

Faculty Perceptions of Readiness and Confidence for Teaching Online

An Evaluation of Online Professional Development

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Career Readiness

Course Design

Higher Education

Online Faculty Training

Program Evaluation

Self-Confidence

Technology Integration

The Online Pedagogy Program (OPP) at Midwest Community College was developed to prepare faculty for online instruction in response to the COVID pandemic. The purpose of this research was to evaluate faculty perceptions of their readiness and confidence in teaching online after completing the OPP, as well as to identify faculty perceptions of the OPP quality. This action research study used a qualitative-only design. Findings revealed the faculty perceived their readiness and confidence to teach online improved after completing the OPP. Technology integration, course learning outcomes, and fostering a sense of community were recommendations for stakeholders about OPP improvement.

Introduction

There has been phenomenal growth in online education in the past decade (Martin et al., 2019; Mellieon & Robinson, 2021). With an estimated five to seven million students enrolling in at least one online course each year and enrollment in online degree programs continuing to increase, postsecondary institutions are under scrutiny to design online classes that deliver the highest-quality education to 21st-century learners (Allen & Seaman, 2017; Schwartz, 2023). Regardless of faculty preparation for online teaching, the COVID-19 pandemic forced leaders of higher education institutions nationwide to make unexpected and extensive shifts to emergency remote teaching and to require students to take online classes (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020; Cutri et al., 2020; Hodges et al., 2020). The leaders of institutions who had been slow to embrace online instruction had limited time to plan, prepare, train, provide, and receive pedagogical and technological support for faculty (Hart et al., 2021; Hosny et al., 2021). Not only did many faculty have to adjust immediately to a new modality of teaching, but they did so with little or no training regarding best practices in online pedagogy and, for many, little or no interest in online teaching (Kessler et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2021; McMurtrie, 2020; Redstone & Luo, 2021; Safi et al., 2020; Tsai et al., 2020). The extent to which colleges and universities offer online education is also closely tied to their institutional philosophy regarding online education (Philipsen et al., 2021).

As the academic landscape continues to evolve, institutions of higher education must adapt to emerging realities and act strategically to effectively address learners' changing needs (Singh et al., 2022). Leaders of postsecondary institutions are under scrutiny to design high-quality online classes delivered by faculty well-versed in 21st-century digital teaching competencies (Legon & Garrett, 2021; Mohabir-Mckinley, 2020; Schwartz, 2023). Research indicates that faculty confidence increases after participating in interactive faculty training, which may motivate teachers to implement positive changes in their teaching practices and result in increased student learning (Borup & Evmenova, 2019; Gregory et al., 2020; Piryani et al., 2018).

Specialists, such as Instructional Designers, provide faculty support in instructional design and technology integration and offer professional development through a variety of modalities (Schmid et al., 2021; Sims et al., 2022). Garrett et al. (2020) surveyed 422 institutions; they found that effective faculty development for online teaching included instruction on designing online classes and using technology tools to create high-quality courses in a post-pandemic educational landscape. It is also important to develop effective faculty professional development that supports and trains faculty in digital teaching methods, enabling them to deliver high-quality online classes and offer entire online programs to a new generation of 21st-century learners. Notwithstanding an increased attention that higher education institutions have placed on faculty professional development, less research exists regarding how these institutions have developed effective professional development to support evidence-based teaching practices for faculty who teach online (Velmurugan et al., 2025).

At Midwest Community College (pseudonym used), the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) offers the Online Pedagogy Program (OPP) to train faculty to teach online. The goal of the self-paced training is to provide faculty at the institution with immediate skills needed to transition to online teaching. Since its inception (May 2020), the OPP at Midwest Community College has not been formally evaluated to determine faculty perceptions of their confidence and readiness to teach in online environments after completing the OPP. As the immediate effects of the pandemic-related remote teaching waned, the program shifted from emergency remote-teaching preparedness to a permanent training program grounded in evidence-based practices of asynchronous teaching. Faculty perspectives were needed to help shape future iterations of the professional development program design. With the Midwest Community College administration's commitment to accelerating online course offerings, they must evaluate faculty perceptions about their preparedness and confidence in teaching online after completing the OPP. Doing so will help the Community College leadership identify practical components of the OPP that will ultimately increase the quality of online classes for students.

This study focused on the following research questions:

1. What are Midwest Community College faculty perceptions about the quality of the Online Pedagogy Program?

2. What are Midwest Community College faculty perceptions about their readiness to teach online after completing the Online Pedagogy Program?
3. What are Midwest Community College faculty's perceptions about their confidence to teach online after completing the Online Pedagogy Program?

