works towards diversity management))*

ITED 7300 - Model and facilitate the use of digital tools and resources to engage students in authentic learning experiences.

ITED 7300 - Model and facilitate the effective use of digital tools and resources to support and enhance higher order thinking skills; processes; and mental habits of mind.

ITED 7300 - Model and facilitate the design and implementation of technology-enhanced learning experiences making appropriate use of differentiation, including adjusting content, process, product, and learning environment based upon an analysis of learner characteristics, including readiness levels, interests, and personal goals. *((also works towards diversity management))*

ITED 7300 - Model and facilitate the effective use of research-based best practices in instructional design when designing and developing digital tools, resources, and technology-enhanced learning experiences.

ITED 7300 - Model and facilitate the effective use of diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments to measure student learning and technology literacy, including the use of digital assessment tools and resources.

ITED 7300 - Model and facilitate the effective use of digital tools & resources to systematically collect & analyze student achievement data, interpret results, communicate findings, & implement appropriate interventions to improve instructional practice and maximize student learning.

ITED 7300 - Model and facilitate effective classroom management and collaborative learning strategies to maximize teacher and student use of digital tools and resources.

ITED 7300 - Effectively manage digital tools and resources within the context of student learning experiences.

ITED 7600 - Evaluate exemplary curricular and instructional practices described in the professional literature.

Instructional Design Theories & Procedures (ADDIE vs Dick & Carey)

ITED 7070 - Identify and apply problem analysis and needs assessment skills in appropriate IT contexts.

Interpersonal Communications

Team Building

ITED 7100 - Collaborate in group problem-solving and communication of solutions.

ITED 7500 - Work effectively and efficiently both as a leader and member of a group.

Writing Skills

ITED XXXX - Demonstrate clear competence in oral, graphic and written communication and comprehension. (This objective is listed in virtually every course)

Diversity Management

ITED 7100 - Identify ethnic, gender, age, ability, and motivational similarities and differences in organizations and analyze their impact on technology access and use.

Foundational/Historical knowledge of IT/ID and Cognition

(NOTE: Non-employer define knowledge/skills)

ITED 7100 - Describe important developments in the history and evolution of instructional technology.

ITED 7100 - Summarize major areas of instructional technology research.

ITED 7100 - Identify trends in instructional technology and predict future issues and implications.

ITED 7100 - Describe the characteristics of and interrelationships among the domains of instructional technology.

ITED 7100 - Describe professional careers and areas of specialization in instructional technology.

ITED 7100 - Identify and efficiently utilize information resources in instructional technology to find professional and academic information.

ITED 7100 - Define instructional technology as the design, development, utilization, management and evaluation of the processes and resources for learning.

Course Design Recommendations

Based upon the mapping breakdown of course objectives to employer needs, as shown above, several areas of strength and weaknesses are readily apparent. ITED 7300 and 7500 appear to sufficiently address employer expectations regarding (i) the selection of instructional strategies, and (ii) planning and managing instructional projects. Other courses partially meet the needs expressed by employers but still require some revisions to provide greater depth and necessary rigor. Finally, three courses currently are targeting content areas of little value in corporate environments, based upon the findings expressed in the research. They should be phased out and replaced with new courses. Proposed objectives for the new courses are provided to help define the nature and scope of those courses.

Keep Largely “As Is”

ITED 7300: Instructional Technology for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment

This course focuses on the teaching strategies while another [new] course should focus on instructional design theory and procedures

ITED 7500: Vision and Planning for Instructional Technology

This course addresses the project management needs.

Refocus 1/3-to-1/2 of the Course

ITED 7070: Decision-Oriented Research, Evaluation, and Professional Learning

Refocus to emphasize evaluation theory and application; reduce research elements

ITED 7100: Foundational Theories in Instructional Technology

Keep the core elements (history, areas of research, trends, interrelationships among domains); incorporate foundations of learning theory & cognition

ITED 7400: Digital Learning Environments

Refocus to go deeper into hardware functionality and network structures; consider shifting the technology selection process to ITED 7500.

