Chapter 7

# Designing and Implementing a Student-Centered Online Graduate Program:
## A Case Study in a College of Education

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## ABSTRACT

*This chapter presents a case study analysis of a graduate program that moved from initial design to effective implementation of student-centered online instruction. The authors describe their experiences designing, implementing, and evaluating an online M.Ed. degree program in a college of education—the first fully online degree program at a large, Midwestern, regional institution of higher learning. The design and approval process took almost four years, including both internal and external approvals. Initially implemented in 2011, the authors gathered three years of follow-up data about the program and evaluated its success using a variety of factors, including course- and program-level data. Program design, development, implementation, and evaluation are all addressed in this case study.*

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a case study of an online, student-centered, graduate program that evolved from an idea, to a design, to implementation, finally undergoing an extensive evaluation. Drawing on their development of the first fully online degree

program at a large, Midwestern, regional institution of higher learning, the authors describe their experiences designing, implementing, and evaluating an online M.Ed. degree program in educational technology (EDT) offered through the university's college of education (COE).

The design and approval process took almost four years and included both internal and external approvals. In the years immediately following initial program implementation in 2011, the authors gathered three years of data to evaluate the success of the program and its courses. The data utilized included professional journals kept during the design process, notes from college and university curriculum meetings, and notes from meetings at university faculty governance meetings. Additionally, student surveys, course evaluations, and notes from stakeholders (e.g., the provost, faculty governance members, and personnel in the Continuing Education office) helped provide context for the work done by program faculty.

Program improvements resulting from the review and evaluation process are ongoing. To date, implementing this program has resulted in increases in online courses and program admissions, which have helped offset a reduction in on-campus enrollments within the college.

## BACKGROUND

The COE and this specific program are part of a regional, public institution of higher education in the Midwestern United States. Approximately 25,000 students are enrolled at the university, of which 3,100 are graduate students. The COE has 3240 students overall, with 908 graduate students. Prior to the development of this online degree, almost all of the students who enrolled in the program resided in the local region. Most students in the M.Ed. degree in EDT are full-time educators, primarily teaching in K-12 settings. Roughly 92% of the students enrolled in both the hybrid and online graduate programs are White, non-Hispanic, with 65% female and 35% male.

Leading up to development of this online graduate program in EDT, the COE faculty started teaching hybrid courses in 2004 and online courses starting in 2006. There was clear evidence at the time of the need to offer the entire program online, with anticipated changes in state funding for education graduate degrees and national competition for graduate students. Having successfully developed, implemented, and evaluated hybrid and online graduate courses, faculty saw a fully online degree as a natural extension to the existing hybrid program.

The goals of the COE's M.Ed. degree in educational technology are to:

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