Literature Review

While faculty are subject-matter experts in their fields, they often lack the skills to teach in online environments (Akpen et al., 2024). By experiencing the role of a student in online learning, faculty can develop a new perspective on asynchronous teaching (Lidolf & Pasco, 2020). If faculty can understand how teaching practices impact students' success, universities will be better positioned to support the rapidly increasing and changing demographic of online students (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2024). To be proficient in online pedagogy, faculty need training in course facilitation using web-based tools, fostering a sense of community, and designing courses to engage learners in the online environment (Berry, 2019; Jaeger et al., 2023; Martin et al., 2019). To further these points, faculty professional development, program evaluation, faculty readiness and confidence, teaching presence, and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) are explored.

Faculty Professional Development

To meet the demand for highly skilled online faculty, faculty professional development is essential. Professional development plays a key role in developing and constructing teachers' knowledge, confidence, and self-efficacy within community colleges and other institutions of higher education (Jaeger et al., 2023). Faculty are inclined to teach the way they were taught, and because many online instructors have never taken an online class or been trained in online pedagogy, they lack a point of reference for online teaching (Redmond et al., 2018). Faculty professional development programs that adhere to effective implementation of UDL principles, are multidimensional in design and in delivery, and the methods used to deliver them impact faculty perceptions about online teaching.

The growth of online learning in higher education has placed greater pressure on universities to train faculty to teach in online environments, ensuring students are taught by faculty trained in online pedagogy, in addition to subject-matter expertise (Borup & Evmenova, 2019; Lidolf & Pasco, 2020). Faculty professional development in online formats can create learning spaces that promote self-directed, investigative learning, a goal of education theories (Lee & Chang, 2025). Borup and Evmenova (2019) contend that the way a course was taught and the techniques modeled by course instructors had a greater influence on faculty perspectives on online learning. The best online teaching programs allow faculty to experience high-quality online learning from a student perspective (Lidolf & Pasco, 2020).

Developments in technology have brought about changes in the roles of faculty and structures of education, so it is important to understand faculty perceptions of these changes. Being ready to integrate technology while simultaneously wanting to learn more about technology integration emphasizes the continual learning process that goes hand-in-hand with technologies that are rapidly changing (Li et al., 2023; Vang et al., 2020; Venkatesh, 2022). Social influence and facilitating conditions also play a primary role in faculty perceptions about online teaching and learning (Gregory et al., 2020).

Program Evaluation

CTEs in higher education settings need evaluation strategies that objectively and subjectively measure faculty perspectives on their readiness and confidence to teach online (Cutri et al., 2020). The goal of program evaluation is to answer questions about the degree to which a program achieves its goals, how it can be improved, and if it should continue (Cahapay, 2021). Evaluation is implemented to review and determine if goals and policies need realignment to meet preferred outcomes, and it helps instructional designers by providing recommendations for designing similar self-paced online courses (Rizzuto, 2017). The Kirkpatrick Four-level model of program evaluation recognized the "necessity of creating an analytical framework to

evaluate the degree to which training initiatives enhance learners' acquisition of job-related skills, improve service quality and safety, and impact the community" (Setyadi et al., 2024, p. 129). The Kirkpatrick model (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006) offers four levels for evaluating training: reaction, learning, behavior, and results criteria. This model is straightforward, systematic, pragmatic, and an impactful, widely used framework for classifying evaluation (Alsalamah & Callinan, 2021). The Center for Teaching and Learning Matrix (Brown et al., 2019) is an internal improvement tool to evaluate the effectiveness of Centers for Teaching and Learning and the programs offered by assessing: organizational structure; resource allocation and infrastructure; and programs and services.

Faculty Readiness and Confidence

Martin et al. (2019) define faculty readiness to teach online as a state of faculty preparation for online teaching. The researchers distinguish between two components of readiness: attitudes about the importance of teaching online and perceptions about confidence (ability) to teach online. Faculty attitude refers to a person's point of view on the relevance of technology and teaching, as well as perspectives on online teaching competencies (i.e., facilitating interaction, assessing learning, and pedagogical roles) of an online instructor (Martin et al., 2019). Faculty attitude also refers to managerial aspects of online teaching, such as maintaining online classes and staying current with the subject matter taught (Alieto et al., 2024). Instructor ability, as defined by Hermans et al. (2025), is the extent to which faculty perceive their competence in using instructional strategies to enhance teaching effectiveness. Basilotta-Gómez-Pablos et al. (2022) concluded that faculty have low ability in technological resources and competencies, and high ability in online teaching competencies and course alignment. Research exists that concentrates on faculty impressions and beliefs towards professional development for teaching (Scherer et al., 2021; Shreaves et al., 2020), and its effectiveness and preference of delivery methods for professional development for instructors preparing to teach online (Vela et al., 2023).

