

Chapter 16

E-Learning and Web 2.0 Case Study: The Role of Gender in Contemporary Models of Health Care Leadership

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The authors, two faculty members with experience in online and blended learning at a Midwestern United States (US) medical school graduate leadership program, recognized the need for a critical thinking, literature-based course to explore the role of gender in health care leadership models. Acknowledging that such seminars are often mixed with cultural, social, and organizational bias, the faculty members set out to create and implement a hybrid course that blended formal, non-formal, and informal learning in a collaborative group seminar using Web 2.0 tools along with traditional teaching methodology. The Community of Inquiry model formed the pedagogical foundation of the course. This chapter will describe the planning, decisions, implementation, and outcomes of the course, including technical and logistical issues. Included are discussions of the role of gender in both health care leadership and online learning to demonstrate the strengths, opportunities, and limitations of the course.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-1930-2.ch016

BACKGROUND

The course described in this case study was entitled, “The Role of Gender in Contemporary Models of Health Care Leadership.” The course was offered at a graduate medical university with a total enrollment of approximately 1700 students. The university, an urban campus in the Midwest U.S., was comprised of three colleges (osteopathic medicine, podiatry, and health sciences) offering nine different degrees. Most students attended classes on campus in a traditional face-to-face delivery format with limited supplemental use of the ANGEL Learning Management System (LMS), a propriety online course delivery system owned by Blackboard, Inc.

The gender leadership course was housed in the Master of Health Care Administration (MHA) program. Although open to students in all programs, the majority of those enrolled in the course were seeking the MHA degree. Many resided outside of the metropolitan area, with others spanning the nation and globe. Most had full-time jobs; others were dual-degree students actively involved in other programs or clinical rotations. Therefore, the course design needed to be responsive to the needs of a diverse range of students. Before further discussing the technical aspects of the course, it is worthwhile to consider why the need existed for a gender and leadership course, and how this drove technology and course design decisions.

The field of health care continues to undergo significant change, and the need for dynamic leadership remains evident (Gilmartin & D’Aunno, 2007). Women comprise more than 78% of the workforce, yet are under-represented in the top leadership positions (Lanz, 2008). Research suggests that leadership team performance is enhanced when women are included (Wooley, et al., 2010; Apesteguia, Azmat, & Iriberi, 2011). Further, numerous articles have demonstrated that women perform as well as, if not better than, men using a transformational leadership style (Mandel & Pherwani, 2003; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Pew Research Center, 2008; Reuvers, vanEngen, Vinkenburb, & Wilson-Evered, 2008). Therefore, it would follow that having women involved in senior leadership teams could be a distinct advantage in health care organizations. Despite the fact that women are outpacing men in earning undergraduate, graduate, and professional degrees (Pew Research Center, 2011), progress in achieving senior leadership positions has been slow. Barriers include demanding work schedules that limit flexibility for family responsibilities (Pew Research Center, 2010), the lack of mentors and leadership succession planning for women, and persistent gender stereotyping (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

Adding a background perspective to the course was the contrast in leadership of our health sciences college within a very traditional medical university. In our college, the dean, associate dean, and five program directors were all women, while the senior leadership of the university and of all other colleges on campus was

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