2024

Teaching During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Multiple Case Study Exploring Faculty Experiences in Fostering Positive Interaction with U.S.-Based Undergraduate Students

Lauren J. Bullock
Antioch University

TEACHING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY EXPLORING FACULTY EXPERIENCES IN FOSTERING POSITIVE INTERACTION WITH U.S.-BASED UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of

Graduate School of Leadership & Change

Antioch University

In partial fulfillment for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

by

Lauren J. Bullock

ORCID Scholar No. 0000-0002-4813-1689r

June 2024

TEACHING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY EXPLORING FACULTY EXPERIENCES IN FOSTERING POSITIVE INTERACTION WITH U.S.-BASED UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

This dissertation, by Lauren J. Bullock, has
been approved by the committee members signed below
who recommend that it be accepted by the faculty of the
Graduate School of Leadership & Change
Antioch University
In partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Dissertation Committee:

Jon Wergin, PhD, Chairperson

Harriet Schwartz, PhD

Kristan Cilente Skendall, PhD

ABSTRACT

TEACHING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY EXPLORING FACULTY EXPERIENCES IN FOSTERING POSITIVE INTERACTION WITH U.S.-BASED UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

Lauren J. Bullock

Graduate School of Leadership and Change

Yellow Springs, OH

COVID-19 changed how faculty members approached teaching in higher education in the United States. This study specifically looks at the changes in faculty-student interaction (FSI) during the COVID-19 pandemic. While extensive literature exists on the topic from the student perspective, the disruption in education necessitated a more extensive study of the faculty perspective. A multiple-case study methodology was employed to explore the experiences of a small cohort of faculty members at a single institution and how they fostered positive interactions with students from Spring 2019 through Spring 2023. The data collected included semi-structured interviews, course syllabi, teaching philosophies, and a pre-interview questionnaire with demographic data. The findings revealed that faculty initially faced hurdles engaging with students but swiftly devised strategies to adapt. Their approaches primarily emerged from internet searches and conversations with other faculty in their communities of practice. Additionally, faculty members who taught prior to the pandemic used their prior teaching experience but also credited having access to course materials designed for online learning as a strategy for positive interaction. Finally, returning to in-person teaching with social restrictions presented significant challenges in comparison to teaching online. A key implication for practice is requiring faculty to teach asynchronous courses periodically to ensure familiarity with best practices for online learning

and access to updated teaching materials. This dissertation is available in open access at AURA (https://aura.antioch.edu) and OhioLINK ETD Center (https://etd.ohiolink.edu).

Keywords: faculty-student interaction, student-faculty interaction, COVID-19 pandemic, pandemic pedagogy, coronavirus, disasters, remote teaching, sustainable remote teaching, online instruction, higher education, leadership

Acknowledgments

Thank you to all those I have met along this transformative journey. Your love, support, laughs, tough words, blessings, and positive energy have been instrumental in shaping me into who I am today.

Thank you to Dr. Jon Wergin for leading me from start to finish. I distinctly remember our first Zoom meeting, during which we discussed my interest in the program. Your unwavering support and guidance have been a cornerstone of my success. I pray you continue to inspire and guide others in your retirement.

Thank you to Dr. Harriet Schwartz and Dr. Kristan Cilente Skendall. I could not have asked for better scholars and faculty to review my written work and oral presentations. Your feedback and encouragement were critical in getting through this process and writing a dissertation that reflected my voice. You modeled relational leadership and teaching and scholarly practices.

Thank you to my husband, RJ, for your love, support, laughs, encouragement, good advice and snacks. When people ask me about you, I always say that you are my person. We know exactly what the other needs, and always feel free to provide.

Thank you, Bray, for being patient with me while I did this big thing. You were beginning elementary school when I started this chapter in my life, and over the years, you have grown into an amazing young man, middle schooler and future leader. I love you and hope this work changes the world for the better for you (and your lil friends).

Thank you, Alana, Robby and Dad. I appreciate your love and support in life. I am glad I can make you proud and set a new standard for the Williams siblings.

Thank you, Dr. Williams, Dr. Cardone and the future Dr. Kimmel. Our regular meetings helped me think through my ideas, find my voice in my writing, and push through the tough times.

Thank you, Dr. Wanda, for being the first Black woman I knew with a doctorate. Your leadership and mentorship are part of the reason I can write this section today. You taught me to be student-centered and bring my whole self to work. You said it and did it. I remember tough meetings and conversations where you fought to ensure our peers placed students first. That stuck with me and played a massive role in my dissertation topic.

Thank you to my C16 cohort (and some C15ers, C17ers, and C18ers). It has been a joy to be a part of this community. I loved learning and growing with our group.

Finally, to all the students I have ever taught or will teach. The lessons I learned from being your instructor will stay with me forever. I hope to continue to learn, as this is just the beginning of the next part of this journey.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of higher education, faculty members have played an essential and significant role in the experiences of college students inside and outside of the classroom (Kim & Lundberg, 2016; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). Faculty design and deliver curricula, assess student learning, advise students, and help them prepare for professional and graduate education experiences (Cotten & Wilson, 2006). In addition to guiding their learning path, faculty members are often found outside of the physical or virtual classroom; they advise student organizations, connect students with potential employers, and write letters of support for scholarships, study abroad programs and graduate applications. Each moment, whether positive or negative, individual or group, frequent or once in a lifetime, can help students meet or exceed academic, social, and professional outcomes.

Faculty can maintain that position in the students' path despite the massive societal shifts happening periodically in higher education. The most recent drastic change started in March 2020. During this time, higher education institutions changed course delivery options for in-person classes in response to the social restrictions by public health officials to slow the spread of the COVID-19. The social restrictions limited the number of people in the same place, whether in a classroom, a train or a grocery store. Despite the massive restrictions, faculty members continued to work; they taught, conducted research and completed as much service as possible electronically (Medvide, 2020). Most in-person course instructors switched to virtual learning experiences despite a lack of experience and training. The dramatic shift in learning delivery changed how faculty interacted with students. This change merits further study beyond just a need for more scholarship on the faculty experience in faculty-student interaction.

While dramatic shifts are expected and have occurred throughout the nearly 400-year history of higher education in the United States, the turbulent time demanded a need for further study as things were unfolding. That need catalyzed this dissertation study. I explored the following research questions: 1) What did faculty members experience between the Spring 2019 and Spring 2023 semesters, and 2) How, if at all, did they foster positive interactions with undergraduate students during the disruptive period? The answers to these questions contribute to both the scholarship of faculty-student interaction and the practice of engaging with students in meaningful ways.

Beyond the classroom shift, higher education leaders and faculty members changed the working and living conditions. Administrators faced a new challenge: working with government leaders and public health officials to determine strategies to keep their stakeholders safe and healthy during a widespread pandemic and communicating the information and decisions in a fast and effective manner. Administrators created committees designed to share updates and new policies in response to the changing direction of public health officials. At the same time, faculty members continued to work while dealing with health, economic and social issues. Instead of coming to campus, teaching in a classroom and holding office hours in a campus workplace, faculty were now working through technology and virtual platforms in their homes. The chaos of making decisions during an unprecedented pandemic and the increased exposure to faculty members' personal lives showed up in their connections with students.

During this time, instructors experienced a decrease in both formal and informal interactions with students. Before the volatile time, faculty and students connected formally through classes, student activities, professional events, and research opportunities (Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Cole, 2006; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Faculty and students also connected

informally in non-classroom locations, including attending programs socially, walking into buildings, or having conversations outside of class about non-course topics (Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Cole, 2006; Cox & Orehovec, 2007; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Through those interactions, faculty and students could establish relationships and, most importantly, help students reach and exceed the academic, professional and social outcomes of higher education. They were able to reap the benefits of connecting with individuals who could encourage them and support them through hard times. This was limited during the pandemic.

The disruption of regular operations forced both students and faculty to move to primarily connecting through electronic platforms, including an increase in the use of email, learning management systems and video conference platforms. The increased technology use during a turbulent time provided an additional challenge, as some faculty members already held limiting beliefs about the usage of digital instruments and needed more skills for aligning technology teaching strategies (Dam, 2021; Trust & Whalen, 2020). Earlier research noted that faculty members held varied beliefs about and had different experiences with technology (Dam, 2021; Trust & Whalen, 2020). Faculty members' ability and willingness varied when using online platforms effectively, such as videoconferencing and learning management systems (Trust & Whalen, 2020). More research was needed to determine if academic programs mattered in their abilities and willingness. The increased use of technology during a stressful and uncertain time exacerbated the existing teaching and technology issue. However, the missing part of the literature for faculty teaching is learning new skills "during a volatile or turbulent time."

Before the move to virtual platforms during the restrictive periods of the pandemic, informal and formal exchanges were crucial to fostering positive interactions and relationships and critical to students graduating and feeling prepared for professional experiences and graduate

education. “Faculty members are thought to be one of the major socializing agents in the college environment. It has been widely heralded that frequent and positive interactions between students and faculty enhance students’ persistence and retention in higher education” (Kim & Lundberg, 2016, p. 289). Accordingly, faculty should understand how to interact with students and apply best practices for undergraduate education because it is crucial for students to complete college degree programs. Teaching has changed, and there is plenty of literature on the pedagogical approaches that faculty should use (Davis & Neely, 2009). However, we need more research on one of the most influential predictors of student success: faculty-student interaction. Specifically, faculty changed how they interacted with students but are also unsure how the changes affected students and themselves. The pandemic offered an opportunity to revisit the literature following a massive change in higher education.

Problem in Practice

Although researchers have explored multiple aspects of higher education during pandemics, it is crucial to explore faculty-student interaction because of its importance to the undergraduate student experience (Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Cox & Orehovec, 2007; Kim & Sax, 2017). Higher education already reported high anxiety among college students; the uncertain time increased the anxiety (Mucci-Ferris et al., 2021; Renn & Reason, 2021). The student perspective continues to be documented, but what about the faculty perspective? The *Chronicle of Higher Education* (2020) wrote that faculty were frustrated, stressed, and experiencing increased anxiety. The research on faculty members’ experiences since the start of one of the most disruptive times in higher education is growing but needs further exploration because of the importance of faculty in higher education (Chang, 2005; Kezar & Maxey, 2014). We know the pandemic has affected all areas of higher education. The research in this study

helps us understand the direct effects on a small cohort of faculty members and how it showed up in their courses.

One of the important things to review is how the social lives of faculty members showed up in the classroom. We can presume that the global health crisis caused strife for some faculty. Blackburn and Lawrence (1995) labeled the challenges faculty faced in their personal lives as social contingencies. These events happen in faculty members' lives and affect their work (Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995). The pandemic could have increased a person's social contingencies. Faculty could react differently based on their social identities or academic backgrounds. For example, full-time, contingent faculty could be concerned about their contract with declining enrollment during the pandemic, which might lead to them stepping back from interactions and relationships and picking up extra work.

In contrast, faculty members could have been worried about a sick or elderly relative and taken on more caretaking responsibilities during the restrictive pandemic. Faculty of color could have felt increased stress because of social issues or stressors tangential to the pandemic. Women, who generally hold caretaking roles, could feel increased responsibility and stress and either step away from the workplace or face depression. Researchers need to better understand what social contingencies faculty members faced and how they affected their teaching ability.

Higher Education Needs to Change

Similar to the way businesses navigate disruptions, higher education administrators make decisions daily during the pandemic and should prepare for more interruptions to standard operations. This is a change from prior years, as colleges and universities are slow to adopt change. The pandemic provided a preview of what swift and widespread change across the university, including in academic and student affairs, could look like and now provides an

opportunity to explore the change at a micro level. Instructors immediately made changes that faculty development researchers lobbied for in prior years. Leaders scrambled to solve problems and make decisions without full knowledge or understanding of the consequences and various stakeholders' needs and wants, changing public guidelines and institutional missions (Dam, 2021). All of this allows researchers to explore how universities could make the changes so fast, address the issues head-on and determine the role the faculty played in the change. While this dissertation will not discuss those questions, it might help address the more significant issues in higher education. We must better understand their ability to change and apply it to future disruptions and change initiatives.

In addition to understanding leadership decisions, higher education institutions must look at how the pandemic changed teaching and learning and faculty members' perspectives of faculty-student interaction during the pandemic. Institutions will review teaching strategies; they must look at relationships, interactions, and changes in the physical environment and technology. Regardless of an instructor's online experience, most faculty were not taught to teach during a crisis. While emergency remote teaching (ERT) and online learning are generally familiar terms in teaching, it is unclear how and when faculty are taught about ERT and the differences between it and online learning. In my own experience, I was not introduced to ERT before the onset of the pandemic, despite being trained in both teaching in higher education and teaching online. Instructors with prior experience teaching online or during an emergency may have experienced a lesser disruption. Still, those with little education or experience could have experienced a heightened stress level due to the abrupt change. Those taught the primary concepts for emergency remote instruction would have learned that it was for temporary

situations. Those who were taught to teach online might not have learned how to teach during a crisis.

The unprecedented and uncertain times brought on by the pandemic have compelled higher education institutions to reevaluate their systems and processes. University leadership, recognizing the challenges posed by the global health pandemic, saw it as an opportunity to implement long-overdue changes that could address the evolving culture of higher education. Academic leaders must identify what needs to be changed to ensure the continued enrollment and graduation of students for professional and educational opportunities. However, before embarking on these changes, institutions must first gain a deep understanding of the experiences of their faculty members. This understanding will serve as a crucial foundation for making more informed decisions in the future. Despite the heightened intensity, as Johansen (2012) aptly put it, “leaders must learn how to listen through the noise” (p. 1.).

While some researchers argue that institutions have the necessary tools to adapt, the challenge lies in shifting both faculty and institutional culture to keep pace with the rapid changes in society. Education, as a result, will continue to evolve under the influence of various forces, including changes in enrollment, student characteristics, and industry requirements (Zhao & Watterston, 2021). Unfortunately, the volatile and turbulent nature of these changes is likely to persist (Gigliotti, 2021; LeBlanc, 2018). Higher education institutions must therefore not only learn from the pandemic but also make more informed decisions as they navigate the ever-changing landscape of education. This adaptability is crucial for ensuring the relevance and effectiveness of higher education institutions in the face of societal changes (Harper, 2020; Gannon, 2021).

Definitions and Key Terms

This section explains the standard terms and concepts used throughout this dissertation, including faculty-student interaction, faculty-student relationship, emergency remote instruction, and online instruction.

Although the search word "student" is consistent in research, the terms to describe "faculty members" vary. For example, faculty synonyms include instructor, teacher, and lecturer in domestic and international resources. Occasionally, "teacher-student" and "instructor-student" are seen in higher education despite the popularity of both terms in K-12 literature. There is no apparent consistency or rationale for the choice of order, student before faculty or faculty before students, and any faculty synonyms.

Researchers need more agreement on a single definition of student-faculty interaction. In fact, most literature assumes the reader knows the definition and that interactions include intentional or incidental contact between students and course instructors regarding their roles in the higher education community (Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Cotten & Wilson, 2006; Kuh, 2001; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). Classroom interactions focus on instructors and students communicating to meet the learning outcomes. An example of a classroom interaction would be a faculty member delivering a lecture or facilitating a discussion of a topic related to the course subject. Out-of-classroom interactions are typically focused on tasks to be completed. For example, a student visits a faculty member during office hours to review a test or assignment or discuss future courses (advising). Interactions between students and faculty can be brief but vary in formality, frequency, nature, and quality. Nevertheless, the connections can lead to relationships. Therefore, engagement and relationships are considered interactions as well. Both imply intention and meaning.

Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) and Online Teaching are used when discussing teaching and learning through virtual platforms. However, they are not interchangeable and must be defined before being discussed at length. ERT is a "temporary shift of instructional delivery to an alternate delivery mode due to crisis circumstances" (Hodges et al., 2020, p. 4). Online teaching is an organized and intentional experience designed to be delivered entirely through virtual platforms for the foreseeable future (Hodges et al., 2020). This distinction is essential, as both were used in courses during the pandemic. The concepts will be explained in more detail in chapter two.

Purpose of the Study

This study used the multiple case study method to identify the faculty perspectives of positive faculty-student interactions during a social and societal disruption. While a large body of research discusses faculty-student interactions and positive classroom environments, there was a need to understand how faculty members adopt evidence-based practices that foster positive interactions with students during volatile and turbulent times. In this study, I add narratives from interviews and data from documentation provided to the body of literature to show the perspectives of higher education faculty at a single institution. This unique contribution to the existing literature fills a gap in our understanding of faculty-student interactions during crises. In addition to contributing to the research, I aimed to surface practical recommendations for leaders and faculty members to better prepare for future disruptions in higher education.

Research Questions

My research questions are: 1) What did faculty members experience between the Spring 2019 and Spring 2023 semesters, and 2) How, if at all, did they foster positive interactions with undergraduate students during the disruptive period?

Significance of the Study

This study was significant for several reasons. First, the study contributed to and updated the extensive body of literature on faculty-student interaction that was essential in making policies and identifying best practices for undergraduate education. Second, the study added information for faculty and higher education administrators to use to help address the issues affecting students and instructors. Third, the data collected provided insight into faculty experiences from various academic, social, and professional backgrounds. Fourth, the individual cases helped to further understand the social phenomenon happening in higher education. The social phenomena in this study aligned with Blackburn and Lawrence's (1995) social contingencies term. Faculty were distracted by personal responsibilities; prior to the study, I knew it could have been a possibility. I assumed there was an impact on parents juggling teaching responsibilities with childcare and faculty of color navigating the racial and political tension of the country. The data in this dissertation explained some participants' experiences. Last, the study surfaced strategies used in fostering positive environments. This data could be further explored through quantitative and qualitative studies.

Little empirical evidence exists explaining faculty members' experiences during faculty-student interaction. A quick search of that phrase returns pages of articles, most with student perspective or a reference to the student experience, expectations or emotional outcomes (Anderson & Carta-Falsa, 2002; Kim & Lundberg, 2016; Kuh & Hu, 2001). Vito (2007) questioned the effects of faculty-student interactions outside of the classroom on faculty members' engagement with their institution and the effects of out-of-class interaction between faculty and students on faculty members' perceptions of their satisfaction with their careers. She explored the questions through Lewin's cognitive theory, which posited that a person's behavior

is a direct response to or product of their environment. Vito (2007) confirmed that limited research existed to explain the relationship between faculty-student interactions and faculty members.

The limitations still exist, although Cox (Cox & Orehovec, 2007; Cox et al., 2010, Cox, 2011), did co-author articles about faculty-student interaction from both the student and faculty perspectives. He built a framework for categorizing interaction (Cox & Orehovec, 2007). In each article, Cox notes that further research is needed to better understand the faculty perspective. Komarraju et al. (2010) note in Grantham et al. (2013) and support this claim, writing that understanding multiple perspectives of faculty-student interactions is essential. Solis and Turner (2016) briefly discuss instructor perspectives at the end of their study; however, the extent of the discussion from the teacher's lens in higher education is brief. Most research shows the influence on students rather than instructors (Cox, 2011; Hagenhauer & Volet, 2014). The existing literature is discussed more extensively in chapter two.

Research Design

I used a multiple case study methodology to explore the research questions with participants from a large, public research higher education institution based in the United States. The participants were full-time faculty members who had experience teaching undergraduate students during the study's time. The period was selected to ensure that all faculty taught in the United States before the pandemic and could compare teaching before March 2020, when things were different. In addition to semi-structured interviews, CVs, teaching philosophies, and course syllabi were collected. The participants also completed a pre-survey questionnaire to gather demographic information such as race, gender, and ethnicity, as well as personal information such as the ages of children responsible for those who were under the age of 18. The

questionnaire included questions about academic background, ranks, and years of teaching experience.