Teaching Presence

One critical area of focus is the role of teaching presence in online classrooms. Teaching presence in the Community of Inquiry (Col) framework refers to the instructor's intentional actions to design, guide, and support the learning process, enabling meaningful educational experiences (Garrison et al., 2000). The Col framework established in the seminal work of Garrison et al. (2000) describes interaction through three key components: social presence, teaching presence, and cognitive presence. Turgut (2023) explains that connecting social presence (emotional expression and group cohesion) for teaching and learning is important because students are more likely to demonstrate cognitive presence (connecting and applying new ideas) when social presence is established. Furthermore, students are more likely to establish social presence when instructors demonstrate teaching presence by designing and facilitating cognitive and social processes (Parrish et al., 2021).

Jaggars et al. (2013) used a mixed-methods design to analyze 23 high-enrollment, entry-level online courses across two community colleges. They revealed that courses with high levels of teaching presence demonstrated measurably better outcomes. These high-presence courses—characterized by prompt and detailed feedback, consistent participation in discussion forums, regular announcements, and effective use of multimedia tools—were frequently associated with higher student grades, significantly lower attrition rates, and greater overall student satisfaction. Students particularly emphasized the value of meaningful interactions with instructors, noting that the absence of instructor presence frequently led to feelings of isolation, confusion, and disengagement from course material.

Regarding teaching presence in the Col framework, Bloomberg (2021) concluded that effective online instruction requires three key elements: clear and intuitive course design, personalized and constructive feedback, and regular, meaningful instructor engagement throughout the course. These findings underscore the importance of educational institutions to provide comprehensive support and professional development opportunities for faculty to develop the specific skills and strategies needed to foster a strong online presence.

Universal Design for Learning

As community colleges and universities increasingly prioritize teaching to diverse populations, the need for faculty to adopt equitable and inclusive teaching practices has become more pronounced. UDL offers a robust framework for addressing these needs by promoting flexibility, accessibility, and learner engagement. However, effective implementation of UDL principles extends beyond technical course design. Faculty must also be equipped with pedagogical strategies that foster social presence and build a sense of community in asynchronous online environments where interpersonal interaction is limited. To this end, faculty development programs should not only introduce the foundational elements of UDL but also model inclusive teaching practices to help faculty better understand the importance of designing inclusive and engaging learning experiences in asynchronous settings (Ismailov & Chiu, 2022; Nkana et al., 2025).

This literature review, underpinning the three research questions of this study, reveals as more colleges and universities develop online learning to keep up with the increased demand from students, effective faculty professional development options that train faculty in online methodologies become more vital. Faculty professional development programs should strengthen faculty's awareness, confidence, and perceptions of how technology can add value to their pedagogy. These programs need evaluation strategies that can measure the effectiveness of faculty training. The Kirkpatrick four-tiered model of program evaluation and The Center for Teaching and Learning Matrix create measurable data that suggests the value and results delivered by the training. Effective online instruction requires three key elements that align with the Col framework, including social presence, teacher presence, and cognitive presence. Introducing faculty to the foundational elements of UDL and inclusive teaching practices helps them to understand better the importance of making learning materials more accessible and relevant to their students' needs.

Methods

This action research study employed a qualitative design. Action research focuses on carrying out research in a specific context in which a problem exists to arrive at a solution and to initiate change (Mertler, 2020). Additionally, action research is a cyclical process of planning, acting, developing, and reflecting to improve educational practice and empower educational practitioners. A benefit of qualitative research within the scope of this study lies within the convergence of two data sources to enhance and create a more complex understanding of faculty perceptions about readiness and confidence to teach online (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Setting and Population

This study was conducted at Midwest Community College, a public, two-year college. The college serves approximately 10,000 students and employs 602 faculty, 17% of whom are full-time and 83% are adjuncts. There is an even mix of genders, and faculty are predominantly Caucasian (75%) with Black, Hispanic Latino, and Asian races comprising less than 10%. The CTE provides support for all faculty through onsite professional development workshops, face-to-face individual consultations, and online synchronous and asynchronous training.

