

Higher Ed Case Studies

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**Case Study #1: Online Learning Director**

Sections	Criteria
Overview	<p>Scenario: South Run State College (SRSC) is an urban institution of higher education with an enrollment of 6500 undergraduates and 2000 graduates.</p> <p>People Involved: Director for Online Learning, the Provost, faculty.</p> <p>Current state of skills, knowledge, abilities, organizational goals, climate, and internal and external constraints:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● School Mission: improve the educational, intellectual, cultural, socioeconomic, and physical environment of the neighboring area</li> <li>● College is facing financial difficulties and has received less state funding</li> <li>● SRSC has increased tuition and fees</li> <li>● SRSC has seen a decline in both undergraduate and graduate enrollment</li> <li>● SRSC has no programs for undergraduates or graduates offered online</li> <li>● SRSC but does have some individual courses offered online and/or hybrid</li> <li>● Online courses have received poorest student evaluations of all courses offered at SRSC</li> <li>● Provost established a new rule: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Each faculty member may only teach one online course due to bad evaluations</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Needs Analysis	<p>The new Director for Online Learning first needs to collect information in order to identify causes of problems. Brown and Green (2015) suggest Rossett's process in conducting a needs analysis when responding to a request for assistance where "data-driven and responsive recommendations" will be made (p.51).</p> <p><i>Step 1: Determine purposes based on initiators.</i> Performance problems: Due to constraints from funding and other unknown underlying factors, the school is not performing as well as it would like to or should.</p> <p><i>Step 2: Identify sources of information.</i> Students, faculty, representatives from the city.</p> <p><i>Step 3: Select Tools.</i> Collection of data will be done through:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Questionnaires given to a representative sample of students who have completed online courses to investigate reasons behind the poor scoring evaluations.</li> <li>2. Interviews of community representatives to explore why enrollment is low and what might be able to be done to bring in more students from the surrounding area.</li> </ol>

	<p>3. Focus groups of faculty to learn about their comfort with e-Learning, the learning management system (LMS) currently in place. Part of this process will include looking at setups and data from past online courses to see how they ran.</p> <p><i>Step 4: Conduct the needs assessment in stages.</i> Data will be collected and analyzed.</p> <p><i>Step 5: Use findings for decision making.</i> Possible solutions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Training faculty in using the LMS or implement a new LMS tool that will facilitate e-Learning.</li> <li>● Training students in using the LMS and e-Learning etiquette.</li> <li>● If training is successful, implementation of fully online programs (based on student interest) could take place.</li> <li>● If e-Learning courses and programs are successful with a pilot group, begin to work on and increase marketing for the college to attract students and ultimately increase enrollment.</li> </ul> <p>The Director for Online Learning should first give priority to focusing on online learning at the school, address those problems, and then work on implementing programs and marketing.</p>
<p>Task Analysis</p>	<p>Task: Faculty need to be competent with creation/implementation of online learning courses and properly use the LMS to manage the online learning experience.</p> <p>Key Components: Faculty will participate in professional development (PD) on e-Learning. Each faculty member <b>MUST</b> teach an online course the following year post PD. In faculty training and PD they will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Learn how to use LMS</li> <li>● Create/implement an online course             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Can create their own or use a guide provided through the PD experience</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Understand how to manage online courses by:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Creating and uploading a syllabus</li> <li>○ Using discussion boards and providing regular feedback to students</li> <li>○ Developing a positive learning environment that supports e-Learning, and individual student needs</li> <li>○ Accessing supportive materials</li> <li>○ Knowing how to support students in an e-Learning environment, and if not, know where to direct them</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Task: Students need to be competent with online learning and will be required to take several online courses as they progress through their degree requirements.</p>