After all the data was collected, I reviewed the interview transcripts for each person to create a codebook. A separate coder reviewed the documents collected, interview transcripts and case analysis for consistency. After receiving feedback from the coder and entering the codebook into NVivo, I reviewed the supporting documentation to write a case analysis report for each participant. I took the survey data from the pre-interview questionnaire and organized it into a table. I removed the participants' names from the document to ensure confidentiality. I referenced the table when writing the analysis. One participant failed to complete the survey; some information was gathered from online sources such as institution websites and social media profiles.

Research Agenda and Positionality

Darwin Holmes (2020) explained that researcher positionality statements in dissertations offer an opportunity to share the researcher's worldview and their social and political location within the research project. My positionality is influenced by the relationships and experiences I have had throughout my career in higher education.

First, I have worked in higher education for over 20 years. My experiences in Student Affairs, Academic Affairs, and Intercollegiate Athletics contribute to my worldview of education and influence my teaching philosophy and research interests. Working in Student Affairs taught me to center the student in my philosophy and decision-making. My involvement in athletics has enhanced my ability to communicate across multiple platforms and highlight essential information needed by stakeholders. In working in both areas, I learned how to be efficient and effective with financial and human resources. The latter is important to mention because of how

it informs my approach to teaching in college. I organize my courses using practices from my roles in administration. For example, I have a list of operating procedures for teaching that I created based on a similar document from my roles in athletics and student affairs.

Related to that, I am committed to good teaching. I became a faculty member to honor those who helped me throughout my time in undergraduate and graduate coursework. It is essential that students feel seen, are engaged in the classroom and course assignments, and have at least one person they can ask questions to when they have opportunities or problems. My love of higher education and teaching permeates everything I do. While college is essential to success in specific professional workplaces, I also want students to understand that you still must determine what opportunities exist for them and how to make the best of them. You can see my love for teaching effectively and efficiently in everything that I do.

Second, in addition to my professional experience, I bring a unique perspective as a member of underrepresented populations in higher education. As a Black woman, I am part of a demographic that is significantly underrepresented in academia. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, only four percent of the 840,000 full-time faculty members are Black women, and six percent are Black. This perspective, coupled with my role as a non-tenure-track assistant professor at an R1 institution, has always worked or taught at large, public research institutions in the United States, informs my assumptions about how other faculty members balance teaching and parenting, especially with children in the K-12 system. My background influences the assumptions I make and the research areas I focus on, including teaching, work, and personal lives.

Third, my research interests lie in faculty development and training on faculty-student interactions and relationship building. This interest is rooted in my passion for leadership and

teaching, which both necessitate strong relationships for success. Burns (2020) stated that instructors are perceived as leaders in the classroom and must understand developmental strategies. While most literature discusses faculty leadership in administrative roles, such as department chairs or deans (Burns, 2020), there is a need for faculty to be explicitly taught the importance of building positive relationships with students to foster learning. I am intrigued by how instructors develop and choose strategies for positive interactions based on the evolving attitudes, behaviors, and characteristics of undergraduate students at U.S.-based institutions. Some of my participants share this interest, with some detailing their experiences in writing and researching teaching within their academic fields.

Mitigating bias is not just a goal, but a fundamental principle in my research. I am acutely aware of the potential for bias in any study, and I am committed to identifying and addressing my own biases. This commitment is not just a theoretical stance, but a practical one. I actively seek feedback, including from a second coder, to aid in data interpretation. I am constantly aware of my perspective and strive to consider various viewpoints. For instance, the mothers in this study did not face challenges managing their children's education due to their children's ages and in-home support. This observation contradicts my assumption yet aligns with my experience parenting during a disruptive period. Finally, I gathered demographic information to better understand the participants' backgrounds and ensure they differed from my own. I engaged with men and women, representing the predominant races and ethnicities at the institution (White and Black) and those outside my academic department, ensuring cross-disciplinary representation.

Lastly, my teaching philosophy emphasizes fostering solid and healthy relationships with students throughout their academic journey. I value positive interactions and recognize their significance in building a community of learners and leaders. To achieve this, I employ strategies

such as active listening, regular feedback, and creating a supportive learning environment. These strategies have been proven to enhance positive interactions and contribute to student success. I aim to understand better the strategies faculty members use to cultivate positive interactions with students and their strategy selection process. Ultimately, my goal is to enhance positive interactions by helping faculty develop effective teaching strategies for undergraduate students.

Ethical Limitations

Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) wrote that researchers have ethical responsibilities when conducting research and highlighted essential things to remember. The researcher is responsible for ensuring the participants' well-being and the study's rigor. In this dissertation, the participants were not exposed to any risks in responding to the questionnaire or being interviewed in the study. While I asked participants to discuss stressful experiences, I did not place them in a situation where they must relive those moments. The proposal was submitted to the IRB for approval before any data was collected. Protocol was followed as outlined in the IRB approval for this study.

Dissertation Overview

Chapter II delves into the extensive body of literature on faculty-student interaction at U.S.-based undergraduate higher education institutions. This comprehensive review not only provides a solid foundation for the study but also provides a background on the present landscape from the perspectives of the students and faculty. Additionally, it explains the role of faculty members in the workplace, and the challenges and opportunities for changes in teaching and learning during social disruptions. Moreover, the chapter underscores the need for more research to affirm the impact of interaction on student learning outcomes and provide strategies

for faculty members as they navigate future turbulent times, thereby engaging you in the ongoing discourse in our field.

Chapter III meticulously outlines the qualitative study and approach used to answer the research questions. The study, employing the multiple case study method, involved in-depth interviews with 12 individuals to gain a comprehensive understanding of their experiences from right before the onset of COVID-19 in Spring 2019 through the end of the restrictive period in Spring 2023. This method was chosen for its ability to navigate the potential complexity of understanding faculty perceptions of strategies that can be used to create positive relationships during a volatile and uncertain period. The collection of teaching materials, including the instructor's CV, teaching philosophy and syllabi from before and after the start of COVID-19, further enriched the depth of our research, helping identify changes in teaching strategies used during the disruptive time.

In Chapter IV, I analyze the data from the interviews and teaching materials and compare it to the literature. I wrote individual case study reports and a cross-case analysis of themes from the data.

In Chapter V, I connected the literature from Chapter II and my findings from Chapter IV. I included personal commentary on my lived experiences, sharing my challenges and strategies during the disruptive times in higher education. Specifically, I shared connections between past research on higher education and the findings, providing a unique perspective that can inform future research and practice.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 demonstrated the challenges experienced by higher education faculty when fostering positive learning environments during disruptive societal times. The turbulence initiated by the pandemic immediately altered the learning environment for almost all undergraduate students in the United States and worldwide. This was not just a temporary disruption: the pandemic fundamentally changed the nature of faculty-student interaction. Understanding this shift is essential for preparing faculty and students for future disruptions in an increasingly turbulent social environment.

Researchers have discussed the benefits and challenges of faculty-student interaction and how it affects communication and higher education outcomes (Majsak et al., 2022). The benefits of interaction include feeling a sense of belonging, developing trust in each other, and increasing motivation for learning (Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Cotten & Wilson, 2006; Kim & Sax, 2009). The challenges to interaction include the low frequency of naturally occurring interactions between faculty and students. The decrease in naturally occurring face-to-face interactions leads to fewer opportunities for positive or meaningful moments. In addition, the institution must force most interactions through programming so that students can benefit from the interaction.

Although there is extensive literature on student perspectives, benefits, and challenges, the more significant issue is that we need to know the faculty's perspective on interaction, specifically how faculty interact with students to create positive learning environments during disruptive periods. Hearing from faculty can lead to a better understanding of how social disruption affects instructors' teaching abilities in higher education. Faculty can be prepared if they understand the faculty perspective of faculty-student interaction, the existing challenges of teaching and how the COVID-19 pandemic increased issues for students and instructors. In fact,

few scholars have approached interaction literature from the faculty perspective (Cox, 2011; Cox & Orehovec, 2007; Cox et al., 2010; Kezar & Maxey, 2014), and even fewer have factored in interaction during teaching disruptions. The student benefits, experiences and perspectives on faculty-student interaction are well-researched; the faculty perspective lacks depth and breadth beyond disruptive moments.

This literature review explores three areas of scholarship related to faculty-student interaction in higher education. The first section explores the college environment and student engagement. This section includes research on the current college environment, the importance of student engagement to student success, and the expansive literature on the types and impact of interaction on students. The second section explores the faculty perspective. This section includes the various roles faculty members hold in higher education, research on the workplace, faculty approaches to teaching, and the limited research available on the faculty perspective on their interactions with students. The third section discusses the challenges brought on by the pandemic and turbulence. This section explains the nature of turbulence, how it can disrupt higher education, and the challenges brought on by the pandemic, including magnifying the issues with technology and the use of emergency remote instruction and online teaching practices.

College Environment and Student Engagement

Undergraduate students today are physically, socially, and psychologically different from earlier generations of American higher education students. Early generations of college graduates were traditionally White men from upper-class families. In the late 1700s and early 1800s, colleges espoused truth in their mottos yet operated under the philosophy that innovation, independence, and consumerism were of paramount importance (Thelin, 2004). As a result,

colleges were opening at a higher rate and enrolling more students. While diversity was still low, as educating people of color was outlawed at this point in history, enrollment numbers were higher than in prior years. The changing students reflected the expansion of higher education against the backdrop of a divisive and growing country. In the mid-1900s, higher education saw another significant change as a result of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (Adams, 2000). The country transitioned from college being an elite experience for children from wealthy families towards an opportunity accessible to a broader range of people from various backgrounds.

In recent years, the undergraduate student population has changed based on gender, race, and socioeconomic status (Baum et al., 2013; Renn & Reason, 2021). These changes have brought about a positive shift in how college students socialize. With increasing racial, ethnic, and gender diversity, students are now introduced to peers from different backgrounds and are encouraged to interact with each other through curricular and co-curricular programs. This has led to a transformation in institutional norms and values, emphasizing the need for students to learn about and understand numerous cultures and backgrounds. The benefits of a more racially, ethnically, and gender-diverse student body are becoming evident in colleges and universities, fostering a more inclusive and tolerant environment. Relatedly, current students' attitudes, values, beliefs, and how they affect interaction have grown as a result of a more diverse student population and the expansion of programs and courses offered to further that diversity. I will explore each of these in greater detail below.

Gender Diversity

Schools have increased the gender diversity of their student populations. Women first enrolled in U.S. colleges in 1837 in order to prepare for marrying religious leaders (Graham,

1978). Oberlin College, a Predominantly White Institution (PWIs) that also enrolled the first Black students, provided education for women who would marry ministers (Graham, 1978). Eventually, women sought education in teaching, nursing and domestic studies before expanding to other fields of study, such as science and mathematics (Geiger, 2016; Graham, 1978). Since then, women's enrollment has caught up to, or in some cases exceeded, men's enrollment. It started with higher education institutions (HEIs) turning to women to fill the classrooms when men were headed to the Civil War (Graham, 1978). By 1870, women made up 21% of the undergraduate enrollment in the United States. A decade later, women's enrollment increased by 11%.

By 1920, women were nearly half of the undergraduate student body (Graham, 1978). Currently, women comprise 58% of the total U.S. undergraduate student population at 9.2 million compared to 42% or 6.7 million as of the Fall 2020 semester (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). However, despite the increase in students, schools have failed to increase the gender diversity of their faculty populations at the same rate. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) provides comprehensive data on K-16 education in the United States. The center's reports indicate that among institutions granting associate degrees or higher, there were 263,657 female faculty members in 1987, constituting about 33.2% of the total faculty. By 2021, this number had increased to 766,801, representing 51.1% of the total faculty population. In comparison, female students accounted for 58% of total undergraduate enrollment. The report categorizes data based on sex, distinguishing between male and female students. It does not use gender expression in its data, which dates back to 1970 for males and 1987 for women.

Race and Ethnicity

The racial composition of college students mirrored the gender shift. While women were advocating for higher education, African Americans were also striving for equitable institutions for free Blacks (Brooks & Starks, 2011). Laws prohibited free and enslaved Black Americans from acquiring literacy skills; it was uncommon for them to enroll and graduate from college prior to the Emancipation Proclamation, a landmark moment in history (Brooks & Starks, 2011). The Proclamation, though it did not immediately eradicate racial disparities, was a significant step towards educational equity for Black Americans.

Despite the legal barriers, Oberlin College emerged as a beacon of diversity and inclusion, becoming one of the first PWI to welcome women and Black students (Graham, 1978; "The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education", n.d.). The college's leaders were staunch abolitionists and advocates of coeducation, and they also provided education for women who were planning to marry ministers (Graham, 1978; Oberlin, n.d.). The achievements of its students further exemplified the college's commitment to diversity and inclusion. George B. Vashon, a Black student, graduated in 1844 and went on to found Howard University, one of the oldest and largest Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)("The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education," n.d.). Mary Jane Patterson, another Black student, became the first Black woman to graduate with a bachelor's degree, earning her degree from Oberlin College in 1862 ("The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education", n.d.).

The Civil Rights Act of 1964, a landmark legislation aimed at addressing Jim Crow laws that institutionalized racial discrimination, played a crucial role in dismantling racial barriers in education. It made it illegal to deny Blacks enrollment based on race (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). The Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965, another significant piece

of legislation, furthered the cause of educational equity by providing Black people with more access to and funding for higher education institutions. Title III, Part A of the HEA, specifically allocated resources for improving educational opportunities for Black Americans (Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, n.d.). These legislative advancements were instrumental in expanding educational access for Black Americans.

In addition to increasing the educational opportunities for Black students, the HEA designated colleges that educated Black students before 1965 as HBCUs because they were founded during legal segregation to improve Black Americans' lives (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). Schools designated as HBCUs have primarily African American students enrolled in the institution and a long history of serving the population. The status change came with increased funding for programming and resources for schools that educate students from underrepresented backgrounds because of the lack of funding and other resources that were promised but not provided.

As of Fall 2022, 99 HBCUs were operational in 19 states, the District of Columbia and the U.S. Virgin Islands (National Center for Education Statistics Historically Black Colleges and Universities, n.d.). Enrollment at HBCUs increased by 47% between 1976 and 2010, growing from 223,000 to 327,000. Enrollment stayed the same between 2019 and 2022 during the pandemic. As of 2021, HBCUs are three percent of U.S. higher education institutions but award nearly one-third of undergraduate degrees to Black students (Historically Black Colleges and Universities, n.d.; "The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education", n.d.). HBCUs should be included in the diversity argument beyond the opportunity for Black students to enroll; almost one-quarter of students enrolled in Fall 2022 were non-Black students (National Center for Education Statistics Historically Black Colleges and Universities, n.d.).

Future legislation created more Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs), including Hispanic (HSIs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), Asian-American Pacific Islander (AAPSI), Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian-Serving Institutions Program (ANNH), American Indian Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities (Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Civil Rights, n.d.). This increased access enabled students from various backgrounds to connect with others who share their racial or ethnic heritage and to learn in an environment that reflects their cultural experiences. MSIs often tailor their learning environments to reflect the cultural backgrounds of their students, enhancing comprehension and practical application. Additionally, the sense of both belonging and community fostered among students and faculty can lead to higher retention rates. Beyond student advantages, this legislation guarantees enhanced funding and resources, improving educational outcomes for these underrepresented groups. The broader societal impact is significant; the workforce and graduate programs will experience greater diversity. An increase in student diversity not only enriches the educational environment but also has the potential to stimulate economic growth and alter the socioeconomic trajectories of students, underscoring the urgent need for diversity in educational institutions.

Socioeconomic Status

Socioeconomic status adds a layer of complexity to the discussion of the changing demographics of the U.S. undergraduate student population. College students' socioeconomic status (SES) can vary widely and affect everything, including student functioning and mental and physical challenges (Goldrick-Rab & Cook, 2011). Some college students come from low-income families and may be the first to attend college. Others come from more affluent backgrounds and may have parents who also attended college. Institutions are seeing students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds enroll in higher education with intentions of using

college degrees/education to move upward/increase social mobility (Renn & Reason, 2021). Research has shown that students from lower-income families are less likely to attend and graduate from college than their more affluent peers (Goldrick-Rab & Cook, 2011; Renn & Reason, 2021). Those students may need more guidance from faculty to navigate the higher education system.

The concept of social mobility should be highlighted here as many students, regardless of race or ethnicity, enroll in higher education to continue or improve their socioeconomic status. HBCUs, and to some extent MSIs, have long served as vessels for social mobility for students of color and those from lower socioeconomic groups (Brooks & Starks, 2011). Most students below the poverty line "identify as women, African American, Latinx, Asian and Asian American, American Indian, first- and second-generation immigrants, and students who speak a language other than English at home" (Renn & Reason, 2021, p. 11). The changing background of students further complicates interaction as faculty diversity is increasing at a slower pace (Seifert & Umbach, 2008). Some scholars explore the barriers between faculty and students because of the difference between student and faculty race and ethnicity (Anaya & Cole, 2001; Cole, 2006).

Characteristics of Current College Students

In the previous section, I discussed undergraduate students' sociodemographics. In this section, the focus is on undergraduate students' attitudes and beliefs about higher education. The influences of race and gender on students' beliefs, religion, spirituality, and politics affect their perspective on college (Renn & Reason, 2021). Students bring to school attitudes, beliefs and values from their families, communities, and K-12 educational institutions (Renn & Reason, 2021). During college, they can shift based on courses, organizations, the community, and relationships with people. Colleges must be cautious of engaging students around a single

identity instead of the intersectionality of the various identities that impact students' experiences (Renn & Reason, 2021). Understanding the student inputs, including experiences, characteristics, attitudes and beliefs, will help institutions create policies and practices to support the changing dynamics of the undergraduate student population (Renn & Reason, 2021).

Currently, students' attitudes, beliefs and values are increasing anxiety about college completion and job attainment; students feel more pressure to perform from families, mentors, faculty, staff and future employers (Renn & Reason, 2021; Taylor et al., 2022). As a result, student mental health is at the top of the list of priorities for university leadership as they seek to manage the campus environment to better address students' anxiety (Mucci-Ferris et al., 2021). The pandemic exacerbated these issues as students had to navigate a public health crisis that impacted numerous people, economic uncertainty, increased work and personal responsibilities, and more significant public health concerns (Auger & Formentin, 2021; Taylor et al., 2022). This study focused on how faculty experienced the stressors and negotiated them. However, new research is needed to determine how faculty members can better recognize the stressors and navigate them while teaching and positively interacting with them. Additionally, more research needs to be conducted on differentiating everyday stressors associated with age development and college enrollment and those as a result of a disruptive time.

In addition to battling anxiety, students are increasingly questioning the value of their education. Historically, religious leaders and government officials have always questioned the college curricula and institutions' abilities to prepare students for civic duty (Thelin, 2004). More recently, Umbach and Wawrzynski (2005) note that the scrutiny continues. The common belief is that employers do not feel graduates are prepared to work. While it is not that they are less prepared, students' beliefs about society have changed. As such, their engagement with faculty

and peers in educational settings shows the different philosophies of current students. In better understanding instruction during a turbulent time, leaders and faculty can better communicate value to students.

Connectivity in Higher Education

Several concepts are essential to understand in the exploration of student-faculty interaction. The concepts are sense of belonging, relational and social, and are defined in this section. Those terms describe the varying levels of engagement with peers in educational settings. They are used regularly in the literature to explain how varying levels of connectedness support student learning. For example, researchers have argued that knowledge organization is essential to effective teaching (Ambrose et al., 2010); however, deeper learning happens when students do more than transmit knowledge but interact with others, even during disruption (Bain, 2004; Wergin, 2020).