Prior to March 2020, online course offerings were limited. Effective Summer 2020, all faculty, including new hires, adjunct, full-time, and tenure instructors, were required to complete the OPP training to be eligible to teach at Midwest Community College. The five modules included in the OPP are (a) Online Course Design Basics, (b) Enhancing Communication and Collaboration, (c) Engagement Strategies, (d) Assessment and Feedback, and (e) Supporting Learners with Accessible Course Design (see Table 1). To be eligible to enroll in the OPP, faculty must have successfully completed a Blackboard Learn Ultra fundamentals course, where technical aspects of Blackboard Learn Ultra were covered. The OPP training was six weeks in length, totaled 33 hours of instruction, and was offered in a cohort model with two cohorts per semester enrolled. Each cohort consisted of

approximately 15 faculty, with cohort composition based on full-time and adjunct status and department until the cohort reached capacity at 15 participants. The first cohort completed the training in Summer 2020.

Table 1

Modules in Online Pedagogy Program and Instructional Objectives

Module	Goals
1. Online Course Design Basics	Analyze best practices in online course design. Identify course information and requirements from a course outline. Craft course and module level outcomes that are clear, measurable, and observable.
2. Enhancing Communication and Collaboration	Identify best practices for designing discussion. Create course activities that feature group work.
3. Engagement Strategies	Identify existing resources to increase student engagement in your online course. Identify new resources that will engage students.
4. Assessment and Feedback	Develop formative and summative assessment strategies for your online courses. Determine what type of feedback will best support learning and determine how it can be best implemented in your course.
5. Accessible Course Design	Evaluate the accessibility of materials in your online course Develop strategies and curate resources that implement Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles and practices to your course design and learning materials.

For this study, 20 cohorts totaling 300 faculty earned their certificates of completion. Criteria for inclusion to participate in this study included (a) actively teaching at Midwest Community College, (b) having completed the OPP, (c) currently teaching an online course, or (d) having taught at least one online course since completing the OPP. All faculty who met this criterion were emailed an invitation to participate in the study. After they confirmed they would like to participate and returned a signed consent to participate form, the survey links (except for the End-of-Course evaluation) were emailed to the participants. Nineteen faculty members consented to participate in this research study (see Table 2).

Table 2

Individuals who Consented to Participate in this Study by Employment Status, Ethnicity, and Gender

Employment status	Ethnicity	Gender	n
Adjunct	Asian	Male	1
Adjunct	Hispanic	Female	1
Adjunct	White	Female	7
Adjunct	White	Male	5
Full-Time	African American	Male	1
Full-Time	Asian	Male	1
Full-Time	White	Female	1
Full-Time	White	Male	2

Data Collection

IRB approval from both higher education institutions affiliated with this study was secured before collecting any data. Data was collected using qualitative methods to inform the results of this study, including one-on-one synchronous semi-structured individual interviews conducted via Zoom and open-ended question responses on the Online Pedagogy Program End-of-Course Evaluation (OPP EOC) instrument. Rigor was established through the selection of appropriate research methods that enhance trustworthiness and minimize researcher bias inherent in qualitative methodologies (Johnson et al., 2020). To increase the rigor and trustworthiness of qualitative research, use of Delve CAQDAS software program, peer debriefing, member checking, and triangulation of data sources took place. A qualitative design allowed the participants the opportunity to express their ideas and opinions about how they consciously experienced the online pedagogy training (Tracy, 2020).

Semi-Structured Individual Interviews

To determine eligibility for participants engagement in semi-structured individual interviews, purposive sampling reflected the intentional selection of eight research participants that would align as close as possible with the demographics of Midwest Community College. Qualitative data was collected through 13 semi-structured interview questions focused on the research participants' perceptions about confidence and readiness to teach online, as well as their perceptions about the quality of the OPP (see Appendix). The semi-structured individual interviews took place synchronously using Zoom and were recorded and transcribed using the features offered within Zoom. The transcript was then imported into Microsoft Word and checked for accuracy. Through this interpretive process, faculty participants shared multiple perspectives and contributed to a more holistic understanding of the topic. Pseudonyms were assigned to protect the participants anonymity and privacy in the qualitative data report.

Online Pedagogy Program End-of-Course Evaluation

The OPP EOC was developed by the Office of Research and Institutional Effectiveness at Midwest Community College. The OPP EOC was used to measure faculty perceptions about the quality of the OPP and their readiness to teach online and was completed by each study participant immediately after they completed the OPP. The OPP EOC consisted of three parts with the first two parts collecting quantitative data not included in the scope of this study. Part three included two open-ended questions regarding faculty perceptions of OPP strengths and suggestions for improvement. Responses were anonymous.

Data Analysis

Inductive analysis was used to analyze the two qualitative sources, meaning that the common themes of the data were extracted from the bottom-up (Ding, 2023). Specifically, inductive reasoning follows an approach where the researcher collects data, investigates the data to find themes, and then provides an overview of the themes and patterns in the data (Tracy, 2020). Additionally, qualitative data analysis happens in a spiral motion for continuous improvement and change. The combined qualitative data was coded, a process of cleaning the data by assigning a word that represents a category (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), using Delve data analysis software.