	<p>Key Components:</p> <p>Students will complete training for online learning which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Using the LMS</li> <li>● Practicing with submitting assignments and using discussion boards</li> </ul>
Learner Analysis	<p>Audience: Faculty and students</p> <p>Stakeholders: Provost, Director for Online Learning, Faculty, Students</p> <p>Current levels will be gauged through:</p> <p>Interviews, focus groups, evaluations, and questionnaires.</p> <p>Questionnaires could collect the 14 pieces of information recommended by Mager on p. 78 (Brown and Green, 2015):</p> <p>Age, Sex, Educational Background, Reasons for attending the course, Attitudes about course attendance, Biases, prejudices, and beliefs, Typical hobbies and other spare time activities, Interests in life other than hobbies, Need-gratifiers, Physical characteristics, Reading ability, Terminology or topics to be avoided, Organizational membership, Specific prerequisite and entry-level skills already learned.</p>
Goals/ Objectives	<p>The first goal presented by the Director for Online Learning will be to increase faculty and student knowledge, implementation, and use of online learning.</p> <p>Objective 1: Faculty will engage in PD relevant to online learning and running online courses</p> <p>Objective 2: Faculty will create and teach more online courses (potentially even full programs) that will meet learner interests and needs</p> <p>Objective 3: Students will participate in proper training to better understand how to operate and succeed in an online course</p> <p>Changes in behavior or performance expected:</p> <p>Faculty and students will be better prepared to teach and succeed in online courses. This should lead to better course evaluations.</p> <p>Expected economic costs and benefits of any projected solutions</p> <p>Costs: Goal will require additional funding to pay for professional development (possible need for a subject matter expert (SME)), and possible spending on a LMS that meets the needs of the college and online learning practices.</p> <p>Benefits: Increased success in online courses, better course evaluations, potential to increase number of online courses and add fully online programs, increased enrollment due to meeting student needs and interests.</p>

**Case Study #2: Paul Seymour, Assistant Professor: A Dilemma Case in Teaching**

Sections	Criteria
Overview	<p>Scenario: At the State University at Chicago (SUC) students in Dr. Paul Seymour’s Molecular Evolution course were not happy with his new teaching methods, called collaborative learning. They were not used to working collaboratively especially with papers and exams, didn’t care for discussions or case studies, and only wanted the facts.</p> <p>People Involved: Dr. Paul Seymour, students, Department of Integrative Biology faculty, and Chairman, Professor David Montague</p> <p>Current state of skills, knowledge, abilities, organizational goals, climate, and internal and external constraints:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Students are not happy with collaborative learning</li> <li>● Students complain/feel that they’re doing all the work and Dr. Seymour is “just standing around”</li> <li>● Students are 40 college juniors, most in pre-med, preparing for MCATs</li> <li>● Course grading includes 50% individual work and 50% group scores (with peer evaluations)</li> <li>● Paul Seymour is more than qualified to be teaching at SUC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ He is published</li> <li>○ He observed his postdoc mentor Dr. Mary Craxton experiment with collaborative learning</li> <li>○ He enjoys teaching and his colleagues felt he was a born teacher</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Students have shared their discontent with other faculty and the chairman</li> <li>● Dr. Seymour’s grant writing has waned</li> <li>● Dr. Seymour is depressed</li> </ul>
Needs Analysis	<p>The Chairman is interested in understanding what is going on in Dr. Seymour’s course. Both are interested in improving satisfaction in Dr. Seymour’s course. First, information must be collected in order to identify causes of problems. Brown and Green (2015) suggest Rossett’s process in conducting a needs analysis. Her process provides an instructional designer a way to obtain information about optimal performance, actual performance, feelings, causes, and solutions (p. 51). This five-step process is used for conducting a needs analysis:</p> <p><i>Step 1: Determine purposes based on initiators.</i> Performance problems: Due to student feedback, Dr. Seymour feels that his teaching style isn’t going over well and students aren’t happy.</p> <p><i>Step 2: Identify sources of information.</i> Dr. Seymour, students, faculty, chairman</p> <p><i>Step 3: Select Tools.</i></p>