Sense of Belonging

First, the term "sense of belonging" refers to an individual's feeling of connection or relation to a chosen group and is a sociological construct that encourages cohesion amongst individuals within a defined context such as a classroom or student club (Kim & Lundberg, 2016). It can be shown in various ways, including as attachments to objects such as school sweatshirts, people such as professors and academic advisors, and institutions such as colleges or universities (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Within education, Dost and Mazzoli Smith (2023) emphasize Goodenow's (1993) definition of the term as feeling welcome, respected, included and encouraged in the school environment. The term is used in other areas, such as business and family, and has several labels, including organizational fit (Dost & Mazzoli Smith, 2023).

Scholars write that a sense of belonging is essential in higher education and study it through lenses including race, gender, first-generation and academic programs (Dost & Mazzoli Smith, 2023; Hurtado et al., 2007). Further, a sense of belonging can lead to meaningful or positive interaction with faculty or course instructors and influence a student's sense of inclusion in the class student group (Cotten & Wilson, 2006; Komarraju et al., 2010; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). The effect is increased when looking at first-year and historically marginalized students when they join groups whose cultures and values differ from the dominant culture (Hurtado et al., 2007; Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Moreover, studies have shown that first-year students value warmth and openness from instructors, which can also foster a sense of belonging (Freeman et al., 2007; Hurtado et al., 2007; Kim & Sax, 2017). Beyond aiding in academic achievement, demonstrating behaviors that promote a sense of belonging is crucial for both individual and community success.

Yuval-Davis (2006) identified three ways to construct belonging. The first level is through social location, the second is through identity and emotional attachments, and the third is ethical and political values systems that people use to judge themselves and others' belongings in a group. This is important because faculty members experienced disruption at each level during the pandemic. While a sense of belonging is essential to student engagement, this study offers further understanding and implications for research and practices. For example, faculty shared that they felt a connection to students during the Spring 2020 transition online because they created communities in their courses before the pandemic shut down in-person operations. They noted that as they spent more time online, it was harder to connect with students through virtual platforms. While all the participants taught synchronously following the first semester, the sense of belonging constructed in the classroom before the shutdown did not continue in classrooms

that started online or transitioned online after a short time in person. Additionally, the faculty did not identify or specifically call out a sense of belonging in the documentation and how it differed between in-person and face-to-face courses.

Social

A second term related to interaction is social. The term differs from relationships but is essential in defining how students interact with the college environment. Most undergraduate students mark the success of their time by their academic performance and social engagement (Mucci-Ferris et al., 2021), making socialization and relationships crucial to the student experience. Various theories help us understand the socialization and relationship-building process once students enroll in college. First, socialization theory is the process through which individuals acquire norms, values, knowledge and skills to participate and perform successfully in society (Kim & Sax, 2017). Instructors transmit the institutional norms to students and reinforce the demonstration of the norms through rewards and affirmations (Kim & Sax, 2017). Students are then expected to reciprocate the behavior and be willing to connect to the community.

Similarly, social capital theory is the actual or potential resources from social networks (Kim & Sax, 2017). Instrumental productive relationships or networks provide access to opportunity or lead to successful student outcomes. For example, students who participate in student organizations or hold on-campus positions develop relationships that can lead to opportunities in professional spaces. This theory supports the need to connect positively with faculty and staff and use those relationships to advance academically and professionally.

Relational

The third interaction-related concept is relational. The term is used within the context of Relational Cultural Theory. RCT is a human development theory based on the idea that relationships help people grow (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007). Relational teaching, therefore, considers that students are making meaningful connections with peers, professors and course materials. Schwartz (2019) bases her Connected Teaching framework on the construct. She writes that faculty "must be open to and seek relationships, understand our sociocultural identity (and how this shapes our internal experience and the ways in which we are met in the world), and vigilantly explore and recognize our emotion in the teaching endeavor" (p. 21). She identifies relationship, identity and emotion as the foundation of connected teaching. Understanding this construct is vital as we explore faculty members' experiences teaching during a turbulent time. All of the participants in this study had an opportunity to establish beliefs and actions related to the three elements of the Connected Teaching framework before the pandemic.

Student Perspective of Faculty-Student Interactions

Understanding the changes in demographics and characteristics is essential, as Astin and other researchers established in early research how students are affected by their college experiences (Chang, 2005; Cox & Orehovec, 2007; Kim & Sax, 2017). Astin's work is essential as it can guide faculty and administrators in supporting students from enrollment to graduation. Astin's earliest work on the theory of student involvement posited that a student's level of college engagement is related to their learning and development. In *What Matters in College*, Astin described how undergraduate students are affected by their college experiences. It is one of the most cited resources in higher education literature. In that book, he proposes the Input-Environment-Output (I-E-O) model, "a methodological framework that allows researchers to

assess a less-biased estimate of a specific college experience on student outcomes, considering not only the characteristics of students entering college but also institutional environments and other college experiences" (Kim & Sax, 2017, p. 88). This model affirms student-faculty interactions as a part of the college experience.

Although Astin's work is prominent, Chickering and Gamson (1987) asked a related question in the mid-1980s that led to various college landscape study areas, including student-faculty interaction literature. Chickering and Gamson (1987) asked how students and faculty members can improve undergraduate education. They listed seven principles for making undergraduate higher education work for instructors and students. The seven principles include encouraging contact between students and faculty, developing reciprocity and cooperation among students, using active learning techniques, giving prompt feedback, emphasizing time on task, communicating high expectations, and respecting diverse talents and ways of learning. This work was necessary because it established credibility for the body of research and justified an understanding of student contact and faculty behaviors that lead to motivation and involvement.

Tinto's (1993) theory of student departure builds on those bodies of research, which helps to understand what makes college students persist to graduation (Cuseo, 2018; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1978; Snijders et al., 2021). The theory suggests that the degree to which the students feel integrated or part of the community is essential. Experiences at the college or university are primarily shaped by their interactions with faculty and other students in class. The pandemic changed how students were integrated into the campus community. Many left abruptly at the start of the pandemic, while others delayed the start of the in-person experience for almost two years due to fluctuations in pandemic guidelines. The changes in the ways universities created belonging could have affected college students. This study will focus on how faculty members

fostered positive experiences, including creating a sense of belonging and encouraging persistence.

Early scholars such as Astin (1984), Chickering and Gamson (1987), and Kuh (2001) established the importance of student-faculty interaction for undergraduate students. Chickering and Gamson (1987) wrote that "frequent student-faculty contact in and out of classes is the most important factor in student motivation and involvement" (p. 3). Researchers have shown that the interactions between faculty and students can influence student performance in terms of social, academic, and professional factors (Cox & Orehovec, 2007; Komarraju et al., 2010). Kuh and Hu (2001) believed that both frequency and nature of interaction have the most significant impact, meaning substantive interaction was more influential than social.

Pascarella and Terenzini's (1978, 1991, 2005) works are also cited heavily in this area. The authors wrote four volumes of the book *How College Affects Students* before and they wrote separately for years. Their influential work on student-faculty contact reported that student characteristics such as having similar interests and aspirations as faculty and seeking faculty mentorship were important antecedents for determining the frequency and quality of student contact with faculty (Cole, 2006). Terenzini's line of interaction research focuses on the frequency of interaction with faculty for academic purposes (Terenzini & Wright, 1987).

Initially, interaction focused broadly on student-faculty experiences in the classroom. Kuh (2001) lobbied for a broader, more inclusive view, which included extracurricular activities. This eventual expansion led to the development of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). The survey grew out of Kuh's (2001) work on defining student engagement and is regularly used in faculty-student interaction literature (Cox, 2011; Cox & Orehovec, 2007; Cuseo, 2018; Kim & Sax, 2017; Kim & Lundberg, 2016; Renn & Reason, 2021). In later

research, Kuh (2009) affirmed that “student engagement represents the time and effort students devote to activities that are empirically linked to desired outcomes of college and what institutions do to induce students to participate in these activities” (p. 683).

Ultimately, student engagement is at the heart of learning in higher education. The general belief is that an engaged student—beyond the classroom—will likely succeed in various development areas, including academic, social and cognitive (Barkley & Major, 2020; Dunne & Owen, 2013; Kuh, 2009; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Therefore, schools must provide resources to identify methodologies and technologies that improve the student engagement experience (Kuh & Hu, 2001). The initial claims were based on both in-person and online experiences. This study will address student engagement from a faculty perspective, specifically listing the mindset and strategies faculty used to build relationships and foster positive interaction with students.

Distance Education

Before describing teaching virtually during the pandemic, I will discuss online teaching and learning. E-learning has been a disruptive change in American distance education worldwide. It has attracted new people, organizations, and leadership roles to higher education (Miller, 2014). However, distance learning is still a well-planned online learning experience that differs from virtual courses in response to social or societal turbulence (Hodges et al., 2021).

Distance education uses one or more technologies to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the faculty member by both time and distance; various modes support regular and substantive interaction between the student and the instructor synchronously or asynchronously, including mail and electronic platforms (Bolliger & Wasilik, 2009; National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). The digital technologies used to meet the course learning

outcomes include the internet, one-way or two-way broadcast options such as television channels, audio conferences, and DVDs or other personal video items (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). Online learning is primarily web-based, meaning at least 80% of the content is delivered via the internet (Bolliger & Wasilik, 2009; Means et al., 2014) and includes distance, distributed, blended, online, mobile, and others (Hodges et al., 2021).

Miller (2014) shared the background of distance education and online learning, as both have a long history of helping institutions adopt strategy and technology to change social needs. Distance education has existed since the late 1800s; online education started in corporations around the 1980s (Kentnor, 2015). Distance education dates back to the 1890s when correspondence education was created to extend access to farming communities during the Industrial Revolution (Miller, 2014). The Morrill Act of 1862 and the Second Morrill Act of 1890 created land-grant and HBCUs in response to the need for graduates in mechanical and practical arts and teaching schools (Miller, 2014). It is described as a method of providing education to adult citizens outside of the school's physical location who receive lessons and exercises through the U.S. postal service (Kentnor, 2015). The students mail the material back in exchange for feedback and grading (Kentnor, 2015).

Advances in technology changed distance education from primary through correspondence to electronic platforms. First, radio courses emerged; the University of Wisconsin professors started a radio statistician within its distance teaching unit (Kentnor, 2015). Radio stations faced regulatory issues, which coincided with a shift to a new medium for learning (Kentnor, 2015). Next, telecourses emerged, combining recorded lectures with textbooks and occasional class sessions (Miller, 2014). Next, videos were moved to local public access channels and other web-based platforms before online-only degree programs became the

preferred method for distance learning (Miller, 2014). Finally, the internet emerged as a faster option for education students unable to make it to the physical classroom. The following section explores distance learning through internet-based platforms.

Online Instruction

E-learning has been a disruptive change in American distance education worldwide. Learning through internet-based platforms grew out of corporations using computer-based programs to train new hires (Kentnor, 2015). Online learning has brought new students, organizations and leadership roles into higher education (Miller, 2014). The online classroom is the central space where faculty members feel responsible for the learning, meaning they engage with students, facilitate connections with peers, and provide social and emotional support (Berry, 2019). Recent research asked how higher education institutions can proactively engage faculty, staff, students and alumni to build and sustain authentic relationships online (Dam, 2021, p. 4).

There are benefits and challenges to online instruction. Using virtual technology to learn gives students and instructors more flexibility than face-to-face instruction. Additionally, it helps address the need for more access for a diverse student body. It allows non-traditional students with personal responsibilities such as caretaking or being the primary income earner for the family to still attain a college degree (Bolliger & Wasilik, 2009; Means et al., 2014). Last, it can increase degree completion rates because of the flexibility and access. Conversely, the barriers to online learning include issues with social interaction, academic and technical skills, motivation, time, delays in instructor feedback, limited technical assistance, a high degree of tech dependence and problems with technology (Bolliger & Wasilik, 2009).

There is some debate on the costs of online instruction depending on how one defines costs, which vary due to the student-teacher ratio, student and teacher physical location (urban, rural)/accessibility, and course development/creation/construction costs (Means et al., 2014).

The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation launched asynchronous learning networks and provided $40 million to support colleges and universities in establishing sustainable online learning programs (Miller, 2014). The foundation established the Five Pillars of Quality Online Education to help measure the effectiveness of online learning. The pillars are access, cost-effectiveness and institutional commitment, learning effectiveness, faculty satisfaction and student satisfaction (Miller, 2014). Access ensures technical quality and that people can access the opportunities, curricula, and student support offered by the programs. Cost-effectiveness and institutional commitment focus on program sustainability and the goal of controlling costs for the development, delivery and maintenance of the course over some time (Miller, 2014). Learning effectiveness is the quality of online learning, ensuring it is equitably compared to a face-to-face or traditional in-person academic program (Miller, 2014).

The final two pillars, faculty and student satisfaction, have interaction embedded in the definition. I discuss student satisfaction briefly before discussing faculty satisfaction at length in the next section. Student satisfaction is a crucial factor in online learning. Students must value the learning outcomes and enjoy the technology-based learning environment (Bolliger & Wasilik, 2009; Miller, 2014). In addition, the increase in online students suggests that students will want co-curricular programming similar to their peers at traditional institutions (Bolliger & Wasilik, 2009; Miller, 2014). Faculty satisfaction merits a separate section as it is crucial to this study.

Faculty Satisfaction with Online Instruction

Although there has been some research on teaching online courses, more research is needed on faculty experiences and beliefs about teaching extensive courses online (Bikowski et al., 2022; Frazer et al., 2017). One of the primary factors of quality education is faculty satisfaction. Faculty satisfaction is when instructors believe that using technology and online pedagogical strategies that enhance the teaching and learning environment benefits students and themselves (Bolliger & Wasilik, 2009; Miller, 2014). It is among the most critical factors in quality online courses (Bolliger & Wasilik, 2009). Faculty must determine what they value in their online learning experiences, whether the quality is solid, and whether the technology helps them meet their learning objectives (Miller, 2014). Faculty-student and student-student interactions play a prominent role in determining faculty and student satisfaction with online courses (Miller, 2014). Bolliger and Wasilik (2009) called for more research as the dynamics of online learning become more complex. In their article, the authors shared examples of conflicting research on faculty perceptions, including some faculty focusing on the student experience and other studies showing no statistically significant difference. Bolliger and Wasilik (2009) noted three broad groups containing factors that affected faculty satisfaction—student-related, instructor-related and institution-related.

Online Learning During the Pandemic

Higher education institutions applied a mixture of emergency remote and online learning. The transition to online teaching presented significant challenges (Kurz et al., 2021; Meishar-Tal & Levenberg, 2021). While the shift was necessary in order to continue learning, the change disrupted the connections between students and instructors. Faculty who are caring, approachable, and accessible in person were limited in their abilities to contribute to students'

academic performance because of the change in location. This disconnection affected the educational delivery and altered the perceived roles of educators, impacting students' overall college experience, engagement, and learning outcomes. This section further explores online learning during the pandemic.

The pandemic increased the number of online learning courses in the short and long term (Meishar-Tal & Levenberg, 2021; Zhang, 2000). Institutions quickly transferred from in-person to virtual to accommodate learning amidst massive social restrictions put in place by the local, state and federal governments. In the Fall of 2020, 75% of all undergraduate students were enrolled in at least one distance education course, and 44% of all undergraduate students exclusively took distance education courses (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). The following year, there was a slight drop; however, over 59% of students were still enrolled in distance education courses (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). The move to virtual spaces was helpful in increasing the use of technology in face-to-face courses.

In response to the change in learning delivery mode, instructors needed different attitudes, skills, and strategies for engaging with students online. First, they needed to use technology differently. A false assumption is the belief that instructors could teach online like they teach face-to-face (Meishar-Tal & Levenberg, 2021). Additionally, technology is constantly changing, making it hard for instructors to maintain knowledge and skills in teaching (Means et al., 2014; Meishar-Tal & Levenberg, 2021). This is a growing requirement for instructors, especially as the tech in professional spaces changes. Second, instructors needed to believe they could connect to students online. Many felt it took additional work to give timely feedback on assignments and design activities that foster interaction between students and the faculty

(Bikowski et al., 2022; Parker et al., 2021). Kurz et al. (2021) wrote that the connectedness between teachers and students is how some faculty understand themselves as professors.

Further, instructors needed to understand their emotions during a turbulent state and how it might affect teaching. Meisher-Tal and Levenberg (2021) explore lecturers' experiences with emotions, teaching and technology during the pandemic. Specifically, they analyzed the differences in experiencing change during a normal process of technology adoption as opposed to an emergency, as well as the emotional response to adopting technology. They sought to better understand technology acceptance but found that emotions played a role in the decision during emergency times. They classified emergencies as political conflicts, natural disasters, and pandemics, describing the increased tension and anxiety people feel during those events. Their literature review noted that "students and teachers are less emotionally available for teaching and learning" during emergency times, but the "continuation of students may help to preserve a certain routine in life" (Meishar-Tal & Levenberg, 2021, p. 7147). They identified four possible emotions: success, opportunity, failure and threat, and found that most faculty in their study experienced success and opportunity.

Researchers cited studies addressing distance learning, online instruction, and turbulence that could enhance the instruction process and support higher education leaders seeking effective and efficient resources for faculty engaging in traditional and distance education (Bolliger & Wasilik, 2009; Kebritchi et al., 2017; Kirk-Jenkins & Hughey, 2021). The additions to the scholarship from this study will make educational and training experiences more prosperous and diverse through options not considered before the pandemic. This study explains the transition from in-person to online courses during the pandemic.

Faculty-Student Relationships

While relationship building in higher education has always been discussed, more scholars are writing about the various relationships and their effects on academic achievement and social mobility (Felten & Lambert, 2020; Reynolds & Parrish, 2018; Schwartz, 2019). However, the relationship-building concept has yet to entirely translate to teaching despite research showing that students increasingly want teachers who care. Some argue that it is because students lack the maturity to develop a professional relationship with a faculty member where they can separate school from personal topics and that there is a lack of willingness to engage across race, gender and ethnicity (Anaya & Cole, 2001; Cole, 2006; Kim & Sax, 2016). In addition, students can find it hard to identify similarities with a faculty member if they perceive them as visibly different from them or from a cultural background that is foreign to the student (Anaya & Cole, 2001; Cole, 2006; Kim & Sax, 2016).

Two pieces of work are pushing the rethinking of relationships forward in the higher education space. First, Felten and Lambert (2020) suggest moving towards a web of relationships instead of individual relationships to ensure that the undergraduate experience is valuable. A network of overlapping relationships can better meet the needs of students. This is helpful as faculty are humanized and seen as people instead of being a one-stop solution or the ultimate determining factor in an individual student's success at the undergraduate level. Second, Schwartz (2019) argues in her work *Connected Teaching: Relationship, Power and Mattering in Higher Education* that faculty members must change. Courses are becoming more negotiable, power dynamics are shifting, and the use of technology is changing at a rapid rate. This shift in society has already offered an opportunity to look at relationships, interactions, engagement, and critical incidents to center the students in the program. Schwartz (2019) also posited that as

students explore identities in college, faculty members could explore their inner lives and connections to the teaching practice. The role of the faculty is shifting from sharing information to inviting students to learn in dynamic learning environments. The concept of connectedness includes the faculty relationships, identities and emotions in pedagogical practice.