Phase Out

ITED 7200: Information Sources and Uses

Phase out and replace with a media production course under a new course number

ITED 7399: Internship in Technology Applications

Phase out and replace with a media production course under a new course number

ITED 7600: Introduction to Discipline-Based Best Practices Literature

Phase out and replace with a media production course under a new course number

Create New Courses

ITED XXXX: Instructional Graphics

Use Adobe Photoshop and, possibly, Illustrator and InDesign to create a variety of instructional materials

Objectives possibly include but are not limited to:

- Describe cognitive principles underlying image interpretation and understanding
- Describe the design elements of instructional graphics
- Analyze human performance problems to facilitate design of appropriate instructional graphics
- Design instructional graphics solutions to address the human performance problems
- Create and edit digital images/photos
- Create and edit job aids comprised of images/photos and text
- Create and edit instructional booklets
- Create and edit graphical web interfaces

ITED XXXX: Instructional Video and Audio

Use Adobe Premiere and Audacity to produce, shoot, and edit instructional videos

Objectives possibly include but are not limited to:

- Develop a storyboard reflecting the action appearing a video.
- Describe the implications and barriers associated with intellectual property use in videos.
- Employ effective lighting techniques for shooting a digital video.
- Select and set up appropriate microphones for recording high quality audio tracks with video.
- Effectively use digital video cameras for shooting footage.
- Edit sound tracks for incorporation into a digital video.
- Incorporate the use of effective editing techniques for content and story.

ITED XXXX: Instructional Design Theories & Procedures

Compare and assess prominent ID approaches; apply ADDIE model to design a unit for F2F delivery

Objectives possibly include but are not limited to:

- Differentiate the approaches to instructional design advocated by prominent ID theories/models (e.g., ADDIE vs Alessi & Trollip, etc.) based upon their principles and philosophies.
- Select appropriate ID theories/models for given instructional problems/settings.
- Development an instructional unit for a face-to-face setting by employing the ADDIE model to:
 - Conduct the following forms of analyses: Job, Needs, Learner, & Environment
 - Produce design parameters based of results of analyses
 - Develop instructional materials (e.g., readings, lesson plans, assessments) for use in delivering 10 hours of instructional content
 - Devise meaningful evaluation strategies to determine strengths, weaknesses of content

ITED XXXX: Adapting Traditional Instruction to Online Environments

Address techniques for authoring HTML and adapting F2F materials to online (LMS) environments

Objectives possibly include but are not limited to:

- Create basic Web pages using only HTML code and plain text editor (no WYSIWYG editors)
- Incorporate images into Web pages
- Design effective navigation interfaces (e.g., links) to integrate multiple pages into a coherent site
- Publish Web pages, including images, to globally accessible Web servers
- Convert MS Office documents into HTML, PDF, and other Web-standard media formats
- Revise instructional strategies used in F2F settings to work effectively in asynchronous (Web) environments
- Produce online instructional unit equivalent to 10 hours of F2F instructional time

Course Sequencing Recommendations (30 Hours)

Assuming only Fall and Spring admissions to the program, the following sequences ensure everyone can finish in five semesters or less. Also, each course is taught in two different semesters (in case someone drops a course and, later, needs to pick it up quickly). The workload for the two courses offered in the same semester is balanced against each other. Finally, the content from one course is logically sequenced with those in the preceding and following semesters to ensure instructors know what content/objectives were taught previously and to minimize students' practices of "washing out" what was learned one semester before the next semester begins.

Fall Admission Sequence

Semester 1 (Fall):

ITED 7100: Foundational Theories in Instructional Technology

ITED XXXX: Instructional Graphics

Semester 2 (Spring):

ITED XXXX: Instructional Design Theories & Procedures

ITED 7400: Digital Learning Environments

((sequence continued on next page))

Semester 3 (Summer):

ITED 7300: Instructional Technology for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment
Elective ((suggested: Organizational Development or HRD course))

Semester 4 (Fall):

ITED 7500: Vision and Planning for Instructional Technology
ITED XXXX: Adapting Traditional Instruction to Online Environments

Semester 5 (Spring):

ITED 7070: Decision-Oriented Research, Evaluation, and Professional Learning
ITED XXXX: Instructional Video and Audio

Spring Admission Sequence

Semester 1 (Spring):

ITED 7500: Vision and Planning for Instructional Technology
ITED XXXX: Instructional Graphics

Semester 2 (Summer):

ITED 7100: Foundational Theories in Instructional Technology
ITED 7400: Digital Learning Environments

Semester 3 (Fall):

ITED XXXX: Instructional Design Theories & Procedures
ITED XXXX: Instructional Video and Audio

Semester 4 (Spring):

ITED 7300: Instructional Technology for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment
Elective ((suggested: Organizational Development or HRD course))

Semester 5 (Summer):

ITED XXXX: Adapting Traditional Instruction to Online Environments
ITED 7070: Decision-Oriented Research, Evaluation, and Professional Learning

Strengths of Proposed M.Ed. Program

The proposed M.Ed. program offers several strengths that the current program does not. They are enumerated in the list below:

- Targets an audience (corporate educators) with occupational growth rates higher than those forecasted for educators in P-12 settings
- Tuition premiums could be charged to non P-12 audience resulting in money being returned to the department for faculty use
- Content is tied to employers' needs and grounded in research using national, international, and historical data
- It is not subject to ever-changing standards and expectations from state bureaucrats and national accreditation agencies

When compared to other M.Ed. in IT programs in Georgia and Florida, the new program is:

- Shorter in hours than other Masters programs; and thus, less costly in time and money
 - Florida: UF 36 hours, FSU 36 hours, UNF 39 hours, UCF 39 hours, USF 33 hours
 - Georgia: UGA 36 hours, UWG 36 hours, Ga Southern 36 hours, Kennesaw 36 hours, Piedmont 36 hours, Ga College = unknown, doesn't list their curriculum online
- Teaches advanced skills in industry-standard media software (e.g., Adobe Creative Suite)
 - VSU students can acquire Adobe Creative Suite (Master Collection) for \$10/yr versus paying \$2,600 retail
- Teaches managerial/leadership skills (including program evaluation, project management) that other programs do not
- Maps all of its curricula to a competency profile that graduates can provide to current and prospective employers illustrating their skills
- Employs a project-based curricula resulting in the creation of an e-portfolio demonstrating students' skills and abilities

Other potential benefits could include (depending on CL T faculty willingness and COEHS money):

- Media courses will be taught by Adobe Certified Experts (Instructional Graphics and Instructional Video and Audio)
- Upon completion of Instructional Graphics and Instructional Video and Audio courses, students could potentially sit for the Adobe Certified Expert exam
- All courses will undergo Quality Matters internal and external reviews for QM certification
- All courses utilize four or more Collaborate/Wimba sessions to increase connectivity with faculty and peers thereby reducing learner isolation

Challenges to Proposed M.Ed. Program

If it was easy to build a program with all of these strengths, universities would have done it by now. Foreseeable challenges to building, deploying, and sustaining the proposed M.Ed. program include:

- Faculty buy-in regarding the shift away from P-12 to corporate/higher education settings
- COEHS administration's support regarding the shift away from the P-12 sector
- VSU/COEHS administration's support regarding processing of tuition premiums
- Faculty agreement regarding the content areas to include in the program
- Faculty buy-in regarding phasing out, redesigning, and creating of courses in the program
- Faculty buy-in regarding adoption of Quality Matters protocols for course design
- Faculty buy-in regarding willingness to attain Adobe Certified Expert status
- COEHS administration's support regarding costs (current and future) associated with Quality Matters reviews and Adobe Certified Expert exams

Assuming the above can be resolved, the following issues still remain:

- How to best market the program to corporate clientele in Atlanta (9th largest U.S. metro area, 5.5 million as of 7/1/13), Tampa (18th largest, 2.8 million), Orlando (26th largest, 2.3 million), and Jacksonville (40th largest, 1.4 million)
- How much money will be available to spend on marketing
- How fast will the new program need to become self-sustaining

Formulation

The following passages are based upon the premise that the proposed shift in the M.Ed. in IT program, described above, is agreeable to the IT faculty. Assuming it is, the next level of program development is the formulation of the program in terms of Pricing, Branding, Key Operational Practices (e.g., Admissions, Advising), and Standardization of Course Structure and Delivery, and Program Evaluation.

Pricing

The behaviors and expectations of corporate clients are more discriminating than P-12 clients. They are willing to pay a premium if they feel the product they're receiving is premium as well. The previous pages delineate a program that differentiates itself from its competitors along several lines (e.g., shorter time, Adobe certified individuals for media courses, employer-driven curriculum, all courses are Quality Matters certified). These features will help draw clients to the program but they, alone, will not retain them.

Because it is designed to compete at an elite level, the proposed program will charge a tuition premium, in the form of an "enhanced program" fee. The price point for the per-credit-hour-fee will be based upon cost comparison with regional competitors. The following table presents the in-state and out-of-state tuition (on a per credit hour basis, excluding fees) for regional universities offering masters degrees in IT and/or HRD.

Institution	In-State	Out-of-State
Valdosta State (standard rate)	\$236	\$ 850
Valdosta State (e-tuition)	293	N/A
Valdosta State (GOML)	385	N/A
Valdosta State (MBA Healthcare)	385	N/A
University of Georgia	384	1,007
University of Florida	449	690
Florida State University	479	1,111
University of North Florida	493	1,044
University of Central Florida	288	1,073
University of South Florida	431	877

Based upon market values by prominent schools in the region, tuition + "enhanced program" fee for the proposed M.Ed. program reasonably could range from \$490 (\$293 tuition + \$197 fee) to \$697 (\$293 tuition + \$404 fee) per credit hour. At \$440/hr, VSU could gross an extra \$23,640 per semester from the "enhanced program" fee, assuming 20 students are enrolled for 6 credit hours. At \$697/hr, VSU could gross an extra \$48,480 per semester. To better position ourselves in the Florida market, the same in-state tuition rate + "enhanced program" fee would be charged to in-state and out-of-state students.