Four rounds of first cycle coding took place: including in-vivo coding to best represent the participants' voices out of the data; process coding where ongoing actions, interactions, and changes over time are identified; descriptive coding to offer simple descriptive nouns to multiple aspects of the data; and lastly structural coding where a connection between responses and research question are established (Saldaña, 2021). A sentence-by-sentence unit of analysis took place of all of the qualitative data for each round of coding. To better manage and organize the corpus of codes generated from the four rounds of first cycle coding, code mapping was used to visually represent the relationships between different codes and enhance the trustworthiness of codes generated (Saldaña, 2021). Pattern coding took place for second cycle coding (Saldaña, 2021) producing categories and patterns that allowed for the emergence of three themes. This research was developed for a

doctoral program dissertation; therefore, Dr. Forman solely performed the coding. However, there were multiple consensus discussions with his chairperson, Dr. Kolski, throughout the coding cycle processes and inductive analysis.

Results

The qualitative findings revealed participants' interpretations and the contextual meaning of their behaviors. By analyzing contextual meaning that is unique to the researched group, a "complex and expansionist depiction" (Tracy, 2020, p. 275) was described thematically and compared to current literature that is grounded in research. Three themes emerged from the qualitative data sources (see Table 3). An unexpected outcome was that faculty participants from this study found value in experiencing the online pedagogy training from a student perspective, enhancing their awareness in creating inclusive and community strong courses.

Table 3

Inductive Analysis

Qualitative data	Code	Category	Theme
I enjoyed the interaction on the discussion board. (Alex) The one thing that really stands out to me ... is how important it is to reach everyone. (Mary)	<i>Enjoyed interaction on discussion board</i>	Teaching and social presence (Col)	Theme 1: Faculty experiencing the online pedagogy training from a student perspective accentuated their awareness in creating inclusive and community strong courses.
The assignment instructions could be simplified. (Anonymous) Better to give direct examples. (Anonymous) Grading of assignments could have been more prompt. (Anonymous)	<i>"Instructions could be simplified" Give examples Grade assignments promptly</i>	Assignments, assessment, and feedback.	
I had never taken an online course. I've never taught an online course. (Mary) One has to quickly navigate. (Arlo) I was unprepared for online pedagogy, either as a teacher, a developer of a class, and as a participant. (Mary)	<i>"Never taken an online course" "Never taught an online Class" Navigating an online class "unprepared for online pedagogy"</i>	Online pedagogy novice	
Introduction to making our classes more inclusive. (Genevieve) I think I really zoned in on accessibility, making more	<i>"Making our classes more inclusive" Making content accessible</i>	Accessibility and inclusivity	

documents, PowerPoints accessible. (Gabbro)	<i>Increasing accessibility</i>		
A lot I will never use this stuff again. (Anonymous) I found the directions to be confusing. (Anonymous) Making the assignments more relevant to their needs. (Anonymous) Have a virtual meeting prior to starting the lessons ... More interaction, communication, and feedback between instructors and students. (Anonymous)	<i>"Never use"</i> <i>Confusing directions</i>	Dissatisfaction	Theme 2. While faculty acknowledged the value of the Online Pedagogy Program training, they also expressed recommendations for improvement.
I learned so much. (Anonymous) The strength of the training was being more informed about UDL. (Anonymous) I enjoyed that the most as I actually learned something. (Anonymous)	<i>"Learned so much"</i> <i>Enjoying learning about UDL</i> <i>Confidence</i>	Satisfaction	
Opening my eyes to an online only educational world. (Alex) The training opened my way of thinking and experiencing an online class as a student. (Arlo)	<i>"Training opened way of thinking"</i>		
I think the training should be expanded. (Anonymous) I would recommend you assess people before giving them instruction (Anonymous) Grading of assignments could have been more prompt. (Anonymous)	<i>Improvements to training</i> <i>Focus on what learner needs</i> <i>Grading assignments faster</i>	Recommendations	
I would say my ability to know the technical tools to create and moderate and grade, and I feel good there. (Henry) The technology enables me to present the materials to students in a way they can understand it. It allows me to record my lectures and present the problems to them like I would in an actual classroom. (Bob)	<i>RQ #2</i>	Ability to "do"	Theme 3: Having a stronger understanding of integrating educational technology tools in addition to Blackboard fostered faculty member's confidence and readiness to teach online.
It provided great value to me, especially for somebody who	<i>"Very familiar with technologies"</i>	Tech tools	

was very familiar with technologies. (Bob)

So, the video, using recordings, whether it's Zoom, Blackboard or WebEx-all those tools helped me record video as far as instructional strategies.