Conversations around relationship building are essential to fostering positive interactions, which are a foundational part of learning in college. Positive interaction can help students reach academic goals, which is positive for faculty members and higher education institutions. Building on positive and nurturing relationships, Cox and Orehovec (2007) noted that personal interactions helped students feel valuable and had positive effects. Beckowski et al. (2018) argued that positive interactions and relationships could significantly impact a student's worldview and approach to engagement. The positive engagement impacts the student in the exchange and is contagious, influencing students to engage positively with others in the community (Anderson & Carta-Falsa, 2002). In general, many people experienced a loss of connectedness due to physical and social distancing restrictions during the height of the pandemic, along with a focus on the importance of collaboration, a lack of connectedness concerns faculty and students in online and remote learning environments (Parker et al., 2021). Others experienced a need to shift how they engage students due to the change in technology use. Kurz et al. (2021) wrote that the connectedness between teachers and students is how some faculty understand themselves as professors.

Faculty Perspective of Faculty-Student Interactions

Researchers have also studied the faculty perspective on student-faculty interaction (Cox, 2007; Hagenhauer & Volet, 2014; Komarraju et al., 2010; Majsak et al., 2022; Solis & Turner, 2016). This section explores the literature on the faculty perspective of faculty-student

interactions. More research is needed when discussing the faculty perspectives of faculty-student relationships. Bradley Cox wrote a series of articles that highlight the discussion of both the faculty and the students. This section will highlight his work and related pieces as it is crucial for explaining the literature that exists from the faculty perspective.

First, Cox and Orehovec (2007) wrote about the benefit to students and faculty members when mentoring relationships grow naturally from functional and personal interactions. Relationships are a subset of interactions; they include multiple interactions between a faculty member and a student. Similar to interactions, faculty-student relationships from the faculty perspective are also under-researched. Hoffman's (2014) work noted that the student-teacher relationship had been around for centuries and that, more recently, researchers have sought to understand positive relationships between faculty and students. Most of the literature still focuses on students.

Researchers also discuss the positive and negative impacts of relationships on education. Positive relationships are more likely to be fostered in relaxing and supportive environments where students and faculty demonstrate respect and positive rapport in a non-threatening manner (Hoffman, 2014). The best relationships emerge from functional and personal interactions (Cox & Orehovec, 2007). Conversely, faculty members can negatively impact the student-faculty relationship. Faculty members who are disorganized, distant, or use monotone voices in lectures can cause students to disengage from the class and the learning process (Kim & Lundberg, 2016). Understanding the impacts of relationships that stem from interactions during societal disruptions is essential. Beckowski et al. (2018) argued that positive interactions and relationships could significantly influence a student's worldview and approach to engagement.

Positive engagement not only impacts the student in the exchange but also leads to students engaging positively with others in the community (Anderson & Carta-Falsa, 2002).

Hagenhauer and Volet (2014) wrote about this topic to advocate for more studies on teacher-student relationships in higher education, as most research shows the influence on students and not instructors. In their study, the authors argue that stronger relationships can help reduce the human and fiscal costs of dropping out. Teacher-student relationships affect teachers and students, increasing the credibility of higher education. People seek to belong to a community; frequent interactions and strong relationships keep people within the community. However, the authors argue that relationships need to be improved; people must balance the relationships to be effective.

In addition to Cox's work, others have contributed to the instructor's perspective of interaction. Kim and Sax (2017) identified seven areas for researchers to use to measure the outcomes of student-faculty interaction. The researchers listed academic achievement, college persistence, cognitive outcomes, affective outcomes, civic outcomes, spiritual outcomes and vocational as areas to break down the research on interactions that created positive learning environments. Kezar and Maxey (2014) identified four qualities of high-quality faculty interactions: "1) faculty members were approachable and personable, 2) faculty members had enthusiasm and passion for their work, 3) faculty members cared about students personally, and 4) faculty members served as role models and mentors" (p. 35). Kurz et al. (2021) wrote that the connectedness between teachers and students is how some faculty understand themselves as professors.

Solis and Turner (2016) briefly discussed the benefits to instructors, citing that "students are attentive and engaged in class, more comfortable talking to them (professors), the course is

more interactive and engaging, and the positive student feedback offers the instructor further opportunities for professional development" (p. 49). There is general agreement that now is the time to focus on faculty to ensure they understand how their teaching style influences student attitudes (Trolian et al., 2021).

Like NSSE, the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) is essential in helping better understand the faculty perspective of student engagement. The survey is administered to faculty teaching at four-year bachelor's degree-granting institutions. The instrument measures faculty expectations for student engagement in educational practices that could be associated with higher levels of learning and development (National Survey of Student Engagement, n.d.). The questionnaire includes items for instructional staff about effective educational practices. For example, FSSE asks about perceptions of how often students engage in educationally relevant activities, the value staff place on learning and development, the nature and frequency of instructional staff-student interactions, and how they organize their time in and outside the classroom (National Survey of Student Engagement, n.d.). While FSSE asks faculty members about their perceptions, it does not ask them about their experiences with interaction and the impacts of engagement on teaching and working in higher education. This is important because faculty member attitudes and behaviors can impact student interaction and how students meet higher education outcomes.

Typological Model of Faculty-Student Interaction

Cox (2007, 2010, 2011), independently and with other scholars, has investigated faculty-student interaction to better understand its context and impact. He first worked with Orehovec (2007) to develop the Typological Model of Faculty-Student Interaction. In 2011, he published independent work that advanced that study. In 2010, he surveyed 2,845 faculty members from 45

campuses regarding their perceptions and practices in engaging with first-year students. This part explores each work in more detail.

In their first published piece, Cox and Orehovec (2007) investigated the full range of types and meanings of students' interactions with faculty outside the classroom, developing the Typological Model of Faculty-Student Interaction. Five types emerged from this work: disengagement, incidental contact, functional interaction, personal interaction and mentoring. The types are presented in decreasing order of observed frequency, starting with disengagement and ending with mentoring. The types are defined by the subject of the communication and the meaning drawn from the student. See Table 2.1 below for information on each type.

The authors used a multi-dimensional research approach by conducting focus groups, interviews and researcher observations (Cox & Orehovec, 2007). They coded the content and context of interactions using variables that influenced the interactions, including location, event type, time and physical surroundings.

Table 2.1

Typological Model of Faculty-Student Interaction

Interaction Type	Description
Disengagement	"is the absence of interaction between faculty members and students outside the classroom" (p. 351).
Incidental Contact	"occurs when students and faculty members interact because they find themselves simultaneously in the same place" (p. 351).
Functional Relationships	"describe the standard and formal encounters between the faculty and students related to the school" (p. 351).
Personal Interactions	"are connections intentionally centered on the faculty member, student's individual, or shared personal interests" (p. 351).
Mentoring	"occurs when faculty members and students develop professional relationships in which functional and personal interactions converge" (p. 351).

Based on Cox and Orehovec (2007)

Cox and Orehovec (2007) found a general need for more non-classroom interaction in the residential college program designed to foster interaction. Students and faculty in the study were frustrated by the infrequent interaction. Because the typology was based on the frequency of interaction, the study needed to provide more evidence to support that one type of interaction is more valuable than another. The findings suggested that all except disengagement are valuable, but it depends on the student. Their study concluded that faculty-student interaction outside of the classroom is essential and must be an institutional effort, not one that comes from a department or unit. Otherwise, students could compartmentalize the experience rather than associate it with the institution. The limitations of their study were that it focused on one

institution, and faculty and students opted into the program marketed to increase interaction opportunities. As a result, both could limit the generalizability to other institutions.

Further, Cox (2011) sought to understand the nature of faculty-student interactions and the conditions that foster and inhibit them. Cox adopted a typology from Anderson et al. (1995), describing mentoring relationships as those involving career and professional development, emotional support, and role modeling.

In between those publications, Cox et al. (2010) surveyed 2,845 faculty members from 45 campuses regarding their perceptions and practices in engaging with first-year students. The questionnaires asked instructors about their demographics, field, teaching style, employment status and institutional support. The findings showed that substantive interaction could be meaningful to undergraduate students. However, some faculty reported needing more substantive contact with first-year students in non-classroom situations. Casual interactions were higher than substantive, although casual interactions could have less than substantive interactions of impact on undergraduate students. The comparisons among levels of interactions are vital because non-classroom situations declined during the pandemic. The decline in contact could mean a decline in the positive outcomes associated with student-faculty interaction.

Cox (2010) developed a conceptual model for out-of-class faculty-student interaction. He identified the relationships between personal characteristics, institutional characteristics, pedagogical practices, job status, activities and time commitments, and casual and substantive interactions. The framework proposed that out-of-class interaction directly results from the pedagogical approach and behavior demonstrated by the faculty member during class time and other professional statuses and activities. The instructors' characteristics and institutional environment shape the pedagogical approach and behavior.

Figure 1

Conceptual Model of Out-Of-Class Faculty-Student Interaction

Note. The figure was reproduced with permission from Springer Nature. From "Pedagogical Signals of Faculty Approachability: Factors Shaping Faculty-Student Interaction Outside of the Classroom" by Cox, B.E., McIntosh, K.L., Terenzini, P.T., Reason, R.D. & Lutovsky Quate, B.R., 2010, *Research in Higher Education, 51*, p. 770. Copyright 2010 by Springer Nature.

Cox et al. (2010) dismissed the notion that gender, race, field, rank, time commitments and pedagogical practices can predict out-of-class student interactions. The data were inconsistent and varied based on gender and employment status. They also posited that the predictor of engagement could be a student-driven construct and that the faculty side is not as strong ("the variability attributable to the faculty members is relatively minor").

These studies were conducted before the COVID-19 pandemic, which severely limited casual non-classroom interactions due to decreased physical contact. Future research must look at non-classroom interactions during increased turbulence to better understand if faculty know the value of casual and substantive interactions and how they promote those interactions despite the turbulence.

Teaching in Higher Education

Faculty members have to change their teaching practices. Teachers must stimulate useful knowledge in the classroom (Bain, 2004; Weimer, 2013). They have to care more about students, intentionally build relationships, find ways to connect with diverse student populations and integrate technology more seamlessly and effectively into their teaching practice. The latter will be discussed in another section of this chapter.

Classroom experiences are indicators of many things, including how willing faculty members are to engage positively with students (Cole, 2006). Additionally, many faculty need more meaningful preparation for teaching; most do not enroll in pedagogy courses or voluntarily engage in teaching center programming (Cook-Sather et al., 2014). Many faculty teach how they were taught or saw modeled by other instructors. Instructors who want to develop positive student-instructor interactions must prioritize caring teaching and leadership practices; they must know and use students' names, manage course expectations, and use appropriate technology (Solis & Turner, 2017). In stressful situations, many faculty fall back on how they are comfortable instructing, which could lead to poor practice and a lack of care. To the best of their abilities, faculty must ensure students feel cared for in the course.

Caring Teaching and Leadership

Caring teaching is helpful considering the characteristics of current college students. As noted in an earlier section, many are struggling with the transition from childhood to adulthood, and the anxiety, tension and pressure that comes with enrolling in college. The term refers to a teaching style that emphasizes creating a positive, supportive, and nurturing learning environment for students (Anderson et al., 2020). It involves building strong relationships with students, listening and showing an understanding of their individual needs and learning styles,

and fostering a sense of belonging and community within the classroom (Kezar & Maxey, 2014; Quinlan, 2016; Walker & Gleaves, 2015). Anderson et al. (2020) added that the passion and enthusiasm for the material, students and the practice of teaching showed students in her study that the faculty members cared. Caring teachers often prioritize student well-being and seek to create an inclusive and equitable learning space for all students. Quinlan (2016) noted that "when students perceive that faculty listen and show immediacy through behaviors which generate a sense of closeness, they experience learning more positively, feel emotionally supported and are more likely to express their own emotions in a more authentic manner" (p. 3). The term is commonly used in K-12 education as it helps students develop academic and social-emotional skills (Quinlan, 2016). Students want instructors committed to learning their names, and not the traditional authoritarian role (Bain, 2004).

The pandemic disrupted teachers with a caring leadership style. The transition to online teaching disrupted the traditional method for connecting with students and the demonstration of caring, approachable, accessible instructors, grounding students' college experience that we conceive ourselves to be (Kurz et al., 2021). This study offers insight into what caring teaching looked like during a few faculty members' experiences and how they were able to create the positive and supportive environment students needed during the crisis and through technology. Numerous participants talked about and included in their syllabi how they showed empathy for students and sought to demonstrate passion.

Walker and Gleaves (2015) sought to theorize the caring teacher in their work. The authors used an inductive interpretive approach to create a list of caring behaviors in the literature. The list includes listening to students, showing empathy, supporting students, actively fostering learning in class, giving appropriate feedback and praise, having high expectations in

standards of work and behavior, and showing active concern for students' personal lives. Anderson et al. (2020) revisited Walker and Gleaves's (2015) work and noted that scholarship in the area is growing, especially with the need for better teaching practices during the pandemic. Schwartz (2019) echoes this push in her Connected Teaching framework, where she writes about relationships, emotions and identities in pedagogical practice.

Challenges in Higher Education During the Pandemic

Turbulence has and will continue to affect higher education institutions. Disruptions happen for various reasons. Humans cause some, while others result from natural disasters. School shootings are a primary example of manufactured turbulence as they stop teaching and learning and negatively affect those connected to the institutions. While arguably, they are not preventable, natural disasters can cause similar damage. Higher education institutions have experienced natural and human-made disasters, and crisis communication plans are increasingly updated to guide school administrators on how the school should respond to tumultuous incidents. However, crisis plans are often kept at the senior leadership level and fail to be shown to individual faculty members and course instructors; presumably, they lack the details needed for faculty to continue course instruction. This section highlights the literature on challenges higher education institutions face during generally turbulent times, including the pandemic that began in the Spring of 2020.

COVID-19 Pandemic in Spring 2020

Globally, higher education institutions faced the most significant disruption of the last 50 years. U.S. higher education institutions stopped in-person operations because of increased public health and safety concerns following the COVID-19 outbreak (Association of Public & Land-Grant Universities, 2020; Kirk-Jenkins & Hughey, 2021; Ramlo, 2020; Zhao &

Watterston, 2021). Instructors switched to emergency remote instruction for a short term and then for the remainder of the Spring 2020 semester with no immediate confirmation of returning to in-person operations (Conklin & Dikkers, 2021). In addition to moving face-to-face courses online, campus experiences such as homecoming, service immersion programs, and fraternity and sorority life were canceled or moved online. Student and academic affairs leaders had to find ways to engage students during mass uncertainty and anxiety.

Institutional approaches to the pandemic varied by location and, in some cases, the institutional type, adding to the alarm already experienced by some. Detailed policies and plans for testing, social distancing, contract tracing and managing positive cases were required as institutions began to increase the number of people on campus (Majsak et al., 2022). This caused problems as the policies were different than before the stoppage and changed based on the changing test results, hospitalizations and deaths, and government restrictions. The World Health Organization, local, state and federal governments, the Center for Disease Control (CDC), higher education institutions, academic and student affairs departments and sometimes individual faculty and staff changed operations in response to the health crisis. It became harder to follow any policy during the stoppage of the operation because of the change frequency.

Earlier in this chapter, I discussed the importance of location in interaction. During this time, due to the potential for transmission through public transportation or walking through buildings to classrooms, people generally felt unsafe traveling to campus and being in classrooms for what was once a standard period (Majsak et al., 2022). While colleges and universities have actively sought to increase campus safety, the recommendations have primarily been focused on physical access, increased vigilance to identify warning signs, improved communication systems and enhanced capacity of law enforcement agencies in response to on-

campus events (Kyle et al., 2017). While all of those are helpful, teaching strategies should be included should classes continue.

Schools followed government guidelines but could not consistently ensure safe classroom spaces, and that information was communicated clearly and in a timely fashion. Schools had to increase their spending on cleaning supplies, desks and tables, ventilation, and more labor for employees to clean more often (Majsak et al., 2022). Most education research affirms that students must feel physically safe to learn (Arao & Clemens, 2013; Soares & Lopes, 2020; Weimer, 2013). Research exists on safety following natural and artificial disasters such as school shootings and hurricanes. Programs exist as well, such as the Sloan semester, a program for students in Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi for students that were affected by Hurricane Katrina and Rita. The programs allow students to continue taking classes while the campus restores operations. However, despite these programs supporting continued learning, faculty training in case of emergencies has not been consistent since these monstrous natural disasters. Renn and Reason (2021) questioned how higher education would safely deliver instruction and manage the college experience in the future. The research in this dissertation explains how instructors created safe environments for students. The data includes areas where faculty felt they struggled and the resources they used to address immediate issues. Chapter 5 recommends how schools and faculty can further provide safe environments based on the discussions in Chapter 4.

Classroom Changes to Technology

The pandemic changed how instructors teach in the classroom. Losing the physical space forced faculty to use more technology, which required more training and resources. The physical classroom changes affected overall teaching and learning in college courses. Some faculty members possessed the skills necessary. However, others needed to learn the skills necessary to

communicate effectively and design a curriculum mainly relying on technology. Teaching and learning centers and communities of practice among faculty from similar academic programs were in demand as a result of the speed and accuracy in which instructors had to make decisions about these courses. This was a significant shift for instructors. Through the restrictive periods of the global pandemic, beginning in March 2020 and subsiding in May 2023, faculty members continued instructing students, supporting students and colleagues, and balancing a misaligned system of changing guidelines and environments. The only universal expectation was that faculty members continue teaching, possibly under stress and duress.

Faculty job satisfaction scholars added a layer to their literature on teaching and working during difficult times. Numerous scholars, including Cerci and Dumludag (2018), explored faculty job satisfaction, with a particular focus during the COVID-19 pandemic (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2020; Sessions et al., 2023). The Chronicle of Higher Education report revealed that many faculty members felt stressed and overworked due to the abrupt shift required by the emergency. The report further elaborated on the emotional state of the faculty members, describing them as stressed, hopeless, angry, and grieving, and pointing out a perceived differences in impact amongst people from marginalized communities juggling teaching and child and adult caregiving responsibilities. Faculty noted that it was hard to manage families when support facilities like daycares, schools and senior centers were closed or limited in-person opportunities. The burden was notably heavier on women and faculty of color, who faced additional challenges related to higher COVID-19 rates in their communities. Despite these challenges, a slight majority felt that their institutions' responses were adequate and felt supported to some extent.

One of the more significant challenges instructors faced was learning and teaching technology to students simultaneously. Teachers and students had to adapt to changing technology. Before, some instructors believed in various myths about online learning. One myth was that instructors could not build relationships with students under these conditions (Carr et al., 2021). However, meaningfully integrated interaction can increase students' chances of meeting their learning outcomes (Hodges et al., 2020). Another myth was that remote learning is of lower quality than face-to-face learning (Dam, 2021). These beliefs contradict foundational literature on teaching and learning and should be taught regularly in teaching centers to ensure preparedness for future disruptions.

Many institutions applied emergency remote instruction or online teaching best practices to continue teaching. Thus, the possible need for emergency remote or online learning must become part of faculty members' skill sets (Hodges et al., 2020). Despite not being designed for the situation caused by the pandemic, faculty members relied on emergency remote (ERT) and online teaching strategies during the pandemic (Hodges et al., 2020). ERT is a temporary shift of instructional delivery to an alternate mode due to crisis circumstances (Hodges et al., 2020). ERT is typically for emergencies, not elongated disasters or situations like those experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic. ERT assumes that teaching will return to normal once the area is rebuilt or safe to return to operations.

The pandemic demonstrated that faculty needed to continue to learn. Trust and Whalen (2020) noted that continuity of learning required "educators to be fluent users of technology, creative and collaborative problem solvers, and adaptive, socially aware experts throughout their careers" (p. 189). Faculty members also had to learn to teach and build relationships through

virtual platforms (Majsak et al., 2022). Faculty were asked to consider more relational teaching methods to ensure students could still thrive.

