Higher Education Case Studies Project

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

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| **Sections** | **Criteria** |
| Overview | South Run State College is an urban state institution with an enrollment of 8500 students, which is comprised of undergraduate and graduate students. SRSC’s mission is to enhance the socioeconomic, cultural, intellectual, and educational environments of the region. The college is not receiving as financial support from the state as in the past and has been forced to raise tuition and student fees. The higher cost of tuition and fees has caused student enrollment to decline. Higher education institutions in the area are not experiencing as much difficulty with this issue. While SRSC offers some online/hybrid courses, it offers very minimal online programs. Unfortunately, the online courses offered receive negative student evaluations. All the key concerns mentioned, have resulted in a poor organizational climate at the college. The college only has two employees that provide faculty with assistance in using the course management system. These employees do not create the instructional design for the courses. To increase enrollment, the Provost wants numerous online courses and programs and is considering a privatized company to deliver these course. A Director for Online Learning was hired and the provost has asked for a plan to resolve this issue. |
| Needs Analysis | The Director of Online Learning will conduct a needs assessment that will identify the critical needs that are affecting the college’s revenue, student enrollment, online course evaluations, and the overall organizational climate. The needs assessment will follow the method by Morrison, Ross and Kemp (2006) and will be conducted in four phases (Brown & Green, 2016, p.49-50).  **Phase One- Planning**   * Identify the Audience – Students, Faculty, and Administration * Type of Data to be collected – Interviews, questionnaires, artifact review, literature review, and focus groups of students/faculty. * Design questionnaires and interview questions.   **Phase Two – Data Collection**  Due to the logistics and costs of trying to collect data from over 8500 individuals (student population/faculty), a representative sample will be chosen.   * Student/Faculty interviews will be conducted * Student/Faculty focus groups were analyzed * Direct observations will be conducted of the current undergraduate/graduate online courses to determine the strengths/weaknesses * Review of literature – Online Education/Traditional Education and its effectiveness * Review of Artifacts – collection of documents   **Phase Three – Data Analysis**  The Delphi Method will be used to analyze the data. “The Delphi Method is a structured process for collecting and analyzing knowledge gathered from a group of experts through the use of a series of questionnaires intermixed with controlled opinion feedback” (Brown & Green, 2016, p.50).   * Data will be coded and analyzed to identify themes * The result of the data analysis will identify and prioritize the various needs: normative, comparative, expressed, felt, anticipated, and critical incident (Morrison et al., 2006).   **Phase Four – Creation of Final Report**  The final report is prepared to include four sections:   1. **Summary of the Purpose** – The purpose of the needs assessment was to identify the effectiveness of online courses offered as SRSC and its impact on student enrollment and overall revenue of the institution. The organizational climate will also be assessed. 2. **Summary of the Process –** The process will include a representative sample of the all college students, faculty, and administration. Once the sample is chosen, data collection instruments will be designed and data will be collected through interviews, questionnaires, and focus groups of students/faculty/administration. A literature review and a review of artifacts will also be conducted. 