(Bob)

I know I am able to build the content that I think is going to be meaningful ... I feel good in my ability to know the technical tools to post videos online, create tests, exams, and discussion boards. (Henry)

Oh yeah, it [confidence] has increased, increased my sureness that I am doing something good and participating ... Collaboration between people who took the Online Pedagogy Program ... I ask them questions, they showed me Blackboard tools so I can research by myself and do it, so, it helped me 150% ... I feel much better about content and I can help students with all the tools I am providing them with. (Oakley)

Theory to practice making one a competent online instructor. (Anonymous)

RQ #3 Confidence Confidence

Applying theory to practice Applying theory

Theme One was faculty experiencing the online pedagogy training from a student perspective accentuated their awareness in creating inclusive and community strong courses. Higher education faculty are comfortable with being subject matter experts in their field, but by experiencing the role of a student in online learning, faculty develop a new perspective in relation to teaching (Leary et al., 2020). The experience of being a student in an online class also helps faculty better understand the importance of creating courses based on the CoI framework.

Theme Two was while faculty acknowledged the value in the OPP training, they also expressed recommendations for areas they saw potential improvement. If faculty deem the OPP training to be disconnected to their needs and express dissatisfaction, this may negatively affect and limit their ability to support online learners (Ahmed, 2023). One recommendation put forth was faculty's desire to have stronger alignment between assignments and OPP learning outcomes. Additionally, faculty also identified the importance of strong communication and fostering a sense of community to make sure students do not feel isolated in an online course. Lastly, faculty need to be confident in their ability to integrate technology to meet the learning needs of students who expect technology integration in online classrooms (Basantes-Andrade et al., 2022).

Theme Three was having a stronger understanding of integrating educational technology tools in addition to Blackboard fostered faculty member's confidence and readiness to teach online. Developments in technology have brought about changes in the roles of faculty and structures of education, so it is important to understand their perceptions of these changes (Scherer et al., 2021). As well, faculty professional development programs should strengthen faculty's awareness, confidence levels, and perceptions about how technology can add value to the classroom. From the data, faculty reported that they felt more confident to teach online when they learned how different technology tools could be integrated into the Blackboard Learning Management System and used in their own courses.

Discussion

The results in this study align with previous research showing instructor pedagogical readiness is important for ensuring the success of online courses, higher education programs, institutional reputation, and providing a high-quality learning experience for students (Loizzo et al., 2019; Neubauer & Pinto-Zipp, 2023; Scherer et al., 2021). Research further corresponds with this study's results, revealing faculty confidence increases after participating in faculty professional development programs, motivating teachers to create positive changes in their teaching practice and instructor satisfaction, resulting in an increase in students' learning (Borup & Evmenova, 2019; Lim, 2022; Piryani et al., 2018).

There were three specific aspects of the OPP that the faculty perceived to be of value: discussions, consistent communication, and course design best practices. Faculty agreed regarding the degree to which discussions were helpful; however, there were contradictory perspectives about the value of the discussions. The dissatisfaction with discussions contributed to their perspectives about discussions in online courses, but it also reveals a disconnect between the faculty enrolled in the training as learners and the course facilitators. This research also showed that faculty agreed about using different facilitation strategies (i.e., sending announcements/email reminders) to promote open dialogue between students and the instructor and the importance of communicating course expectations. Bolliger and Halupa (2021) confirmed that facilitating discussions and encouraging communication and interaction in online discussions are important competencies for faculty who teach online.

The importance of course design that successfully integrates course materials about digital teaching and learning into programs that train faculty to teach online is necessary (Rizzuto, 2017; Scott et al., 2022). The OPP training topics of UDL, accessibility and engagement strategies, and course organization align with course design best practices (Gregory et al., 2020; Heap et al., 2021). As offered by three anonymous comments, "I knew nothing about UDL prior to this course, so it was great to learn more and practice using UDL" and "The modules were carefully crafted ... [highlighting] important aspects of online teaching" and "the one thing that really stands out to me now, is how important it is to reach everyone. The strength of the training was being more informed about UDL". When faculty are encouraged to develop strategies to implement UDL principles in both course design and learning materials, they foster equitable and student-centered educational experiences. UDL offers a research-based framework for designing inclusive and flexible learning environments that support learner variability through multiple means of engagement, representation, and action and expression. UDL enhances instructional design by promoting accessibility and diverse forms of knowledge demonstration (Nkana et al., 2025).