	<p>Collection of data will be done through:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Direct observations of Dr. Seymour’s course</li> <li>2. Interviews with individual students</li> <li>3. Focus group with students</li> <li>4. Focus groups with Integrative Biology faculty to learn about other teaching styles going on in the department</li> <li>5. Consultation between Chairman and Dr. Seymour</li> <li>6. Review relevant literature on teaching and learning styles</li> <li>7. Examine work samples from Dr. Seymour’s course</li> </ol> <p><i>Step 4: Conduct the needs assessment in stages.</i> Data will be collected and analyzed.</p> <p><i>Step 5: Use findings for decision making.</i> Possible solutions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Identifying student needs and redesigning the course with a teaching style that meets those needs</li> <li>● Dr. Seymour receiving additional training on collaborative learning and how to be a better facilitator of this teaching method</li> <li>● Providing options for students in how they can complete the course</li> <li>● Providing information to students on benefits of collaborative learning</li> <li>● Suggesting that Dr. Seymour use a lecture-style approach to teaching</li> <li>● Adjusting weighting of course components</li> <li>● Including an online/blended learning environment as part of the course</li> </ul> <p>The main focus here should be to address the teaching style that is not going over well before addressing the grant writing that is lacking.</p>
<p>Task Analysis</p>	<p>Task: Implement a pedagogically appropriate mode of instruction that is pedagogically sound but also meets the needs of the learners.</p> <p>Key Components: Dr. Seymour will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ask for feedback from his students to learn what they want</li> <li>● Create new materials that address student needs</li> <li>● Provide choices for how students can access information by creating an online environment for students to access materials like recorded lectures</li> <li>● Consider creating a blended format of lecture and collaborative learning</li> <li>● Read up on different teaching methods and associated studies so that his pedagogical choices are backed by research</li> <li>● Provide information to students about benefits of different teaching and learning models and styles</li> </ul>
<p>Learner Analysis</p>	<p>Audience: Dr. Seymour, Chairman, students Stakeholders: Dr. Seymour, Integrative Biology faculty, Chairman, students</p>

	<p>Dr. Seymour already has a vetted background in teaching. The focus should be on the students. Information can be collected through interviews, focus groups, evaluations, and questionnaires.</p> <p>Questionnaires could collect the 14 pieces of information recommended by Mager on p. 78 (Brown and Green, 2015):  Age, Sex, Educational Background, Reasons for attending the course, Attitudes about course attendance, Biases, prejudices, and beliefs, Typical hobbies and other spare time activities, Interests in life other than hobbies, Need-gratifiers, Physical characteristics, Reading ability, Terminology or topics to be avoided, Organizational membership, Specific prerequisite and entry-level skills already learned.</p>
Goals/ Objectives	<p>The main goal is to determine the best method for Dr. Seymour to teach his Molecular Evolution course.</p> <p>Objective 1: Dr. Seymour will collect student feedback about their needs in this course.</p> <p>Objective 2: Dr. Seymour will do research and examine different approaches that may be implemented in his course</p> <p>Objective 3: Dr. Seymour will readjust his teaching methods to meet the needs of his students while at the same time providing a sound pedagogical approach. With this plan, he will also provide information and possibly even training for students about the benefits of collaborative learning.</p> <p>Changes in behavior or performance expected:  Students will be happier and feel prepared for MCATs with regard to this course content. Dr. Seymour will no longer be depressed and have time to work on writing grants. The Integrative Biology faculty and Chairman will hear good news about the Molecular Evolution course.</p> <p>Expected economic costs and benefits of any projected solutions  Costs: There may be some costs associated with any necessary training for Dr. Seymour. Hopefully there will not be any lowered enrollment due to bad publicity from previous student experience with Dr. Seymour's course.  Benefits: Increased student satisfaction with Molecular Evolution. Possible increase in enrollment in this course due to positive publicity from successful students.</p>

### References

Brown, A. H., & Green, T. D. (2015). *The essentials of instructional design: Connecting fundamental principles with process and practice*. New York, NY: Routledge.