Introduction to Section II of *Online Learning* Volume 23, Issue 3

Peter Shea
University at Albany, SUNY
Editor-in-Chief, *Online Learning*

This third issue of 2019 contains 8 articles that were received through our regular submission process. These papers reflect a wide array of topics, research questions, and methods. This collection of studies advances our understanding of faculty and professional development, instructional design, and student, research, and ethical concerns in online settings.

The first three papers deal with faculty and faculty professional development issues. The first of these is "Examining Faculty Perception of Their Readiness to Teach Online" by Florence Martin, Kiran Budhrani, and Chuang Wang of the University of North Carolina. Using survey methods, the study looks at faculty attitudes about the importance of online teaching competencies and faculty's perception of their ability to confidently teach online. The paper defines readiness to teach online as a function of these two – i.e. relevance of online teaching and competence to be effective. An important finding from the study is that the competencies faculty find most important differ from the competencies they believe they can perform. These results and their implications are discussed in depth in the paper.

The next paper is "Using Social Media as a Platform for a Virtual Professional Learning Community" by Laurie Bedford of Walden University. As the previous study suggests, professional development is a critical component of faculty competence with online instruction. The authors assert that social media use for professional development has primarily focused on informal learning in unstructured formats. This paper explores whether more structured approaches might support the development of an effective online learning community among participants. Using interviews to elicit insights from 22 doctoral mentoring faculty who engaged in a structured social media environment the author reports that the platform was an effective way to engage faculty, build relationships and foster shared learning.

The third paper is "What Is an ID? A Survey Study" by Olysha Magruder of Johns Hopkins University, Daniel Arnold and Shaun Moore of Oakland University, and Mel Edwards of Purdue University. This paper provides context for the role of the instructional designer and the influence of online learning on the evolving nature of this faculty-support role. The question driving this research focuses on the competencies instructional designers report. Results from a survey of 139 instructional designers indicate that the ability to evaluate programs and incorporating learning theories are the most critical competencies for the profession, but various other competencies are deemed important. These results have significant implications for practice and the further development of the profession.

The next paper in this section is "Well Begun Is Half Done: Using an Online Orientation to Foster Online Students' Academic Self-Efficacy" by M'hammed Abdous of Old Dominion University. While the previous papers broadly explore variables impacting faculty preparedness to teach online, this paper looks at student readiness for online learning. Using a large sample of student (n = 3,888) the study looks for relationships between participation and satisfaction with an online orientation and students' confidence to complete online course activities, to interact with classmates and the instructor, to use of a learning management system (LMS), and to socialize with classmates. The study found that satisfaction with the online orientation strongly predicted students' self-confidence to use the LMS, as well as their confidence to interact with and to socialize with their classmates. The author concludes that the use of a learner-centered orientation, with learning activities that reflect course activities, is crucial to online students' success in online learning.

The fifth paper in this section is "One Size Does Not Fit All: Toward an Evidence-Based Framework for Determining Online Course Enrollment Sizes in Higher Education" by Susan Taft of Kent State University and Karen Kesten and Majeda M. El-Banna of the George Washington University. Online course enrollments have long been a topic of controversy with some arguing that there need be no limit at one end of the spectrum (e.g. MOOCs) and those arguing that smaller is better for online quality at the other. For the most part, the large scale argument holds sway in non-degree programs (MOOCs) and smaller scale is typical of coursework in degree-granting programs. Within this context of "traditional" online courses leading to degrees, class size is still a topic of concern and this paper provides much needed nuance into the topic of optimal course size. The paper presents evidence compiled from 58 articles found in recent higher education journals reported by researchers from a variety of disciplines. The paper also includes a framework with recommended class sizes based on learning needs and pedagogical strategies with examples of courses in five size categories.

The next paper is "Examining the Role of Motivation and Learning Strategies in Student Success in Online Versus Face-to-Face Courses" by Emily Stark of Minnesota State University. This study examined differences between student learning strategies and motivations in online and face-to-face courses in a survey of 778 students using the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ). Results suggest that students in online courses had lower levels of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to succeed and viewed their online course as less interesting and useful compared to students in face-to-face courses. However, students in online courses reported greater self-efficacy compared to those in face-to-face courses, i.e. they felt more able to successfully complete the work online. Students in online courses reported using fewer learning strategies, including rehearsal, organization of information, metacognition, and seeking less help from peers and the instructor, compared to those enrolled in face-to-face courses. Possible explanations for these and other differences are discussed along with implications for future research.

The seventh paper in this section is "Research Ethics of Twitter for MOOCs" by Eamon Costello, Enda Donlon, and Mark Brown of Dublin City University. Social media data are frequently seen as valuable for educational research, especially for non-traditional online learning contexts such as Massive Open Online Courses. The data are publicly available, informative, and easy to access. However, using this data is not without risk. The goal of the research presented in this paper was to ask what ethical considerations researchers have reported when investigating MOOC learners' and teachers' Twitter activity. A key result was that almost three quarters of the

studies analyzed did not contain any mention of ethics. This is problematic in that collection of personally identifiable and potentially compromising data is inherently an activity with ethical concerns. The authors provide discussion of the results and suggestions for future research.

The final paper in this issue is "Artificial Intelligence and The Academy's Loss of Purpose" by Anthony Picciano of the City University of New York Hunter College and Graduate Center. This paper, also focusing on ethical and related concerns, discusses the future of higher education as online technology, specifically adaptive learning and analytics supported by artificial intelligence, develops and evolves. The paper argues that online and adaptive learning have already taken hold within the academy, but the most significant changes are still unfolding. These evolving technologies may have the potential to change traditional roles in higher education in unpredictable and highly disruptive fashion. These possibilities are summarized with implications for the future of higher education professional roles.

We invite you to read and share this issue with colleagues and to consider submitting your original work to *Online Learning*.