Two components of readiness - faculty attitude about the importance of teaching online and the state of preparation for online teaching - were distinguished in defining instructor readiness. Frass et al. (2017) underscored the importance of professional preparation to teach online because of the continual changes that take place in the field of online education. The faculty of this study identified their readiness to integrate technology into their teaching practices and felt ready to teach an online course after completing the OPP training. They also wanted to learn more about how to integrate technology into their online pedagogy to benefit students' learning and to strengthen their readiness to teach in the online environment.

Successful professional development programs that have increased faculty confidence to teach online recognize that faculty need ongoing practice leveraging technological tools to strengthen their confidence to teach online (Dar & Sharma, 2024). Faculty perceptions were strongest regarding their confidence to integrate technology into their teaching practices, as evident

by Arlo's interview response "I feel that when teaching online, I have to be very competent to quickly navigate the computer and understand how to use technology to teach." However, some faculty shared feeling least confident about their ability to use a variety of technologies to enhance their digital forms of instruction, as offered in Genevieve's interview response "I would like to get a refresh on the technical side, like discussion boards to increase communication, or using collaborative tools for students to present their work online".

Limitations

This study contained limitations that were not unique to the nature of a qualitative action research study. Reporting limitations of a study is important to establish transparency (Mills, 2018) by identifying the boundaries of research design and to identify areas that can be expanded or refined in future studies (Mertler, 2020). The limitations in this study included a low response rate, subjectivity and bias, and institutional support.

Low Response Rate

240 faculty were invited to participate in study, but only 19, or a 7.92% response rate, completed the surveys in this study. Low response rates are not uncommon, especially for online surveys, which yield on average 11% to 12% lower than mail delivery methods (Shiyab et al., 2023). With such a low participation rate compared to the reported average rate of 36% for online surveys (Daikeler et al., 2020), responses may not be representative of the intended survey population and may introduce nonresponse bias and potential data quality concerns (Wu et al., 2022). If the response rate had been higher, the findings in this study would be more indicative of a larger population and data quality concerns would be improved. As is, readers should take caution and not generalize these findings to other contexts.

Subjectivity and Bias

Action research involves active participation by the researchers in the community being studied. While the researchers have taken measures to remain cognizant of their biases (e.g., keeping a researcher's journal, engaging in peer debriefing, and member checking) their proximity to the research site and research group may have introduced biases and subjectivity into the research process, potentially affecting the objectivity of the findings (Mills, 2018).

Institutional Support

The instruments used in this study did not assess faculty perceptions regarding institutional support and institutional infrastructure and how each impacts faculty members' readiness and confidence to teach online. For example, a question like the one used in Lichoro's research, "What institutional support have you received since beginning to teach online courses?" (2015, p. 117) would have been a good question to better understand faculty perspectives about the institutional resources needed to facilitate a smooth transition to online instruction and provide the necessary support for teaching in a virtual environment. According to previous studies, faculty perceptions of how the institution values online education and the technological resources and the professional assistance an institution provides influences faculty readiness and confidence to teach online (Allen & Seaman, 2017; Haras et al., 2017). After reviewing outcomes from this study, the researchers have determined a design limitation is the lack of questioning about the influence of institutional support and is an area suggested for future research.

Recommendations

The three areas where faculty offered OPP recommendations were: (a) technology integration, (b) course learning outcomes, and (c) fostering a sense of community.

Technology Integration

To be confident online instructors, faculty need support in how to use the tools of the Learning Management System as well as the use of additional web-based tools (Dar & Sharma, 2024). To increase faculty perceptions of their readiness and confidence to teach online, it is recommended that future iterations of the OPP provide more opportunities for faculty to practice using a greater variety of tools (web-based tools outside of what is offered through Blackboard) throughout the training. Faculty reporting a neutral opinion regarding their technology integration confidence may be due to a lack of institutional support for ongoing professional development regarding technology integration occurring (Bond et al., 2019). Lee and Jung (2021) concluded that instructional change, particularly regarding technology use, is strongly associated with institutional support. Additionally, institutional policies that govern e-learning and technology support affect online instructor satisfaction. This suggests that instructors adopt and employ technology more easily when institutions provide relevant support to ensure the quality of instruction.

Course Learning Outcomes

Course learning outcomes steer course content, direct the design of the course curriculum, guide instructional strategies, assignments, activities and assessments, ensure that the course is designed to support educational objectives, and contribute to the desired learning outcomes of the program (Hines, 2017; Mertens & Wilson, 2019). A finding from this study was faculty perspectives about the OPP having unclear instructional objectives and unclear assignment directions, suggesting a possible misalignment between course learning objectives (program goals) and instructional activities. This finding also demonstrates faculty understanding of the value and importance of alignment between course learning outcomes and educational objectives, and view it as a tool to help improve course organization and clarity. In future iterations of the OPP, a recommendation includes that clear and measurable course learning outcomes be incorporated into the OPP to measure and evaluate course performance and participants' satisfaction with their OPP experience. A pre-test to establish baseline online pedagogy skills and a post-test to determine what measurable growth occurred, if any, aligned with course learning outcomes, is suggested to be implemented.