Assuming the net fees returned to the department is sufficient to entice the faculty to undertake the wholesale programmatic change proposed in this white paper, additional operational elements would need to be installed to warrant the premium rates in the eyes of prospective students. These features include: (i) consistent and ubiquitous branding, (ii) increase in non-course communication, and (iii) standardized course structures.

Branding

As stated previously, the proposed program is designed to be elite. It can compete effectively with any instructional technology program offered anywhere in world. ((This isn't a delusion of grandeur. I helped to build Illinois' Master of Human Resource Education program from the ground up. I've reviewed online instructional programs and services offered at premiere institutions, e.g., Penn State, Arizona State, Virginia Tech, etc., and they teach the same instructional content, theories, and best practices that we can. Their on-campus programs offer affordances that we cannot match – access to high-end research facilities, exceptional students working fulltime with faculty on research – but their online offerings target the same fulltime workers, part time students as we serve and we can compete effectively against them.))

As with any elite product, branding is key to the product's recognizability and perceived value. Bearing this in mind, the program's visual presence will have a consistent recurring theme. Simply stated, every Web page, PowerPoint lecture slide, email correspondence, postal mail, etc. issued as part of the proposed M.Ed. program needs to bear its brand. Most of these items are easily achieved through Web page and PowerPoint templates, email signature files, letterhead stationery, etc. By creating and sustaining a consistent and ubiquitous appearance, we generate recognition for our program and increase its presence in the marketplace.

In addition to visual branding, courses will employ a standardized course structure and will undergo Quality Matters reviews to ensure high quality controls are met. Further, Adobe Certified Educators will teach all of the media courses (a quality feature that virtually no programs offer).

Key Operational Practices - Admissions

The current M.Ed. in IT requires an undergraduate GPA of 2.75 or higher. The proposed plan would have a 3.00 GPA floor. GRE exam scores would be required. Suggested minimums are 60th percentile or higher for Verbal Reasoning and Quantitative Reasoning and 56th percentile or higher for Analytical Writing. Based upon the 2014-15 GRE scales, these rankings equate to the following scores: 153 for Verbal Reasoning, 155 for Quantitative Reasoning, and 4.0 for Analytical Writing. In addition to GRE scores, a 'goals statement' one-page, single-spaced, write-up also would be required. Admissions would be competitively-based with a cap of 20 students per semester. Students would be admitted in Fall and Spring semesters only.

Key Operational Practices - Advising

On big ticket purchases (e.g., homes, tuition), purchasers can feel "buyer's remorse" more quickly and more intensely than with cheap, disposable items. With an estimated ticket price in excess of \$13,000, we want purchasers of the proposed M.Ed. degree to feel like a "member" of a community immediately upon acceptance into the program. Therefore, in addition to the standard 'welcome to the program' email we send to students, we need to follow-up with additional materials (e.g., suggestions for success, tutorials for acquiring discounted software, reminders to acquire books prior to the start of the semester, etc.). These additional communiques can, and should, be standardized so they're not an excessive burden on the current faculty. That being said, we need the students to 'belong' the program and be highly satisfied with their experience; in doing so, they will become part of our marketing campaign to sustain the program.

Standardization of Course Structure and Delivery

As part of program branding, courses will have similar structures and elements. This already is encouraged, in part, by the way that BlazeView organizes the “Content Browser” frame on course home pages into ‘modules’. Building on this affordance, the model presented in the figure below illustrates the core ‘instructional’ elements and organizational structure to be used in the courses:

- Module (folders within BlazeView’s Content Browser frame)
 - +---- Lessons (individual pages within the module)
 - +---- Overview (what is it; why is it important to know)
 - +---- Mini-Lecture (8-12 minute streaming PowerPoint-voiceover)
 - +---- Assigned Readings (seminal books, pubs)
 - +---- Assigned Activities (small activities; not every lesson will have an activity)
 - +---- Module Activity/Assessment (larger activities)

This is the model used in the University of Illinois’ M.Ed. in Human Resource Education and currently is used in RSCH 9800. Chunking of the content into modules/lessons facilitates the assimilation of knowledge (a la, Piaget) and retention of information (see Miller’s Information Processing Theory). In addition, students grow to rely upon the consistent structure; and, it has the added benefit of making it easy for faculty to move content around and add/remove content simply by added the desired module/lesson.