Researchers must create new ways to bridge the gap between emergency remote instruction and online learning. Researchers write regularly about ERT and teaching online and the knowledge, skills and competencies needed to be effective (Dam, 2021; Hodges et al., 2020; Ramlo, 2020; Trust & Whalen, 2020). We know that online learning and ERT were designed for different conditions. However, we do not know if the ERT and online teaching strategies were applied or are effective during turbulent periods. COVID-19 instruction is in the middle of the spectrum, using elements of both. This study contributes to identifying the strategies applied during that time and could be used to design further studies on broad applications.

Challenges to Working

In addition to challenges faced by students and instructors, faculty members faced additional challenges in working. While faculty job satisfaction is alluded to above, work conditions have changed dramatically since the onset of the global pandemic (Kniffin et al., 2021). “COVID-19 accelerated a bunch of trends that were already underway involving the migration of work to online or virtual environments” (Kniffin et al., 2020, p. 65). Like many employees, faculty members’ working locations, routines and physical environments changed during the pandemic, whether they worked remotely (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020). The physical boundaries of the classroom evaporated overnight, forcing regular routines and systems to change. In some cases, faculty members had to purchase the equipment and cover the costs associated with teaching, including power and the internet. Researchers and leaders must be mindful of the shift in higher education working conditions (Gannon, 2021; Harper, 2020).

Institutions had to be more flexible in their work expectations to allow faculty to cover home and childcare needs. Department chairs and administrators had to reduce nonessential meetings and projects to allow faculty to increase online teaching training and completion of other jobs (Majsak et al., 2022). In addition to reducing unnecessary tasks, they had to believe that flexibility was necessary. In some instances, institutions relaxed faculty workload policies and changed promotion and tenure to adjust to the heightened period of uncertainty.

The *Chronicle of Higher Education* (2020) wrote that faculty were frustrated, stressed, and experiencing increased anxiety. Social contingencies, events that happen in faculty members' lives and affect their work, are even higher during a public health crisis (Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995). During the turbulence, faculty faced the potential for more stress because of the changing nature of the pandemic. Some faculty left, adding more responsibilities to those who stayed, including managing coping strategies (Ramlo, 2020). In addition to life in the classroom changing, instructors' lives outside of the classroom changed.

Conclusion

This study closes the gap in the research on the evolving nature of faculty members' experiences with fostering positive faculty-student interactions during periods of turbulence. It addressed the gap by exploring faculty members' lived experiences teaching between March 2019 and May 2023 to better understand how they created positive learning environments despite the pandemic. This research adds to the literature on interaction, interaction during turbulent times, and interaction during hybrid or online teaching. It also adds to the evolving nature of faculty interaction and the growing area of faculty development in a turbulent environment.

The following section will detail the research process designed to explore the research questions and address the existing gaps in this area of study.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

In the previous chapter, I discussed the limitations of current research. First, while we have a broad and deep understanding of the student perspective, the research regarding faculty perspective is and has always been relatively limited. Second, we knew that interaction occurred during COVID-19, but needed to thoroughly explore what faculty and students experienced during the most restrictive time and throughout the pandemic restrictions. Last, we knew that emergency remote instruction and online learning were essential in understanding how to interact with students during a tumultuous time. However, emergency remote strategies are intended to address temporary disruptions to teaching, while online learning was designed for courses and academic programs intentionally designed for virtual spaces. Using virtual platforms during COVID-19 was a technical solution during a tumultuous period.

This dissertation study contributes to the literature on faculty-student interaction and teaching during disruptive periods. It explores the experiences of faculty members interacting with undergraduate students at U.S.-based institutions from the Spring 2019 to the Spring 2023 semesters. The chosen time frame aims to shed light on how instructors perceived teaching in higher education from a relatively stable period through to the end of a socially restrictive era. This comparison allows faculty members to reflect on classroom dynamics a year before the pandemic led to the cessation of in-person operations, initiating nearly three years of turbulence. The study concludes in May 2023, coinciding with the U.S. government's substantial relaxation of social distancing mandates, mask-wearing, and vaccination requirements. The focus on positivity is pivotal, as it relates significantly to student outcomes and faculty retention; maintaining faculty satisfaction and student engagement is crucial. Subsequent sections will

detail the selection of case studies as the chosen methodology and describe the data collection, management and analysis processes.

Case Study

Using case studies to explore the phenomena of teaching during turbulent times is helpful for various reasons. The structured process of case study methodology allows the researcher to hear the participants' perspectives on various areas and illustrate how current literature is connected to their findings. It allows for the surfacing of various historical, social, psychological and cultural elements. It allows for new perspectives. This was incredibly important in this study, as the work started during the height of the pandemic. It allows for the researcher to identify individual experiences.

First, case studies allow for a comprehensive study of a phenomenon, event or activity situated in everyday life. The centering questions allow the researcher to explore the topic broadly. The method was perfect for answering why and how questions and could surface the nuances experienced by participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Yin, 2014). This approach works for studying faculty experiences teaching across different academic disciplines and programs. It allows the participant to drive the information shared and create a broad narrative of their experience.

In addition to being broad and comprehensive, case studies can potentially show the diversity of experiences. Since they are ideal for complex issues, case studies allow for sharing findings that speak to the intersectionality of peoples' experiences. Meaning that a single case study can show the differences within incidents of people who, on the surface, are bounded by similar experiences. In this study, I looked at faculty teaching at the same institution in different academic disciplines and colleges. I found varying responses to decision-making at the

institution, existing and new technologies employed as a result of the pandemic, and strategies for engaging positively with students.

Case studies help the researcher place the findings in a specific context. This study looks at a large, high-research, urban institution in the northeast United States. Placing the data within that specific context can highlight how the larger scholarship applies to those contextual factors. Meaning, looking at the data from their teaching experience and considering the context of the institution is helpful when understanding the nuanced nature of the existing scholarship. Creswell and Guetterman (2019) note that context in case studies is essential to understanding the lived experiences of participants in social phenomena.

Case studies are not generalizable; instead, they are transferable, meaning that people can read the data and draw inferences that connect to or challenge their experience. This study serves as a valuable resource for faculty members and administrators to see how their experiences align. This could further lead to establishing a solid foundation for future researchers for elements within the case study. Other scholars could take note of the implications of the study and explore further.

Epistemology

This study employed a constructivist epistemological approach; knowledge is constructed through interaction with the world. This perspective is essential for studying faculty-student interaction as it unfolds amidst a global pandemic. Scholars write about constructivist paradigms in qualitative research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Stake, 1995; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009; Yin, 2014); in general, they agree that case study methodology can employ either a positivist or constructivist paradigm This study employs the latter.

In a constructivist framework, the narratives and interpretation of data from the participants help co-construct the knowledge of the phenomena being explored. This ensures that the participants' data is explored in conjunction with the world around them. There is no finite truth; however, there is a trust that the meaning-making happening in the study is that of the participant. This approach is ideal for faculty-student interaction because of the individual nature of teaching and the value of interacting with students, peers, and administration within a dynamic and complex environment: the classroom. My primary focus is sharing the data through my interpretation of the cases and allowing readers to make their meaning from learning about the experience (Stake, 1995).

Multiple Case Study Rationale

This multiple case study approach aimed to better understand undergraduate faculty members' experiences fostering positive interaction before and after a turbulent period of forced, massive, and quick change in higher education. It explored individual faculty members' experiences and documentation from various social locations within a single institution. The study is intrinsic. The bounded system is full-time faculty members that taught undergraduate courses in the United States starting before Fall 2019 and continuing through at least two years of the pandemic in March 2022. The faculty members are from various departments, schools, and colleges in the institution. They were chosen to ensure faculty diversity such as academic rank, years of teaching experience, race and gender. This helped to ensure that the topics of the literature review were covered and that the participants had similar experiences with university policies and leadership decisions and experienced issues occurring at the school and region. There are three clusters in the group: business, communication and education. The end date corresponds with the lowest levels of public health restrictions (decreased contact, mask

requirements, vaccine requirements). The data collection will include teacher philosophy, training and development opportunities, academic backgrounds, work experience, and demographics.

Multiple case studies allow the researcher to test themes across various areas in one study. For example, the race and gender of the faculty member could have played a factor in stress due to the racism experienced during COVID-19, which may have affected the ability to foster a positive environment. We also know that socioeconomic factors could have led to higher levels of stress, which could have affected the instructor's ability to foster positive interactions. Multiple case studies allow the researcher to draw conclusions across numerous cases. I argued that COVID-19 was different from other pandemics, forcing faculty to change their teaching approaches. This has merit because the pandemic changed higher education and will continue influencing how instructors interact with students. Higher education institutions will face more disruption, and the data from this study could provide background for both faculty and administrators to make better decisions. The case study could help others see the experiences and how they relate to each other and the literature.

Research Questions

My research questions were 1) What did faculty members experience between the Spring 2019 and Spring 2023 semesters, and 2) How, if at all, did they foster positive interactions with undergraduate students during the disruptive period?

Case Study Design

This study examined data from 12 faculty members who teach undergraduate courses at the university described below. The rationale for selecting this particular institution is detailed in a subsequent section. Each faculty member's interview transcript and supporting documentation

(CV, teaching philosophy, syllabi from before and after the start of the pandemic) were considered as individual cases before being analyzed collectively. This is presented in chapter four, along with the cross-case analysis. Chapter 5 discusses potential avenues for future research and how the findings might be applied in various settings to enhance teaching practices. While the data from these case studies are not universally generalizable, insights can be taken and applied to similar scenarios.

Case Selection

Before explaining the case study design, I will share the setting of the participants. The participants were selected as individual cases within a single institution. I explored their lived experiences, knowing that they were unified in teaching at the same institution and sometimes the same college within the institution but differed in their academic discipline and experience, teaching styles, work experiences, and personal lives. The goal was to look at diverse individuals' experiences and documentation to better understand how they navigated teaching during a widespread tumultuous time.

The institution's setting is as follows: First, the institution is situated in a large metropolitan area in the northeast United States. The school has close ties with local and state governments and is one of the largest employers in the region. The main campus is located in the city, and several satellite campuses are located within the region. Additionally, campuses are located outside that radius and cater to different student bodies and community organizations. Second, the institution has multiple schools and colleges within its structure, including undergraduate, graduate and professional programs. The institution caters to almost every type of student, meaning that academic programs are diverse and available to students regardless of physical location, year in school, and research interest. Third, being in a large city with a diverse

population means that the students, staff and administrators are generally more democratic than other peer institutions. The student body is known for being active and vocal in politics, race, economics and other areas of society; the diverse nature of the population means there are widespread and often conflicting attitudes, values and beliefs. Last, the school is an R1 in the Carnegie Research Classification system, the highest designation for an institution. As such, a strong emphasis on research and scholarship is embedded in the culture.

I was interested in this setting for a few reasons. First is due to the variety of academic programs offered at the undergraduate level, and the potential for a diverse faculty pool to provide data on the scholarship outlined in chapter 2. The faculty members in the study share commonalities, such as teaching experience prior to the pandemic and employment at the same institution. Overlapping demographics and academic backgrounds, including race, years of teaching experience, and academic discipline, are also noted. The diversity of sociodemographic and academic characteristics, including race, gender, ethnicity, and full-time instructors, is shown in the participant description. Second, there is an abundance of undergraduate programs available. The institution has over 100 academic programs. I focused on undergraduate programs because interactions are considered a high-impact practice within undergraduate education (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). While some participants taught graduate students, this study focused on undergraduates because they are different.

Additionally, undergraduate national data calculated the average experience; I was interested in more detail about individual experiences. The variation of faculty could help with the cross-case analysis and produce themes that can be useful in other academic programs. Last, it ensured the potential faculty pool included people who were employed at the same institution over the four years. The participants have all taught at least one year before Spring 2020 to

ensure they had classroom experience before COVID-19 emerged in March 2020. The participants taught at least one year before the onset and at least three years after the onset. These participants were chosen based on these shared traits and their potential to provide narratives that elucidate the depth and breadth of the institution's faculty expertise.

Participant Selection and Interviews

Creswell and Guetterman (2018) suggest identifying participants and sites and getting access to those individuals first. The goal was to interview between 10-15 faculty members or until saturation was reached to understand the participants' teaching experience. Recruitment continued until an academic, racial and gender-diverse group of participants completed interviews. This was essential for two reasons. First, the teaching practices around technology vary for some academic disciplines. For example, in this study, two participants shared that arts programs did not use LMS platforms before the pandemic. It was important to hear from participants about their experiences with interacting through various forms of technology both before and during the tumultuous time. Second, some of the workplace and personal environment literature focused on issues with marginalized populations. It was important to hear those perspectives to make meaning of the existing scholarship. For example, most of my scholarship focused on parents, which is one of my primary social identities. However, in this study, multiple participants shared their experiences caring for adults in their homes. Pushing for diverse representation ensured those areas were presented in the findings.

Conversely, I interviewed two studio-based arts instructors but failed to find STEM faculty who had to change their physical labs due to the pandemic. I heard about student experiences in STEM courses; they talked about innovative and effective strategies for teaching the elements of an in-person lab through computer—and internet-based platforms. Those stories

were crucial to understanding the depth and breadth of experiences at the institution. Despite outreach across the university, I failed to secure an interview with a participant from the physical sciences.

I recruited faculty using various methods. I emailed people in my network at the institution and asked them to share the email with their networks. I specifically included people from the teaching center to ensure that some of the members had participated in training. I asked them to share with others in their network who attended programs. I also built a faculty list by researching all of the schools and colleges within the institution. I organized them in an Excel spreadsheet and marked the dates I sent emails. I looked on LinkedIn for faculty members who fit the profile. I then added their information to the Excel spreadsheet. I marked all the dates I sent an email and their responses. While I primarily used online platforms, I also posted flyers in areas where faculty members would see them. This allowed me to confirm that I was reaching people outside of my network and outside of the teaching center.

The full email is included in the Appendix; however, here are the specifics shared in the email to recruit participants.

You are invited to participate because you could meet the participant requirements:

- Are a full-time faculty member at the institution in this study.
- Taught at least two three-credit undergraduate courses per semester.
- Taught multiple semesters between Spring 2019 and Spring 2023

If you decide to participate, you will be:

- invited to a 60-minute semi-structured interview about your experience teaching before and during the COVID-19 pandemic

- asked to share your CV, teaching philosophy and two syllabi – one from before Spring 2020 and one after Spring 2020
- asked to complete a short pre-interview questionnaire to gather demographic information and supporting documentation (items from the previous bullet)

Instantly, I received pushback that forced me to rethink my criteria. I adjusted my participant criteria with the IRB, and then after receiving approval, I sent the updated criteria via email with a note of the change:

Participants should:

- Be a full-time faculty member at the institution in this study.
- Have taught a minimum of four undergraduate courses total between Spring 2019 and Spring 202.
- Have taught multiple semesters between Spring 2019 and Spring 2023.

I recruited participants from the time my IRB was approved in May 2023 through October 2023, when I received the final survey from a participant. The total number of respondents was well within my range of 10-15. An early review of the academic and demographic data showed that the participants also ensured participant diversity.

Data Collection

Once researchers identify and gain access to participants and sites, they should consider what types of information are needed to answer the research questions. I structured the survey based on demographic and academic information needed to ensure participant diversity. The survey instrument is listed in Appendix D. The written documentation helped me confirm the survey information shared and identify strategies for positive interaction. The triangulation of data is central to ensuring trustworthiness in data collection (Creswell & Guetterman, 2018).

As mentioned above, I requested the following documentation in addition to a 60-minute semi-structured interview from all participants:

- their CV
- their teaching philosophy
- two syllabi—one from before Spring 2020 and one after Spring 2020
- a short pre-interview questionnaire to gather demographic information and supporting documentation (items from the previous bullet)

All but one participant supplied all of the documentation and participated in an interview. Three additional people, not included in the 12 that participated, agreed to interview but failed to return multiple email requests for interviews and survey completion.

I used an interview guide for the semi-structured interview questions. The interview guide is a script to ensure a consistent approach to interviewing participants for the study. It allows the researcher to focus on participants sharing their experiences in their own words without leading or feeling constricted (Kvale, 2011; Magnusson & Marecek, 2015). A well-planned guide can increase the researcher's accuracy and confidence in collecting data that supports the research question (Magnusson & Maracek, 2015).

Magnusson and Maracek (2015) shared valuable resources for crafting and asking questions. I used their work to craft an interview guide. First, I organized my questions by topic and then subtopics. The broad topics for the study were teaching experience in higher education, teaching and working during the pandemic, and fostering positive faculty-student interaction. I listed potential sub-questions but also knew that some might arise based on participant feedback. While the interviewer should stick to the guide, the participants will have opportunities to clarify a statement or correct a contradiction. Second, I maintained a conversational tone to ensure the

participant committed to sharing stories relevant to the case study questions. I added to the script a friendly greeting, a review of their rights as participants, and a thank you at the end. I followed each interview with a thank you email. I asked follow-up questions. Next, the questions should be interview questions and not research questions. Last, the questions should be brief and straightforward. The interview guide is in Appendix C.

I constructed the questions after reviewing the literature on faculty-student interaction, overall teaching strategies, online teaching and learning strategies, social disruptions and higher education work experiences. Kvale (2011) recommends that when preparing the script for an interview in the form of an interview guide, it may be useful to develop two lists of questions: one with the project's main research questions in academic language and another with the research questions translated into the vernacular as questions to be posed during the interview.

The semi-structured interviews allowed for follow-up questions to clarify understanding, recognize new information, and confirm brevity or ignorance (Magnusson & Maracek, 2015). For example, during one interview, a participant shared that she had no issues with parenting during the study. I followed up by asking her what led to the ease of child-rearing during the pandemic. I listened to their responses and included a comment confirming my understanding, which then led to the next question. I wanted to encourage the interviewee to feel comfortable describing their teaching philosophy, experiences, and strategies for fostering positive interactions without triggering any negative emotions.

I started each interview by introducing myself and the research study and confirming participation. I asked broad questions about their experience teaching before getting into what happened in their classrooms, workplaces and personal lives during the time. I included a set of questions about moments in their experiences that reflected the larger experience and what they

learned from the experience towards the end. I also asked if there was anything I did not ask that they wanted to include. The goal was to promote positive interaction, maintain a good conversation, and stimulate the participants to discuss their experiences (Creswell & Guetterman, 2018; Kvale, 2011).

Data Management

Data management is essential to the credibility and reliability of the research (Creswell & Guetterman, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The data were stored safely and responsibly; I was the only person with access to the files. I created a folder for each case study participant. I saved the questionnaire response individually, and placed it along with the documentation submitted and the video interview files by pseudonym in the folder. I stored IRB documentation, the interview guide with questions and interview notes in a separate folder. The information needed for the cross-case analysis was stored independently of the participant folders. The codebook, which includes the themes and codes, was stored in a primary document outside participant folders. The folders are all saved and protected under a password-protected Google Drive. A backup is stored on an unattached laptop hard drive. I was the person with access to the videos or materials. I was not sponsored, so the participant list will remain anonymous and confidential. The external coder did see the transcript and analysis of a single participant. Identifying information was removed before sharing.

Data Analysis

Analyzing qualitative data calls for examining the raw data, reducing it to themes through coding and recoding by hand or digital platforms, and then representing the data in figures, tables and narratives in a final research text (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Creswell and Guetterman (2018, p. 244) offer a general approach to coding.