Program Evaluation

In the existing OPP training evaluation, these authors perceive that a formal methodology for measuring how program outcomes are being met, or not, is lacking. A recommendation is that The Center for Teaching and Learning Matrix developed by the American Council on Education and Professional and Organizational Development Network be utilized (Brown et al., 2019). The Teaching and Learning Center Matrix was created as an internal tool for evaluating the effectiveness of Centers for Teaching and Learning and their associated programs, similar to that of the OPP. Another program evaluation option would be The Four-Phase Program Evaluation Model (Hines, 2017), which aligns with the Kirkpatrick program evaluation model but extends Kirkpatrick's four levels to six by adding change in student learning and institutional change. Following a formal program evaluation model would help Centers for Teaching and Learning and their institutions benchmark progress, identify areas for growth, and contribute to the scholarship of educational development through data-informed approaches to support faculty development.

Fostering Sense of Community

Faculty need training to learn how to facilitate a course that fosters sense of community and to design courses to engage all learners (Berry, 2019; Martin et al., 2019). Findings from the OPP EOC open-ended question responses revealed faculty disappointment about the lack of facilitator presence between the lead OPP instructors and faculty learners in the OPP discussions, "[I was] disappointed there wasn't more interaction between faculty and students" (anonymous EOC response). It

is recommended that faculty who facilitate the OPP consider participating in the discussions on a regular and substantive basis to model engagement strategies for novice faculty learners in the program, and to develop teaching and social presence for all participants in the course. When instructors demonstrate presence in the discussion multiple times throughout the week by responding to students and facilitating understanding of course concepts, they guide the learning process and reassure students that their contributions are meaningful (Evans et al., 2023). This style of interaction also builds social presence and helps to humanize the learning process.

Conclusion

Three key findings about the OPP training were found in this study. First, faculty desire to learn more about integrating educational technology tools into their course design. Having a stronger understanding of integrating educational technology tools, in addition to the existing Blackboard features, further faculty members' confidence and readiness to teach online courses. Second, experiencing the online pedagogy training from a student perspective accentuated the faculty's awareness in creating inclusive and community strong courses. Third, while faculty acknowledged the value of the OPP training, they also expressed recommendations for improvement to the OPP. Recommended improvements included providing increased opportunity for training and support regarding technology integration, clarifying program learning outcomes (including a formal program evaluation model being adopted), and increasing facilitator presence in OPP discussions.

Disclaimer/Conflicts Statement

These authors certify that they have no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial or non-financial interest in the subject or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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Appendix

Interview Protocol Questions

1. Since you completed the Online Pedagogy Program training, what one aspect has stuck with you the most? Please provide an example. Explain as needed.
2. Were there any specific pedagogical principles you learned about in the Online Pedagogy Program training that you have applied to your teaching? Please provide an example. Explain as needed.
3. To what extent did the content in the Online Pedagogy Program model instructional strategies that you could integrate into your online teaching? Please provide an example. Explain as needed.
4. Were there any specific technological tools you learned about in the Online Pedagogy Program training that you have applied to your teaching? (Share the technological tools components on the Zoom screen as needed).
 - a. *If not answered thoroughly, ask: Can you identify which tool you applied to your teaching?*
 - b. *How did you apply this tool in your teaching?*
 - c. *If there is a change, follow up by asking: What has impacted this change?*
5. How do the particular technologies used in a lesson you have taught “fit” with the instructional strategies you used? Please provide an example. Explain.
6. Overall, how would you describe the “value” of the Online Pedagogy Program?
7. What specific Online Pedagogy Program content made you feel most ready to teach online?
8. What specific Online Pedagogy Program content did not contribute to your feeling ready to teach online? Please share an example or two.
9. How do the learning goals, instructional strategies, and technologies used in a lesson you have taught all fit together? Please provide an example. Or explain.
10. Which specific Online Pedagogy Program content made you feel most confident to teach online? Please provide an example.
11. Which specific Online Pedagogy Program content made you feel least confident to teach online? Please provide an example.
12. Please share an example or two that contributed to your sense of confidence in teaching online after completing the Online Pedagogy Program training.
13. If your degree of confidence has changed since completing the Online Pedagogy Program training, share your thinking or examples of what contributed the most to your increase in confidence.



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