3. **Summary of the Results** – A mixed methods format will be used involving charts, graphs, and a narrative. The results are that current courses do not have a standard structure and format therefore leaving students dissatisfied with the education they receive. Being that the institution is located in an urban region, many students have to work and their work schedules conflict with the days/times of the traditional courses offered. Professors lacked the knowledge of teaching online courses and therefore provided little to no feedback to students. Professors identified a lack of training and support by the institution. 4. **Recommendations –** Higher education institutions that offer online degree programs are more cost effective than going to a traditional institution due to the numerous personnel that have to pay paid and the large number of property and facilities that have to be managed (“Is Attending College Online”, 2017). Based on the results, recommendations are as follows:  * Offer more online programs as well as hybrid programs * All programs/courses will be Quality Matters certified * Provide professional development for faculty * Hire four additional employees to assist staff and students with the course management system. * Invest in marketing and promotion of the new online programs/courses offered to all of the high schools in the surrounding region. |
| Task Analysis | * The Director of Online Learning will be the subject matter expert to assist the instructional designers by providing guidance on the content and tasks to be included in the development of new online programs. Data collected during the needs analysis will be reviewed to identify the pros and cons of the current online courses. Based on the data, training will be provided to faculty to improve on the deficiencies identified. * Collaborate with the bursar’s office to conduct a comparative analysis of the cost of online tuition amongst all of the schools in the surrounding region in order to offer a more competitive price per credit. * Collaborate with the office of academic advisement to conduct a survey of student interests toward online programs (What kind of programs are they interested in?). * Establish communities of practice amongst departments to support each other as they receive professional development and training. |
| Learner Analysis | The audience for the learner analysis are the students and the faculty. The stakeholders are comprised of students, faculty, administration, and prospective students. Students’ current levels will be gauged through interviews, surveys, and questionnaires as well as data received from course evaluations, which provide information about the student, their background and experiences, as well as data on the specific course. Faculty levels will also be gauged through interviews, surveys, and questionnaires as well as data received from course evaluations. Course evaluations will express student concerns in terms of the delivery, feedback, and management of the course. Direct observations of the course and how it is delivered will be seen through course management system. |
| Goals/Objectives | **Goal:** The goal is to increase financial revenue for the college.  **Objective I** – To increase the number of online programs/courses offered.  **Objective II** – To provide faculty with professional development/training on effectively teaching in an online learning environment.  **Objective III** – To build partnerships with all high schools in the urban region to attract prospective undergraduate students by promoting the new online programs offered.  These changes will increase enrollment due to the new online programs offered, which will increase financial revenue for the college and stabilize the rising cost of tuition. Professional development and support to the faculty will result in effective delivery of instruction in an online environment, which will result in positive course evaluations. Overall, the organizational climate is expected to improve due to satisfied students, trained/supported faculty, and increase in enrollment and financial revenue. This projected plan will be cost effective to the institution because they do not have to pay as many faculty/support staff each month and they do not have to manage as many facilities and grounds. These savings and the increased revenue can be used to provide ongoing training for faculty and towards quality matters certification of programs/courses. |