1. Initially read through the text data
2. Divide the text into segments of information
3. Label the segments of information with codes
4. Reduce overlap and redundancy of codes
5. Collapse codes into themes

Codes are categories, patterns or themes that help organize the data for analysis and reporting. The analysis helps researchers answer the research questions. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), while the process of analyzing data is straightforward, the procedure itself is complex. The latter requires the researcher to oscillate between minor data points and abstract concepts from the literature, assumptions or emerging themes. Data analysis can occur at the same time as data collection.

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) have a similar process for data analysis as Creswell and Guetterman (2018). They suggest starting with the data "responsive to your research question" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 198). The units should reveal information relevant to the study and encourage the reader to think about that information as a building block. Units should also be the smallest piece of information that can stand by themselves, meaning they are "interpretable in the absence of any additional information other than a broad understanding of the context in which the inquiry is carried out" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 198). The coding process begins by assigning a shorthand description to the data to allow retrieval when analyzing or writing. The interview videos and transcripts, field notes, emails, rosters, schedules, and other items must be labeled for future reference.

In multiple case study analysis, the researcher writes up the analysis of each case before doing cross-case analysis (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2014). Each case is treated as a comprehensive case. The data, including teaching philosophies, training and development information, and interviews, was collected so I could learn as much as possible about the contextual variables that might have a bearing on the case. After individual analyses, I constructed a general explanation related to the broader themes of the study that aligned with information from most cases (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

In my process, I started by cleaning the data. I removed extra words or phrases, errant words, and any deidentifying comments from each transcript. I also crossed out information that the participants asked me not to include in the write-up. I then watched each video and edited the transcript to match the audio. There were quite a few changes based on the text file. That is, I used the transcription provided by Zoom, and made changes to the transcript as I listened to the audio. Once I was satisfied with the accuracy of the script, I employed two coding methods.

Saldana (2016) writes extensively about coding qualitative data. He shares multiple strategies for approaching coding through a systemic process, including first and second-cycle coding methods. Before I applied the process coding method, I "played with my data," as suggested by Creswell and Guetterman (2018). They recommended reading through and thinking about the information the participants shared, and making notes about anything that stands out for researchers. This aligned with my constructivist approach to research, as it allowed me to look for patterns and data points that I felt could tell a story about each participant's experience teaching. It was also helpful in that it confirmed my approach to coding the data.

Saldana (2016) writes that while good qualitative researchers have a plan before they collect data, it is important to be somewhat flexible, especially when using case study

methodology and looking for emerging codes and themes. In my proposal, I suggested an emergent coding approach. When I analyzed my data, I used descriptive coding with the documents submitted, including the pre-interview questionnaire, and process coding and simultaneous coding to review the interview transcripts. I struggled with using NVIVO coding as it closely matches a constructivist approach; however, I felt confident that both ordinary and unexpected themes would emerge as I read the transcripts (Cresswell & Guetterman, 2018). Ordinary themes are data that are expected in the analysis process; unexpected themes are surprising. With case studies, multiple perspectives of themes will be found by the researcher because of the nature of reviewing various pieces of data such as documentation, interview transcripts, and websites.

I marked the codes in the margins of the transcript digitally. I then went back and listed the codes in an Excel spreadsheet. I used text segment codes to allow for longer phrases and sentences (Saldana, 2016). This was helpful because I wanted to ensure that the codes came from the participant conversation but aligned with the scholarship reviewed in preparation for the study. This allowed me to create a codebook that groups the codes into ordinary and unexpected themes. I then marked each code with its source: literature review, interview, and documentation.

I then went back to the data and used pattern coding for my second cycle coding method (Saldana, 2016). This time, I took the ordinary and unexpected themes and put them into an outline and dropped the data points from the interview transcripts and documentation under the themes. I added my personal experiences and notes for the cross-case analysis under each theme. I used the content from the outline to write each case analysis.

During this process, I wrote memos based on my learnings and review of the data. The memos provide time to reflect on issues raised in the setting and how they relate to the larger

theoretical, methodological and substantive issues (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). They also served as a holding place for information or a reminder to look at other resources. For example, the term "faculty job satisfaction" surfaced when searching for workplace in higher education literature. I used the memo to document the research I found and added it to the literature review section after I analyzed the data. I created a separate document and folder for the memos.

I used computer-based software to analyze the data. I added a transcript to NVIVO. I used the codeword feature to generate a list of common words and themes. On the first pass, the keywords were general, such as education, teach or class. After several attempts and limiting the parameters, I failed to generate a codebook that was as rich and descriptive as the hand-generated list that emerged through descriptive and process coding. I did not use it to analyze the data further.

In addition to using Saldana (2016) for coding, I also used Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) suggestions. First, the authors offered a metaphor to help code the data. The study's purpose is the base, and the codes and themes are the branches. I used this metaphor as I thought about connecting themes to the data collected and the scholarship. It allows for room for themes that emerge from the discussion and those that come from the literature. Second, in looking at the transcripts, I viewed the data through the lens of my epistemological framework, constructivist, which focuses on how people construct knowledge or make meaning of their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Last, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) list four ways to know when you have reached saturation—should be exhaustive, mutually exclusive (fits into one category), sensitive (easily understandable) and conceptually congruent (same level of abstraction).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are critical to the research design. Policies, processes, guidelines, and codes of ethics crafted by the government, professional organizations and educational institutions help ensure that participants are not harmed, and researchers are held accountable during the research process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this study, various ethical considerations are explored, as well as identity strategies for reduction. First, case study researchers are prone to substantiate preconceived notions. They read the literature beforehand and want to make assumptions. While assumptions can be healthy, case study researchers should use a strict coding process that allows for emergent themes and look for multiple resources to check the data. I used written documentation to triangulate the information as best as possible. Second, going through IRB approval ensures that the process outlined is fair and protects the researcher and the participants. It ensures that researchers are aware of the ways in which their study design could be harmful. Third, studying peoples' lived experiences requires that they understand the purpose of the study, the procedures and potential risks. After getting IRB approval, I shared the appropriate documentation with the participants and asked them to sign and date it. After they returned the documentation, I sent the pre-interview questionnaire link and options for an interview time. I then reviewed the procedures during the interview and offered them an opportunity to leave at any point during the process.

This study's participants were all adults; no vulnerable populations were involved. All interviews were conducted respectfully. All participants understood that it was voluntary and that no compensation would be provided. The participant could leave at any point in the study if an emotional or personal experience became too much.

Conclusion

The methodology outlines the approach I used in addressing the research questions on faculty-student interaction during a social disruption. The selection of the multiple case study methodology involved using multiple cases to explore a problem in practice in higher education. This methodology, commonly used in education, provided an opportunity to examine complex issues as they unfold. This chapter explained how the method was used to better understand the faculty perspective of teaching during the pandemic.

The following chapter explains the findings. It answers the research questions on what faculty members at a single institution experienced during the pandemic, and how their teaching strategies fostered positive interactions during a tumultuous period.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

In my study, I explored the following questions: 1) What did faculty members experience while teaching between January 2019 and May 2023, and 2) How, if at all, did they foster positive interactions with undergraduate students during a disruptive period? I was interested in the experiences of faculty members teaching during a tumultuous period in U.S. higher education. More specifically, I was interested in their interactions with students and how they fostered positive interaction with students while managing a turbulent time.

I interviewed 12 individuals about their experiences teaching and the strategies they used to navigate the experience while maintaining or fostering a positive learning environment. Three additional people confirmed but did not complete the pre-interview questionnaire or schedule an individual Zoom meeting. The participants completed the pre-interview questionnaire first, which included questions about demographic and academic background. Participants answered the questions and submitted their documents for analysis. The interviews were about 45-70 minutes, with many remarking that the experience was therapeutic or necessary in processing their experiences. This chapter describes their understanding of their experiences and what methods they used to continue teaching during a tumultuous period.

In the following pages, I describe the participants, answer the research questions, explain the themes that emerged from the interviews and the supporting scholarship of those themes, and then end with a cross-case analysis. I conclude with the themes that multiple participants shared and themes that only one or two shared. To get these answers, I asked each interviewee between 6 and 8 questions about their experiences teaching before and after the start of COVID-19. By understanding their perspectives, I could better understand how they made decisions and if anything came up that could be useful in future research.

The setting of the institution is described in chapter three. It is important to note here that the institution is a large, R1 public university located in the northeastern part of the United States. The culture is generally democratic and diverse, meaning that students, faculty and staff are involved in various social justice issues and tend to attend because of the diverse and inclusive nature of the instruction. The institution has both undergraduate and graduate programs, including degrees in professions such as law, medicine and dentistry. The majority of the students travel to campus for classes, although there is a small residential population. In addition to teaching excellence, the university strives to be a hub for research and the local community.

Participant Information

I mentioned in Chapter 3 that I sought a diverse pool of participants. The participants are diverse according to academic and personal demographics. In the pool, six people identify as men and six people identify as women. No participants were identified outside of those two gender identifications, although multiple classifications were offered in the pre-interview questionnaire (available in Appendix D). The participants represented three races and ethnicities. The participant pool includes four Black people, seven White people, and one person who identifies as Asian/Pacific Islander. This is essential because the literature shows varying student reactions to faculty members based on race, ethnicity and gender. The gender question is essential as the literature points to women having more responsibilities in the workplace (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2021); asking this question helped me understand the experiences of women who could have been balancing teaching, working and providing care while navigating COVID. Understanding the backgrounds of the participants can help us better

understand their perspectives and whether they align with research on gender and race in teaching.

A subset of questions centered on academic title, discipline and years of teaching experience. Two participants were full professors, five were associate professors, and five were assistant professors. Two were arts instructors, and one was a liberal arts professor. Business, communication and education had at least three professors each. The years of experience varied from seven to 40 years, with one person opting for not applicable. Nine of the 12 professors reported having prior online teaching experience, education or training before the pandemic started in March 2020. Three professors reported teaching undergraduate courses; nine faculty in this study taught undergraduate and graduate courses.

The pre-interview questionnaire also asked about work experience prior to teaching to see if there was any effect on the experiences of the pandemic. The study did not surface anything specific.

Research Question Themes and Codes

During the data analysis process, I used descriptive and process coding to surface codes and themes that could address the research questions. In scanning and highlighting text that corresponded to the literature or could address the research question, I created a list of codes. The first research question sought to understand faculty members' teaching experiences before and during the global pandemic. The second research question explored how faculty members selected and applied strategies to foster a positive learning environment. The codes that could address those questions were then organized into broader themes from related scholarship or emerged from reviewing the submitted documents and the interview transcripts. See Table 4.1 for the list of themes and codes.

Table 4.1

Themes and Codes from literature, interviews and documents

Theme	Codes
Change	Radical Change Societal Change Institutional Change Department Change Individual Change Course Changes Innovation Change
Faculty Development	Online Teaching Training Teaching Communities (Online, Institutional) Informal Opportunities For Learning/Self-Taught
Home/Personal Life	Children/Parenting Parents Relatives
Humanistic Approach	Human Humanizing
Interaction/Engagement	Interaction Engagement Relationships
Leadership	Institutional Leadership College Leadership Department Leadership Classroom Leadership
Social, Racial, Political	Criminal Justice System Race And Gender Political Tension Racial Tension Civil Unrest Police/Police Brutality
Teaching	Confidence Course Learning Outcomes Philosophy Approaches Strategies

Technology	Course Integration Faculty Beliefs/Approaches/Philosophy Online Tools (Zoom, Canvas, Google, Adobe, And Microsoft Apps)

Individual Cases

The following sections are the individual cases. Each section explains the participant's experience teaching during the study period and any data that can address the research questions. Participants selected pseudonyms to be used in place of their names.

Case #1 Amy

Introduction: Teaching Before the Pandemic

Amy described her experience teaching courses in the arts during the pandemic. She taught face-to-face and online courses and went through online education training before the pandemic started. She designed the courses she taught in her program. She also used a learning management system, which was not common practice in her school.

Teaching During the Height of the Restrictive Period

Spring 2020: Mid-semester Transition to Virtual Learning. When Amy transitioned her courses online in response to the school's closure of in-person operations, she shared that it was easy for her to switch from a studio-based, face-to-face course to a synchronous virtual classroom. First, she understood how the video conference software provided by the university worked because of her prior teaching and work experience. She was also comfortable with the LMS platform as she had content to post online for her students. She did not change topics, assignments, or learning outcomes in the transition. Since Amy had taught her courses online before the pandemic, she was familiar with course technology, trained in best practices for online

learning, and had course materials, such as videos, to post online in place of typical classroom activities like lectures.

> Moving my class online was easy. I'm a very organized person, and I already had my course online. I incorporated some new online tools, such as [ClassIn Mirror]. Because of my experience, my class transitions were not that bad.

Only one course proved challenging to move online. The course focused on promoting in-person events and connecting students with potential employers. Students learned to design materials and produce in-person events. This course also served as a bridge between the classroom and industry; employers would attend the program to provide students with feedback on their materials. In transitioning the course online, she had to navigate the logistics and alter perceptions about the course's viability in a virtual format. She researched how to adapt the course based on its unique characteristics. Additionally, she met both individually and with the larger department to address the myth and skepticism regarding the event's feasibility online.

Although it was initially hard to envision transitioning effectively online, there were benefits to making the move. The program increased its promotion of graduating students through social media. Before the pandemic, neither the department nor the course instructor utilized social media to showcase student work in that course. When searching for alternatives to the in-person course, she began posting content on social media to generate conversations. This allowed students, graduates, and employers to view the students' work. They continued using the platform even after returning to in-person instruction.

Generally, she had already appreciated or engaged with technology before the pandemic. She shared the importance of connecting with the industry; she kept an active roster of clients to ensure she understood and could teach the concepts and software necessary in her program. "As a teacher in a field in which most students head into professional practice, it is critically

important for me to retain professional clients and experience first-hand how the industry continues to evolve." In reviewing her CV, she listed her experience teaching and creating courses in various learning delivery modes. During the pandemic, she questioned how the department could revisit or discuss what now seemed like outdated teaching and industry beliefs. This was common practice for instructors: evaluating technology to keep up with the changing industry applications of electronic equipment and software. For example, her industry had a strong belief in print mediums, which changed when people lost access to printers and the need for printed items diminished. With no one meeting in person, the demand for physical items waned.

Fall 2020: First Semester with Mixture of Virtual Learning and Restrictive In-Person Operations. Amy's department was entirely online for the following academic year, beginning in Fall 2020. She petitioned the college to remain teaching online despite missing face-to-face courses and interactions with her peers. She saw the value in face-to-face encounters, but she felt she could safely and effectively teach online. She shared that she feels all online courses should be synchronous, not asynchronous. Amy felt that asynchronous courses rob faculty of the benefits of engaging and building relationships with students.

Teaching Takeaways: Reflecting on the Entire Period

Teaching Philosophy. Amy's approach to teaching balances the student experience with that of industry expectations. She centers herself between the classroom and the industry, ensuring that she works with clients to provide the most updated and relevant information to students. She wrote about understanding the importance of how students learn and that she regularly researches best practices for teaching to employ in the classroom. In addition to

maintaining an active client roster, she interviews industry professionals about their experiences to share in the classroom.

College Student Attitudes, Beliefs and Values. Throughout the interview, Amy shared her experiences teaching students during the restrictive period. She emphasizes the importance of students researching their faculty and taking their course selection seriously, given the significant investment in their education. Amy shared her concerns about asynchronous learning: "When I consider asynchronous courses, and I hear about the financial benefits, like accommodating more students to increase revenue, it seems to diminish the educational value. It's about more than just making money; it's about the educational experience." She recognized that student expectations were changing and shared this sentiment with her students.

Faculty Satisfaction with Online Learning. One of the most essential parts of teaching online for faculty members is that they believe that teaching can be done effectively through virtual platforms. Amy regularly discussed integrating software and technology into her courses. This practice is embedded in her teaching philosophy, as seen in training sessions she has attended or student presentations that she has mentored. Before the pandemic, she was one of the first people in her department to teach online and use the learning management system. In her school, the LMS platform was not widely used by instructors. Because she had used it before, she ended up training other faculty members in her school on how to use it to teach the arts.

Strategies for Fostering Positive Learning Environments

Faculty-Student Interaction. Amy is deeply passionate about teaching, primarily due to the connections she establishes with her students. She spoke about it in her interview and wrote about it in her teaching philosophy. She believes that the essence of teaching lies in interacting with students, which is why she feels that asynchronous courses lack the crucial element of

personal engagement. “I think my love for teaching stems from the connections I make,” Amy explained. “I have dabbled in a few asynchronous courses, not teaching, but as a student. The absence of interaction with other students and faculty made me question their value.”

Classroom Management. Amy used two strategies to foster a positive learning environment for her students. Firstly, she organized informal virtual sessions to provide opportunities for casual interactions outside of the classroom. During the summer after the Spring 2020 semester, she offered informal weekly Town Hall meetings to students for continued support in navigating the changes in the world. Secondly, after returning to face-to-face instruction, Amy led her classes on walks outside to ensure the physical and mental well-being of her students. Recognizing the importance of taking breaks during lengthy classes, she would pause the class and encourage everyone to take a walk, weather permitting. While walking, she would interact with different groups of students and get to know them better. She also reminded them that their portfolio classes were the most intense in the program and that it was perfectly okay to take a break.

Documentation Overview. Amy provided an overview of her courses in both syllabi that encouraged students to get excited about the course. She started with a positive statement about how the classes would help them in their industry. She included the information about COVID-19 that the institution provided on the first page of her syllabus to ensure that students knew what the expectations were during that time. She explained underneath the institution-required information the change in expectations of the art school. Again, this information is listed early in the syllabus to ensure that students are aware of the change in policies. In addition to the course syllabi, she shared her CV and teaching philosophy, which helped her understand the perspectives shared during the interview.

Outside of the Classroom: The Workplace. Amy's workplace presented several challenges. She noted that the department had a positive culture before the pandemic, with peers who respected each other and generally collaborated well. However, the absence of face-to-face interactions "allowed people to misbehave." While she did not provide specifics, she mentioned that the stress and frustration of navigating complex issues during the pandemic might have led to colleagues making inappropriate comments. Additionally, she observed that the college and university leadership faced difficulties with timely communication and transparency.

Since she had experience with online course design and LMS platform use in arts courses, she assisted other faculty members during the initial transition to online teaching.

> When we moved online, I was quickly asked to support some other faculty members and departments that had not taught online. I immediately went into emergency mode, constantly on Zoom, training people to conduct online courses.

This assistance was crucial because many of her peers were accustomed to face-to-face studio courses. She had to educate them on the specifics—how to set up a course on a learning platform, how to use Zoom, and how to teach a class using more technology—during a contentious time. This means they were dealing with their own personal and professional challenges. Many of her peers found it difficult as they had no experience with teaching technology. It is important to note that Amy learned new software related to her field.

Amy mentioned several times that she was uncertain whether her challenges stemmed from COVID-19 or broader social phenomena such as racial or political issues.

> When I approached this interview, I was reflecting on the summer of 2020, pondering the civic unrest. If COVID-19 hadn't occurred, what would the impact have been? It's something we'll never truly know. However, I believe the events were more impactful because we were all glued to our screens, witnessing what was happening. We all saw George Floyd's incident, capturing everyone's attention. There were no distractions, as everything was unfolding right before us. I often think about how these events influenced my teaching. I'm curious whether the changes were due to COVID-19 or the events of that summer. It's a topic that merits significant study.

Off-Campus and At-Home Experiences

Outside of teaching and work, Amy cared for a sick partner. They finished chemotherapy a week before the institution went online. She had already planned to work remotely to protect her partner, who was particularly vulnerable due to a weakened immune system. Coincidentally, she was set to begin her remote work just as the leaders ceased in-person activities due to pandemic restrictions. This timing was fortuitous, alleviating concerns about exposing her partner to any health risks while he recuperated. Her department supported her decision to transition her classes online ahead of the university-wide shutdown.