The mini-lectures are designed to balance students’ average attention span of 10-15 minutes (Johnstone & Percival) with key elements of that lesson’s readings/content. Typically they’re 5-6 PowerPoint slides in length and are not simply intended to highlight key elements in the readings. They should tie the readings back to real-world applications/problems in the workplace. Since they employ both visual and auditory senses, they utilize Mayer’s Cognitive Load Theory to increase students’ acquisition of knowledge. Finally, these mini-lectures would be closed-captioned by the VSU Student Access office to ensure compliance with Federal Section 508 regulations (as well as to increase program marketability).

The assigned readings are self-explanatory; however, the one recommendation applicable to this section is to increase our use of seminal texts in our readings. Instead of using free Web readings or less expensive texts, as we might use with P-12 teachers who don’t have a lot of money, we should utilized texts viewed as “industry standards”. For example, instead of using Smith and Ragan’s Instructional Design book which doesn’t delve into the instructional design process very deeply; use Rothwell and Kazanas’ text, which is targeted towards corporate trainers and examines the ADDIE/ISD process deeper than most books on the market.

Lesson Activities typically are small activities and/or discussions requiring 30-minute or less to complete. They are intended as knowledge checks ‘to see if the learner is getting it’. Not every lesson will have an activity but most will. It is through these activities that students having difficulties can be directed to remedial materials.

Module Activities are larger, more time consuming endeavors intended to assess if a learner can apply what was addressed in the module. These could be small, singular, artifacts or they might be part of a semester-long project. It is through these activities that we can ascertain if learners are meeting their course objectives. The artifacts from these activities, in turn, will be used in students’ portfolios.

The final standardized course element is regular (i.e., once a month) synchronous sessions. These will be one-hour Collaborate sessions (longer if the instructor wishes) in which course instructors review previous content, address student questions, and introduce upcoming modules. In addition to their instructional content, these sessions should serve as a means for students to become connected to the instructor and to their peers. Students will be required to use headsets with built-in microphones (to prevent echo feedback during sessions) and to facilitate communicate time during the sessions – it's faster to speak/hear questions than it is to type them out and wait for responses.

Program Evaluation

The program's continual improvement will be monitored through a "vital signs" paradigm that scores and tracks the program performance on key factors critical to the program's overall health. This approach was prototyped in the 1990s with the mainstreaming of online (Web) instructional programs and has been reformulated over the years, notably at the Online Learning Consortium's Quality Scorecard. The factors to be monitored by the proposed program include the following vital sign categories: (i) Student Recruitment & Retention, (ii) Student Support Services, (iii) Student Learning, (iv), (v) Student Satisfaction, (vi) Faculty Satisfaction, and (vii) Sustainability. Within each of the categories are a variety of metrics presenting indicators regarding the program's health for that vital sign.

Student Recruitment & Retention

- Application Rates
- Average GRE Scores of Applicants
- Acceptance Rates
- Average GRE Scores of Accepted Students
- Activation Rates (% of accepted students who actually enroll upon acceptance)
- Retention Rates
 - % of students in cohort who return from each semester
 - % of students who complete the degree
 - Average time to complete the degree (in semesters or months)

Student Support Services

- BlazeView Tracking Data for online tutorials (e.g., How to Succeed)
- Volume of tickets submitted to VSU Help Desk, if available
- Survey of students regarding use of Library, Financial Aid, Online Training Sessions, etc.
- BlazeView's "down time" for maintenance, if available

Student Learning

- SOI scores for key items (e.g., quality of feedback)
- Grade breakdown (GPA) of students enrolling in courses
- Competency profile performances
- Support for students' peer/professional networking (outside of courses)
- Peer evaluation of course rigor
- Utilization of Quality Matters design elements
- Degree to which faculty are meeting agreed upon standards for engagement/timeliness

Student Satisfaction

- Degree to which value is being fulfilled
- Identification of chronic problems

- Recommendations for support services
- Effectiveness of learning elements within courses
- Degree to which they (i) engaged in, and (ii) benefitted from socialization with peers
- Willingness to recommend the program to their peers

Faculty Satisfaction

- Faculty receive professional development for effective use of technologies/strategies
- Degree to which faculty feel they're being supported while designing courses
- Degree to which faculty feel they're being supported while delivering courses
- Faculty retention (willingness to teach future offerings)

Sustainability

- Revenue growth
- Cost breakeven analysis
- Applicant referral rates from current/past students

By monitoring the metrics within the seven “vital signs”, programmatic factors can be individually targeted and fine-tuned to improve the program’s overall performance.