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

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| **Sections** | **Criteria** |
| Overview | Dr. Paul Seymour is a new professor at The State University at Chicago with successful experience in research. He attended some of the best research institutions and worked with several famous researchers in the field. Dr. Seymour has published several scholarly papers is highly respected in his field.  He currently teaches molecular evolution to 40 juniors, comprised mainly of pre-med students. On the first day of the course he explained the rules of the course; 50% of the grade would be individual work and 50% group scores. Peer evaluation will also be part of the grade. Students were opposed to his rules and shows signs of aggression. Despite the opposition, Dr. Seymour continued with his instructional approach of collaborative learning collaborative learning where students worked on projects as teams and received group grades. At the end of the five-week course, he received negative course evaluations from the students and the results showed that the students were not thrilled with his instructional approach of collaborative learning. The students also expressed their concerns with other faculty members to include, The Chairman of the Department of Integrative Biology, Distinguished Professor David Montague. Dr. Montague inadvertently addressed his concerns as to why Dr. Seymour was not writing sufficient grants. This situation has affected Dr. Seymour’s personal feelings and has him down and unhappy. |
| Needs Analysis | The results of the course evaluations and the conversation with the Chairman of the Department identified a problem in regards to performance. Dr. Montague and Dr. Seymour will collaboratively conduct a performance analysis. The analysis will follow Mager’s steps for conducting a performance analysis below (Brown & Green, 2016, p. 48).  **Step One – Describe the person whose performance is being questioned.**   * Dr. Paul Seymour is a new professor at The State University at Chicago with successful experience in research. He attended some of the best research institutions and worked with several famous researchers in the field. Dr. Seymour has published several scholarly papers is highly respected in his field.   **Step Two – Describe what is causing Dr. Seymour’s performance to be questioned.**   * End of course evaluations results were negative. Dr. Seymour’s students showed signs of aggression and were opposed to his course rules and his instructional approach of collaborative learning since the first day of the course. Student were not used to working in collaborative groups. They were opposed to groups work (projects, papers, grades) and did not want discussions, papers or group tests, or case studies.   **Step Three – Describe what Dr. Seymour should be doing**   * Although Dr. Seymour is a highly skilled researcher and is very knowledgeable, his collaborative learning approach to teaching this group of students and/or course may not be the most effective teaching style. * As a new professor, Dr. Seymour should receive a mentor to support him as he learns teaching best practices and pedagogy. Dr. Seymour should also be offered peer observation visits of an effective learning environment so that he can learn various teaching strategies that can be implemented in specific learning environments and receive feedback from his peers as well. * With his passion for teaching, Dr. Seymour may want to call his mentor Dr. Mary Craxton, in quest for a teaching opportunity at John Hopkins. The learning environment at John Hopkins seems to accept the collaborative learning approach and Dr. Seymour would be in his element.   **Step Four - Determine the cost of the discrepancy (frustration, depression, decline of student enrollment).**   * Students would not want to take this course with Dr. Seymour because of his teaching style. They may decide to take the course at another institution and transfer the credits. This would result in a loss of financial revenue for the institution. * Dr. Seymour’s professional reputation will be tarnished and he will be considered an ineffective professor, which can result in losing his job. * Dr. Seymour will fall into depression because his performance and teaching abilities are being questioned. Depression can lead to him to taking a leave of absence, which would affect the university. * Overall, the cost of this discrepancy outweighs the problem. Dr. Seymour is not positioned at the appropriate learning environment. To question a highly skilled professional on his performance because students do not like his teaching style and learning approach is disrespectful. The cost of training, professional development, mentorship, and time will not guarantee that Dr. Seymour will change his teaching style and may result in him taking a job elsewhere. |
| Task Analysis | In order to achieve the desired performance results, Dr. Seymour needs the following:   * Receive a mentor to support him as he learns teaching best practices and pedagogy. * Dr. Seymour should also be offered peer observation visits of an effective learning environment so that he can learn various teaching strategies that can be implemented in specific learning environments and receive feedback from his peers as well. * Collaboratively create a professional growth plan with his mentor * Write a personal reflection of his career passion for teaching and his current teaching practice at the University of Chicago. It may not align with the culture at this institution and John Hopkins may be a better fit. * Attend all the training opportunities offered by the university and seek other outside agencies that may be providing training on effective teaching strategies and approaches in higher education. |
| Learner Analysis | Dr. Seymour is the audience. Dr. Seymour’s current/prospective students, Dr. David Montague the Department Chairman and Dr. Seymour’s  colleagues in the department are stakeholders. Dr. Seymour’s current level will be gauged by assessing his human needs. According to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, an individual’s behavior/performance is determined by their needs (Maslow, 1968). He is currently feeling low in terms of job satisfaction due to this situation. The stakeholders’ current level will be gauged by the professional support given to Dr. Seymour and its impact on his performance. |
| Goals/Objectives | **Goal:** The goal is to improve the instructional delivery of Dr. Seymours courses to meet the learning needs of his students.  **Objective I** – To build collegial relationships and become involved in communities of practice to develop an effective teaching style through best practices and pedagogy.  **Objective II** – To improve teacher student relationships through their input on course evaluations and discussions.  **Objective III** – To assist in a modification or redesign of the course that meets the learner’s needs as well as human needs. Components to a successful learning environment must be taken into consideration.  While these changes are expected to increase performance, the result will be based on the level of Dr. Seymour’s human needs being met. While these are good considerations to increase performance, Dr. Seymour may not be willing to change his teaching style and the negative evaluations may have affected his sense of acceptance and belonging.  Overall, the economic costs of this discrepancy outweighs the problem. Dr. Seymour is not positioned at the appropriate learning environment. To question a highly skilled professional on his performance, because students do not like his teaching style and learning approach is disrespectful. The cost of training, professional development, mentorship, and time will not guarantee that Dr. Seymour will change his teaching style and may result in him taking a job elsewhere. |

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