Conclusion

Amy, who had a background in teaching both face-to-face and online arts courses, found transitioning her courses online during the pandemic relatively straightforward due to her prior experience and training in online education. She was familiar with many of the instructional tools offered at the time, including the learning management platform and videoconference software, but this was uncommon in her program. In shifting to a virtual format, she maintained the same topics, assignments, and learning outcomes for almost all of her courses, allowing for continuity for her students in the classroom. One particular course posed a challenge initially as it was centered on an in-person event. The event brought together students, alumni, and industry professionals and presented the challenge of adapting to an online environment. Amy had to rethink and restructure this course to maintain its objectives and benefits in a virtual setting, utilizing social media to showcase student work and maintain industry engagement.

In addition to her instructional duties, Amy played a pivotal role in assisting her colleagues with the transition to online teaching, sharing her expertise and providing training on various digital platforms. Despite the overall successful shift to remote education, she faced

challenges within her department's dynamics and communication during the pandemic. Personal circumstances also intersected with her professional life, as she cared for her partner, who was recovering from chemotherapy, aligning with the timing of the transition to online work. Through these experiences, Amy reflected on the broader impacts of the pandemic and societal events on her teaching and personal life, underscoring the intertwined nature of these challenges.

Case #2 Arete

Introduction: Teaching Before the Pandemic

Arete brings over 30 years of teaching experience to his faculty role in communication. He has a versatile background in creating courses for himself and others, as well as teaching courses online and in person. His courses range in format from discussion-based sessions to large lectures and online to in-person classes for both undergraduate and graduate levels. He started teaching immediately after graduating from his program. In addition to teaching, he consults on projects with local businesses. While Arete is certified in online instruction and has developed and taught courses online, his experience is limited to asynchronous teaching; synchronous online instruction was a new experience for him during the pandemic. He participated in online teaching training programs mandated by the department before the onset of the pandemic forced changes in the curriculum.

Teaching During the Height of the Restrictive Period

Spring 2020: Mid-semester Transition to Virtual Learning. Aware of the looming threat of COVID-19 early on, Arete engaged in discussions with his department chair, mentally preparing for the inevitable shift to remote instruction. He shared that he followed the news pretty closely and brought it up with his colleagues once it looked like it might affect his institution. He remained calm amidst the chaos but shared concerns similar to those of others in

the study regarding personal health and colleagues' abilities to transition rather than the logistical challenges of virtual instruction in his courses.

Arete's experience teaching and teaching online helped to ease the transition. He had materials prepared from previous online courses, so he was able to organize his LMS platform based on the changes. "If I had not been trained to teach asynchronously and hadn't prepped all of the materials and structured my LMS for that, it would have been disastrous for me." The quote below helps to explain his perspective:

> I don't know if [asynchronous teaching] just played into my personality type, but learning how to do an asynchronous class is very good preparation for any type of class, honestly. Also, I did not expect to have any particular complaints about what we were providing them with in those last few weeks of the semester. I know lots of people had problems; I heard it from students, I heard it from other instructors. I heard it from the administration. I heard it from my parents. I looked at Facebook pages. Lots of people had very bad experiences. Our students had a fine experience.

He was fortunate that he had years of both teaching experience and online teaching experience in addition to resources for his courses. Having recorded lectures and online activities for students already created made it so that he just had to post the materials based on the course schedule. Since he moved to asynchronous classes, he did not have to learn or teach his students how to use Zoom. Additionally, he did not have to teach on camera during live class sessions like other faculty during the Spring 2020 semester. Arete eventually returned to teaching in person in the Fall 2020 semester.

Teaching Takeaways: Reflecting on the Entire Period

College Student Attitudes, Beliefs and Values. Towards the end of the pandemic, Arete noticed changes in his students over the four years beginning in 2019. He eventually moved back to a physical classroom during the restrictive period. He shared that he was not getting the required participation needed to make it functional, which was a new experience for him. That,

combined with concerns over public health and general frustration, made it more challenging to teach towards the end.

Strategies for Fostering Positive Learning Environments

Faculty-Student Interaction. During the interview, Arete discussed the challenges he faced during the pandemic. He shared that he encountered more difficulties as time went on than during the initial transition. His biggest challenge while teaching online was having to teach in front of a screen for hours on end each day. His biggest challenge when he returned to teaching in person was teaching while wearing a mask. It was tough for him to talk to and understand his students while wearing a mask, as required by the institution. However, the experience also gave Arete a newfound appreciation for face-to-face interactions. He realized the value of personal encounters in the learning process. Even with the constraints imposed by the pandemic, he was committed to delivering quality education by leveraging various engagement strategies, such as breakout rooms and comprehensive online course portals.

Classroom Management. Arete saw himself as the leader of his classroom and believed he was responsible for its operations. In the course syllabi shared for review, I noticed that he taught topics about American society. He shared in his interviews that, for the most part, issues of race, gender, and politics did not prominently feature in his experience. He was more concerned about public health and the efficacy of his courses in meeting student needs. He shared his concerns with his peers, saying that everyone was clueless about what was going to happen in real life. This level of uncertainty was alarming for all; however, he did not let it show in his classes. He did share information on public health in the course syllabus after the pandemic started.

Documentation Overview

Arete's mindset and teaching philosophy align with his course syllabus. He shared in the interview that he is "a linear thinker, a procedural person." His organization and approach to work showed in how he was able to create a checklist for the transition. He believes that students need structure, flexibility and engagement. He continued, "Everything has to get to the [LMS]; it has to be explained." In his courses, he clearly outlines the course overview, learning objectives, and assignments. He also shares at the beginning the best methods for and expectations when communicating with him. For example, he shares that the two best methods for asking questions outside of office hours are through Canvas message or email. In reviewing his teaching philosophy, you can see the genesis of his desire to teach, "I wanted to change students' lives like [teaching mentor] changed mine." His approach can work regardless of the class type, class size or degree program.

Outside of the Classroom: The Workplace

Arete shared two beliefs about his workplace. The first was that he was always motivated to do his job. He loves teaching, as shown by his decades-long career, mentioning it in the first line of his teaching philosophy and sharing that sentiment in his interview. The second is that he could see it was challenging for his peers to navigate teaching during the pandemic. As part of his job, he created course materials for other instructors to use during the pandemic. Instructors could take the materials, make changes to their courses, and post online. He was an organized and experienced professional, and found it hard to imagine how others were dealing with it despite their experience and professionalism.

Off-Campus and At-Home Experiences

Arete's stable home life provided him with a supportive backdrop, allowing him to balance his love for teaching with his family commitments. He is a parent but did not share any challenges he faced in raising his children during the pandemic.

Conclusion

Arete's teaching philosophy, training and experience, both online and in-person, helped him through the onset of the pandemic. First, his approach to teaching is one of commitment, structure, flexibility and engagement. He seeks to ensure that students meet or exceed the learning outcomes and have a good experience in his courses. To that end, organization and interaction are essential to him regardless of the learning delivery mode of the course. In reviewing his course syllabi, he outlines course assignments and expectations for engagement in the class. His course design is meticulous, detailing the overview, learning objectives, and assignments alongside his preferred communication methods, such as Canvas messages or email. Additionally, he ensures course materials and instructors are clear and accessible on the LMS. This approach served him well in leading and teaching his classes before and during the pandemic.

Arete leaned into this philosophy and his strengths as a faculty member during the pandemic. The initial shift online was smooth. However, he encountered challenges towards the end of the pandemic when he returned to in-person instruction. He described a shift in students' expectations and attitudes. However, he was able to survive the restrictive period with minimal disruption. He enjoyed asynchronous courses and found a way to manage the disruption throughout this study. His strategies during the pandemic mirrored those used in his face-to-face courses. He experienced minimal challenges in his personal life.

Case #3 Eoin

Introduction: Teaching Before the Pandemic

Eoin is an education professor who had some teaching experience before the Spring of 2019. He learned how to teach while in the adjunct role and then even more during the transition online during the pandemic. “It was a baptism by fire.” He found his way of teaching in a few ways. He found an older colleague to help him with his teaching skills. His mentor taught him how to teach; he advised him to “give them something to do with the data.” Despite having a graduate degree, he had no online training or emergency remote training before COVID-19.

Eoin’s approach to teaching is active and conversational. He shared that he enjoys being active and engaging in class. He focuses on delivering information and encouraging students to think critically about the content. During the interview, he shared a few instances where he showed grace but mainly focused on making sure he met the course learning objectives during tumultuous times. “I think I’ve had to figure out how to give students, especially in Gen Z, a lot of grace because [of the things they share that cause them anxiety.]”

Teaching During the Height of the Restrictive Period

Spring 2020: Mid-semester Transition to Virtual Learning. Eoin was told to move his courses to asynchronous. He immediately had to evaluate the elements of his course that were already online and what part of his courses needed to be changed because of the new learning delivery method. He did not teach lab courses, so he did not have to worry about changing components that were hard to replicate digitally. His courses were mostly in-person and discussion-based.

He was critical of his teaching online, and once he returned to campus. Specifically, he shared his thoughts on teaching during the restrictive period of the pandemic.

> It was terrible. I didn't know what was happening. Nobody knew what was happening. I think I did a really bad job once the pandemic hit, giving students grace, and I think a lot of that came from me just being so kind of freaked out by it. I think a lot of us were freaked out by it just because we didn't have any control over what was happening. So, the pandemic hits, we kind of stop working, and the students still have to do school. And I'm still trying to get that same classroom energy online, asynchronous. I'm trying my best to use my same classroom pedagogy, and just like it just didn't work entirely. It was an absolute disaster.

Eoin shared that his students were worried and upset. They were angry with the institution and sometimes took it out in his class. Students refused to answer discussion board prompts correctly. Because of the social justice issues happening in the city where the institution was located and the country, students would often show up to class upset with the institution, things happening in the news and occasionally with each other. Eoin shared that some heated discussions happened in class; he adjusted the course activities to reign the students back in and prevent future blow-ups from happening. He shared that he had to talk to students separately after they offended another student or instructor with their comments. The students were confused, angry and resistant for a while. He said:

> So, the first thing I remember is this student who I was giving a discussion board in class, the classes were asynchronous, and instead of it responding to the Discussion Board. This person wrote 500 words about how awful the college was. How they shouldn't have had to pay for the course, and I'm just like, what am I supposed to do? I'm just the teacher here. I don't set tuition rates. I have no control over anything.

Teaching Takeaways: Reflecting on the Entire Period

Eoin was thrilled to return to campus. He enjoyed returning to face-to-face classes, the familiar connection to students in the classroom, and his confidence in his abilities to teach in the classroom.

Faculty Satisfaction with Online Learning. His lack of online teaching training and experience, combined with his engaging face-to-face courses, could lead to faculty dissatisfaction. Faculty satisfaction is a primary factor in quality online education. If faculty

members believe that the online learning platform is best for students, then they will deliver a quality experience. In this case, Eoin felt the delivery was best compared to in-person because of the restrictions; however, he was told to teach asynchronously instead of assessing what was best for his course. Broad assignments of learning delivery modes discount the faculty member's involvement in decision-making about their course.

Strategies for Fostering Positive Learning Environments

In general, Eoin felt he did a poor job teaching online from the Spring of 2020 through his return to in-person teaching in the Fall of 2021. He used various strategies to attempt to connect with students and ensure they demonstrated the learning outcomes. He used his in-person course approach to online teaching. He tried to keep everything the same. He kept his grading consistent with before during the first semester. "I was thinking about it recently, in one of my classes, I still graded stuff hard. I thought about it after and asked myself why. I should have been more understanding. 'You're done. You passed. You're good.' That's how I wish I would have done it, in retrospect."

Faculty-Student Interaction/Classroom Management. Eoin appreciated face-to-face courses and was excited to return to campus. He felt his teaching approach was better in person and that the interaction would improve once he was back inside the physical classroom. Part of the challenges that arose during his time online centered around race, politics and social justice issues; they showed up following local, regional and national events. He dealt with local and national instances of police brutality or race-based incidents.

> So not only are we in the pandemic, but we have the George Floyd incident on top of that. It made every single person I know absolutely frustrated. It was difficult for me and my students. When you put it all together, I'm trying to have conversations about developmental psychology and race, and my students, especially my students of color are all expressing their frustration.

Some of his students had experienced racial injustice throughout their lives, while others were feeling the impact for the first time. For the first time, Eoin was managing student frustrations at this level.

> I had a student who would say some insensitive things, essentially microaggressions. I had to meet with the student after class because my students of color were growing visibly frustrated and angry with the student's remarks. I met with the student individually to try to talk through the impact her words had on the class.

Another strategy he used was that when discussions grew challenging, he changed the communication method in the class. For example, he shared:

> I'm trying to balance this situation, trying to prevent students from yelling at each other while also dealing with my personal life. At some point during the semester, I realized we couldn't have discussions anymore, so I gave them activities for the remainder of the time. It was really hard. I thought about where the students were coming from, all of the students, and especially the students of color, and how they were perceiving everything. As their White instructor trying to tell them these things, and clearly, I was not doing a good job. I wasn't the voice that people needed to hear. So, it just compounded and compounded and compounded.

Eoin shared that it was challenging to manage conversations like this in addition to everything else. His perception/belief is that he got worse. He did make changes, but he is unsure if he positively interacted with students.

Documentation Overview

Eoin's teaching philosophy highlights his growth as an instructor. He quickly learned that he had to apply the principles and practices he learned through working, volunteering and being involved in sports. He shared that he regularly encourages students to set goals, critically analyze the information presented, and be respectful of the student diversity in the classroom.

Those philosophies are seen in his course syllabi. He has a detailed course description and a list of course objectives. His assignments offer various opportunities for students to present their work in class. He lists required and recommended resources to support multiple

perspectives. He also includes a note about the potential for controversial conversations in his class and the expectations that discussion should be authentic but respectful of the identities in the classroom.

Outside the Classroom: Workplace and Personal Life

In this study, all interviewees were asked about how they experienced their workplace. Eoin was incredibly productive during the height of the pandemic. He eliminated his commute for the first part of the restrictive time and then was in the office alone once he returned to campus teaching. Additionally, department meetings were pretty straightforward and uneventful.

> I wrote a ton during the pandemic. I paid attention to nothing in the department because it was just like I don't have the bandwidth right now to even consider what is happening in this department because everything is just a mess.

Eoin added that informal interactions with colleagues were reduced from March 2020 to the end of the time, May 2023. He shared that he would see his colleagues at department meetings and college or university events online and in person. He shared that his peers stopped coming to work in the office. He rarely sees people now.

In addition to a new teaching role, Eoin juggled his family life during that time. For the first part, he was at home with his partner, also a teacher, and a small child. "I'm trying to figure out how to care for a child and how to work. Teaching is my job. I enjoy doing it, and I want to be good at what I do because it's important to me."

Eventually, his child went back to daycare, and his partner returned to teaching. The fathers in this study expressed more challenges balancing teaching and parenting than the mothers in this study. When asked about why he stayed teaching despite the challenges, he shared that he loved teaching and had a family to support. He shared:

> I've always liked this job, even if people on Twitter and people criticize it. My autonomy in this job is fantastic. I can sit, go for a walk, and write; nobody puts rules or restrictions

> on me. I have to grade and do these things. I like teaching and working with students, having conversations with them, and learning from them. That's why I persist; it's more of a psychological thing. I don't quit things easily; I push through. I wouldn't say, "No, this is too hard. I'm done." It's like, "Yeah, this sucks, but we've got to keep going."

Leadership at All Levels: Department, College, Institution

While Eoin's experience in the department was fine for the most part, his experience with college and university leadership was challenging. The college and university leadership changed during this time. Additionally, the leadership struggled to make decisions about the pandemic and the higher education challenges being exacerbated by the pandemic. In general, the faculty were at odds with the school and institution leaders and started speaking out about their frustrations. It appeared as if the decisions were rushed, poorly communicated and lacked transparency. "We didn't need any of it. We didn't need that and the world burning down."

One of the decisions college leadership made was to have administrators in every course to monitor faculty activity at the start of the semester. The college told instructors to switch to asynchronous rather than synchronous. The faculty pushed back on this because they felt it was unnecessary and intrusive.

> So, there was a lot of administrative oversight where they would jump in. The admin was put into all of our canvas classes like they were essentially watching what we did. People were freaked out by that, too. I have academic freedom; it doesn't make sense why you are in my class. It's a problem the college has had over the last few years. It destroys trust. Doing this during the pandemic exacerbated that. I was still new so I'm trying to roll with the punches.

Conclusion

Eoin shared a few things that were unique to his case. First, he shared that the interview gave him an opportunity to reflect on his experience. "It was hard and tough; I hadn't reflected on it before the conversation. I guess I didn't realize the emotional impact it had on me during that time. It had a lot of impact, and I didn't cope well with it at all." Second, he shared that he

used his sports background to get him through teaching. That was unique to this case. Most people rely on training, prior experience, and peers to get through the challenges. He leaned on his coaching and participation in sports. He leaned on his sports participation and coaching experience. He shared that he built resilience and learned how to guide others through his involvement in sports. He used sports to organize his teaching. He also found a mentor in a colleague in his college.

Case #4 Heidi

Introduction: Teaching Before the Pandemic

Heidi has decades of experience teaching business courses and working for organizations. She has taught online, face-to-face and hybrid courses. She pursued her dissertation while teaching and raising a family. Her career includes adjunct, visiting and professor roles at multiple institutions. Her love of teaching and her colleagues fueled her experience during the pandemic.

Heidi has the most online teaching experience of anyone in this study. In the 1990s, she taught a distance learning course for another institution. She was with a cohort of students in one state while another cohort was taking the course synchronously in another state. She also had her newborn child with her in class while she was instructing. She shared that teaching right after giving birth was hard for her.

Heidi moved to in-person teaching when she joined the institution in this study. She started teaching online courses when the business school offered financial support for instructors to design online courses. She shared that she moved into the online space because:

> Maybe three years after I got there, [the school] started investing heavily in money and people. I said, “No, thank you, I’m doing great. I’ve got this classroom. I know what I’m doing. I can run that room.” However, some part of me thought maybe I should try this, not because I thought there was going to be a major pandemic, but because I thought is it really my way to shy away from things that I don’t know if I can do? This is the perfect opportunity to stretch a little and try. I made some serious rookie mistakes. But by the

> start of COVID, I was 100% [comfortable] teaching online classes. [The school] had also switched platforms. They had gone from a clunky platform to a better one than I had. Eventually, I'd taken so much training that I'd earned an online certificate. I knew how to make the learning management platforms dovetail with online delivery.

Heidi was comfortable with online delivery and the learning management systems to the point where she supported other faculty during the pandemic. She disrupts a myth about instructors who have taught for a long time or are over the age of 50 and do not want to integrate technology in their teaching practice. Heidi is in her 50s but was an early adopter of a new learning management system and online courses within the newer online teaching initiative.

Teaching During the Height of the Restrictive Period

Spring 2020: Mid-semester Transition to Virtual Learning. Entering the pandemic, Heidi had plenty of experience teaching through various learning delivery methods. She also had material for her courses, something that others noted was essential in easing the transition. Last, she had experience with the LMS platform; the institution switched to a new platform shortly before the pandemic. She shared her mindset heading into the shutdown:

> So, when COVID hit, professionally, I was in the best shape. Not only was I trained, but I had course material developed and in online format. So, I didn't have to do much to transition from my in-person classes to online. It was not a big deal. It took me probably a whole day of just converting assignments and making everything look the way I wanted. I also let my students know about my expectations.

Because of her preparedness, she immediately turned to her peers to support them as they transitioned online. Because of the general appreciation and comradery of the department, she felt compelled to help anyone who was nervous or struggling and needed help. She commented:

> But my colleagues did not have an easy transition. What was great is that I was able to pay [the school] back for all the money [they invested into online course development and training] by being there for my colleagues. Anybody who had a question or was nervous about the first class, I would join them on Zoom as a tech. I would join as anything because they usually needed support. They only needed that hand-holding for a little bit, you know, we all did. Somebody did it for me back in the day. So, I was in a great position when COVID started.

Personally, Heidi's husband was sick right before COVID. He was hospitalized in December 2019 after quickly falling ill. She organized her schedule to support him at the hospital and then when he returned to their home. She planned on using her FMLA leave if she had to be in person. She shared:

> I couldn't get anybody that was safe to stay with him because of COVID. I couldn't leave him alone. So, I was screwed, and the best thing that ever happened to me at that point was that they shut down in person because I could do everything I needed to do online.

Banning in-person operations solved "a myriad of problems." She felt bad because she had a large teaching load and few faculty who could teach her courses in her absence. Her courses are required for students in her academic program, and she felt like she would be letting people down.

Consequently, Heidi did not leave and remained both teaching and helping her students and others through the transition. In the interview, she said the experience was seamless for the students. She focused on articulating expectations. She said she did not change the assignments, which were necessary for getting through the rest of the semester. She did alter one thing: if the assignments were due in person, such as a presentation, then it would be given over Zoom. Otherwise, papers will be submitted through the LMS platform. She recognized that the rest of her students' classes were making significant changes; she maintained as much stability as possible.

Fall 2020: First Semester with Mixture of Virtual Learning and Restrictive In-Person Operations. Heidi remained online for as long as possible. She was adjusted to teaching online and could support her husband in case any follow-up issues arose. When she returned to campus, she had to lecture with a mask on. She agreed with others in this study that it was hard

to teach wearing a face mask. “I had a hard time [being heard], and I’m pretty loud. I had microphones and giant slides, and it still was tough.”

Teaching Takeaways: Reflecting on the Entire Period

Heidi was confident in her teaching abilities because of her training and experience. Subsequently, part of her confidence and success in transitioning was due to her mindset when initially learning how to teach online. She shared that she rejected the offer to use an instructional designer to set up her courses, and learned to create the courses herself. “I never wanted to become dependent on that, because if something goes wrong, like the pandemic happening.’’ She continued that the instructional designers were often busy helping other people; she knew enough to make it functional for her students. “I can troubleshoot anything in [the LMS platform] because I ran towards it.”

Faculty-Student Interaction. She also recognized that interaction was meaningful, so she played games to keep students engaged and threw students out of the virtual classroom if they turned their cameras off. She also had her students teach her things.

> I think [my students] did better online because they were more in control of how they approached it. It wasn’t just, I’ll show up to class, and that’ll take care of it. They knew that they’d show up to class, and that just was the beginning.

Documentation Overview

Heidi’s teaching philosophy matches her comments from the interview. In the same way she explains her teaching philosophy, she took me on a journey from her start as an instructor to her current teaching schedule and service assignments. Her goals are to create highly engaged, learner-centered experiences. This matches her comments in that she tried to support students’ learning by talking to them on Zoom. She maintained a high level of engagement throughout the pandemic in spite of the various situations that occurred over the four years. Heidi’s comments

on productivity are not surprising. In reviewing her CV, she listed various service assignments, publications, and presentations that she had developed until the start of the pandemic. She advised student groups, led undergraduate and graduate programs, and taught in undergraduate, graduate and certification programs. Her service activity following the start of COVID-19 was on par with her interview comments. She has nine department, college and professional service appointments that are currently active.

Outside of the Classroom: The Workplace

Heidi saw more of her colleagues during the pandemic than when she was on campus. She explained that she scheduled Zooms with colleagues more because she had time. She shared that she was not leaving the house so she could be online for 12 hours a day. She added that when she taught in person, she was busy on campus between meetings and classes.

> I have a full load of service. I'm a joiner. But it was also the other people because all those people were like, "Hey, you want to grab a coffee?" and it never happened. It's not that you didn't want to; it just never happened. So, whether it was by phone, Zoom, or email, I connected with people that I liked and worked with more than when we were all in person. We had different schedules and would just pass each other in the hallway.

She went on to describe the emotion of the online interactions during the time away from campus:

> There was a lot of Zooming, a lot of meetings and a lot of work. You have to look for the things that are coming your way. [For example] I would call the instructional designers, or I'd email them because I'd run into something that I couldn't figure out, and then they'd hop on a Zoom with me. I wasn't in a hurry to get out of their office or whatever, because I had time. And so, I got to know some people I wouldn't have gotten to know as well.

Heidi's workload increased during the pandemic. She took on extra classes and worked online during the pandemic. She worked so hard that she ended up getting promoted because of all of the service she had completed. She described her approach to work, "I would sit down at my dining room table, and 12 hours later, I would leave it. I never worked so hard in my life, and

I was at a Big 5 law firm." In addition to supporting faculty at her institution, she supported peers who worked and taught at other schools.

Leadership at All Levels: Department, College, Institution

The leadership challenges that others faced showed up in Heidi's interview. She shared that she did not receive any notice that the school was going to close. She also shared that the department chair would talk to everyone about their schedule before he made it. He was collegial and respectful. He tried to honor teaching preferences; he also modeled good leadership by teaching on campus so others could be at home. Heidi felt pressure to teach in person but also firmly stood her ground to remain online. "I had this thing going on at home. I was not raising my hands to come in in person. I was not doing it because I wanted to be here. I also was not doing it because I didn't want to bring anything home, and I was worried about that."

Off-Campus and At-Home Experiences

In addition to supporting her sick husband, Heidi shared that her family structure included college-aged children. She has a close-knit family. Her daughters recently graduated from college, and her sons are just now going to college. She had to compromise with her children, who lived at home when friends wanted to come over because of her husband's illness. She shared that the pandemic disrupted the family routines. However, it did not add any stress because her children were older. She would cook something they could all eat but also knew they were not young and could provide for themselves. She was able to focus on work and supporting her husband.

Conclusion

Heidi, with extensive experience in teaching various business courses across different modalities, demonstrated adaptability and dedication to her profession. Her journey included

navigating the challenges of teaching while pursuing her dissertation and raising a family, evolving from traditional classroom settings to pioneering online education. Her proactive approach to embracing online teaching, driven by a desire to challenge herself and adapt to new educational landscapes, positioned her as a valuable resource during the transition to online learning due to the pandemic. Her ability to seamlessly shift her courses online, coupled with her readiness to support her colleagues, showcased her commitment to education and community.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Heidi's prior experience and preparation in online teaching proved invaluable, allowing her to transition with ease and support her peers who were less familiar with the digital classroom. Her leadership and willingness to assist others were evident as she played a critical role in helping her department adapt to new teaching realities. Furthermore, her challenges, including caring for her sick husband, highlighted her resilience and fortitude to balance professional responsibilities with family commitments. Heidi's story reflects a profound dedication to her students, colleagues, and family, illustrating her ability to navigate and thrive in the face of unprecedented challenges in the educational landscape.

Case #5 Kurdene

Introduction: Teaching Before the Pandemic

Kurdene teaches undergraduate, graduate and certificate courses in the communication school. He has taught part-time and full-time for nearly 20 years. Additionally, he has experience working and volunteering in corporations, non-profits, local government and the K-12 education system. Kurdene has a technology background, so he did not face some of the teaching with technology challenges that other faculty did. He has earned awards, presented his research at organizational conferences, and conducted research in his areas of interest. Kurdene was an adjunct before moving into his full-time role. He taught in multiple programs and schools within

the institution in this study. “I’ve been teaching for a while. Teaching has been second nature for me. I’ve taught (professionally) more than half my life.”

Kurdene teaches large-lecture, discussion-based and capstone and seminar courses at the institution. He participated in online training workshops. He teaches primarily in person but has taught hybrid before. Before the pandemic, he gave students the option to log on to a web-based platform to view the class lecture if they were sick or could not make it. This practice grew to be difficult following COVID. The restrictions institutions put in place during that time limited the options for faculty that had used this practice. Institutions wanted to ensure consistency and commitment from faculty members and course instructors. In addition to online training, he participated in a unique training program through the faculty development center. The program focused on encouraging faculty members to rethink their courses and generate teaching and learning research.

Teaching During the Height of the Restrictive Period

Spring 2020: Mid-semester Transition to Virtual Learning. Kurdene found out about the growing public health crisis that turned into a pandemic through his service involvement at the institution. He was in a meeting where faculty started to speculate about what was happening abroad. Within his department, colleagues were having informal discussions, but there was no organized effort or conversation to his remembrance. He quickly shifted to virtual learning. He did not disclose the primary learning delivery mode for his courses in the Spring.

Teaching Takeaways: Reflecting on the Entire Period

Kurdene reevaluated his demands on student time. In prior semesters, he felt that students should prioritize the class above all else. He realized that during the pandemic, students were

dealing with bigger issues and sometimes could not prioritize attending class or submitting assignments in the ways he wanted them to. This represented a shift in his teaching approach.

> Now, I see my demand for students' time differently. I looked at what I was demanding of students in a very different way. Before, I understood our agreement as you came to class, right? You pay attention, right? We have that social contract. And now I think, for whatever reason, the [class] time just felt different online. I think I really had to see what I was demanding of students, because now no, I couldn't. It was very clear when a student had to navigate things. The student was missing. It was a lot clearer. There was something about that for me.

Faculty-Student Interaction. In terms of engagement, Kurdene reported having more robust relationships with students before the pandemic. He shared that some of that came from being in a different school within the institution. In that other school, he held an administrative role in addition to being an adjunct and teaching faculty member. In his current position, he is primarily responsible for teaching, although he has added additional administrative responsibilities. He also notes that he taught a different population, one that represented more of his salient identities, including race and gender expression.

However, he noted that:

> The online space was a bit more intimate at times. It was easier to learn and call my students by their names because they were on the screen. I didn't have any security measures (in comparison to showing ID to security to enter the building for in-person class).

Students were generally struggling with the compound effect of the public health crisis and the political and racial reckoning happening outside of class. Kurdene created a safe space for students to process in ways other faculty members were not doing. He shared:

> I distinctly remember the impact of hearing students struggling because [other] faculty members weren't addressing the racial issues prevalent in broader society. At the beginning of several classes, I found it necessary to help them, especially the Black students, process the events occurring in their other online or in-person classes. For example, there were significant incidents in [local city of the institution], one particularly involving the police, that deeply affected my students. I recall a student expressing distress after attending a class where the [other] professor acknowledged ongoing events

> but refused to discuss them, emphasizing that this was not pertinent to the course. As the sole Black full-time faculty member in my department, my classroom became a hub for these critical discussions. Reflecting on spring 2020, it's the struggle of my students to find a space where their voices, identities, and concerns are acknowledged and respected that stands out to me.

Kurdene observed more vulnerability in people, particularly students, during this period. He acknowledged their struggles with external challenges that began infiltrating the classroom environment, potentially due to limited social interactions outside class. This situation led to some students becoming disengaged, not activating their cameras or participating in discussions. Kurdene responded with a thoughtful approach, reaching out to check on their well-being and ensure they were okay.

Strategies for Fostering Positive Learning Environments

Kurdene's approach to teaching and strategies to foster a positive learning environment changed during the time of this study. As mentioned before, he is a relatively private person; he has a large family and remarked that he rarely gets time to himself. The pandemic gave him more time alone. It also helped him realize that in the same way he was managing a personal life, his students were, too. He started to share more about himself with his students. He felt that understanding their social situations helped him be more empathetic and understanding of them. He said it helped to engage and build relationships during the time away and the subsequent time afterward.

Kurdene rethought and changed his course material to ensure relevance to the course and the learning objectives. He questioned the content and whether it was appropriate for and engaging to students. He sought to decenter himself from the materials and ask about the need for the information in the curriculum.

Understanding the Impact of Race, Politics and Social Justice. When asked about his experience, he started the interview by saying, “It’s hard to speak about COVID without speaking of the upheaval in racial and racial identity.” Kurdene, a religious leader in his community, was at the forefront, balancing his roles as a community, faith leader, and supporter of his students, religious community, and family during this period. He navigated the complex landscape of beliefs within his community regarding Black individuals and healthcare in the United States. He shed light on the prevailing mistrust among Black people towards healthcare system operators and leaders, a sentiment rooted in a historical context of unethical treatment and discrimination against Black Americans by authorities in the country.

His experience with COVID has changed how he speaks about race in class. “The experience has significantly broadened the topics I address in the classroom, particularly concerning race and discrimination. I can confidently say that it has influenced the subjects I choose to discuss. My approach has always been intentional, but now it’s even more so, with increased attention to the nuances of these issues. I’ve become more attuned to my students in ways I hadn’t been previously. This change has fostered connections with some of my students in unexpected ways and prompted me to reflect more deeply on my teaching practices than I have in the past.”

Kurdene’s strategies include reflecting on what it’s like for students and professors to now be in people’s homes during a pandemic. “We’re now exploring new strategies for engaging students online, considering whether it’s necessary to have video cameras on or off. This adjustment reflects a broader conversation about equity and inclusion. We’re realizing that inviting ourselves into students’ homes via camera may not always be respectful of their privacy and comfort levels. This has sparked discussions among professors about how to adapt our

approaches. Should we mandate camera use, or should we find alternative ways to confirm student presence and participation in this new teaching environment? These questions became particularly prominent by fall, and by spring 2021, they were at the forefront of our considerations. We're earnestly trying to understand how to maintain student engagement and support their ability to participate fully in class without imposing undue stress. This period has been a significant learning curve for faculty, prompting us to reconsider our methods of ensuring student engagement and attention, especially when traditional in-person monitoring isn't possible.

Documentation Overview

Kurdene writes in his teaching philosophy that his approach to teaching is to find a balance between students' needs and wants. He has carried this approach from his early days teaching in the K-12 education system. It shows in his comments about his experience with students and how he has changed his mindset and course materials to better reflect his perception of his students' needs and wants. He furthers his beliefs by sharing that the information has to be relevant and applicable to the student. This approach is helpful in connecting with students as it shows a genuine interest in their lived experiences and how it affects their academic performance.

Relatedly, his course syllabi support his philosophy. They open with contact information and instructions on building professional relationships. He understands that students want to know the best practices for communicating in professional settings. He places that information, as well as COVID-19 information, at the top of the syllabus. He also lists his expectations for civil discourse in the class. His syllabi content echoes his comments on discussing controversial topics in the classroom.

Outside of the Classroom: The Workplace

Kurdene experienced benefits and challenges in working at the instruction. He shared that part of his workload increase was due to the shouldering the weight of the tough conversations around race and politics. “Mainly the students of color. But yes, everyone. Because my classes, again center, there’s no class that I do that doesn’t touch on equity. So yeah, all of them.”

While Kurdene appreciated the streamlined collaboration with faculty during the lockdown, he also felt a sense of loss from the absence of students in his daily work environment. Pre-pandemic, his office buzzed with the presence of students, fostering a lively atmosphere. Although not isolated, thanks to his large family, he missed the informal, enriching interactions with students that had once punctuated his office routine.

In his administrative role, Kurdene found that the lockdown simplified the logistics of meeting with faculty, improving operational efficiency. However, he observed that the shift to online interactions did not come without challenges. Faculty meetings sometimes became charged as personal identities, and perspectives surfaced, introducing tension into discussions. This dynamic underscored the complexity of navigating professional interactions during a time of widespread uncertainty. Discussions such as these were contentious during faculty meetings, as they exposed the varying perspectives and some myths that faculty bring.

Leadership at All Levels: Department, College, Institution

Kurdene faced some leadership challenges at the department, college and university levels. First, the department faced challenges during faculty meetings. The pressure of the racial and social reckoning could have influenced the perspectives of others during discussions involving race. It was hard to navigate this. Second, the college and, to a certain extent, the university sent mixed messages, as noted by others. The complexity of the situation and the

number of people involved in the decision-making and communication processes can make it more difficult. The example he provided centered on the decision to return to campus. The forced return to in-person classes and operations felt like it lacked consideration of everyone's needs.

Conclusion

Kurdene had teaching experience, online training and teaching experience, and a background in technology that made it easy for him to transition his courses online. His major challenges arose when engaging with peers in the workplace. He took on a larger share of discussing controversial situations happening in the country with his students. Kurdene was able to explain how his background and experience as a teacher and religious leader helped him through the more challenging conversations that took place while faculty were largely remote. He provided insight into strategies for managing those conversations and rethinking course material and teaching approaches to adjust to the changes in student attitudes and beliefs.

Case #6 Lamont

Introduction: Teaching Before the Pandemic

Lamont has over 30 years of experience in education, including nearly 15 years at the institution in this study. His extensive background equips him with a deep understanding of pedagogy, educational environments, and best practices in education. In addition to decades of experience teaching, he has earned multiple graduate degrees in education and a higher education teaching certificate. Currently, he designs the curriculum and delivers instruction to undergraduate students preparing to teach elementary and middle school math and science. He is the only faculty member in this multiple case study with some connection to teaching and the physical sciences.

Teaching During the Height of the Restrictive Period

Spring 2020: Mid-semester Transition to Virtual Learning. During the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, Lamont's teaching experience was similar to that of other faculty members in similar positions. He navigated the transition from primarily face-to-face classrooms to online instruction at the onset of the pandemic. He abruptly paused class sessions in campus buildings and assignments that required in-person interaction in local schools. He switched to video conferencing and increased content and communication through school-provided websites and learning management systems. While he was eager to return to the physical classroom as soon as safety allowed, he waited for instructions and guidance regarding the physical learning environment from school and university leadership.

Lamont modeled adapting to the evolving learning environment, a critical element in good teaching. He recognized that the social restrictions from government agencies were necessary for public health and to minimize the spread of a dangerous virus. However, he, like other instructors in this study, asked the critical question of how he could meet the course learning outcomes for this semester under the current restrictions. He focused on solving the problems he faced, such as how to recreate teaching demonstrations and observations to ensure that students could meet education certification requirements.

Teaching Takeaways: Reflecting on the Entire Period

During the turbulent time, Lamont reported feeling confident and calm in managing the shift to online learning, attributing it to his deep-rooted commitment to teaching and his years of experience in K-16 education. He never wavered in his dedication to providing quality instruction and ensuring the competence of his students. Lamont leaned on his pedagogical background, particularly embracing Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles, to redesign

classroom activities and assignments. This approach allowed him to meet course outcomes, assign or change resources, incorporate technology, and account for the diversity of student learning styles and experiences.

Teaching Philosophy. In his teaching philosophy, Lamont emphasizes a constructivist approach, where learners build upon their existing knowledge. In Spring 2020, recognizing his students' prior classroom teaching experience, he adapted his syllabus, integrating videos from previous semesters and swiftly transitioning to online communication platforms. In the Fall 2020 semester, Lamont recognized that the approach would only work if his students had classroom teaching experience. Many did not. He adjusted his approach to accommodate that group who needed classroom teaching experience. He modified assignments – keeping the lesson plans but switching out the in-person teaching demos with recorded teaching videos. He increased the number of classroom videos and their use in other areas of instruction. He removed in-person teaching requirements, emphasizing flexibility in response to the circumstances. Subsequently, Lamont collaborated with school leadership and students to organize teaching demonstrations via videoconferencing platforms. This led to an unlikely outcome: students were learning the separate skills needed to teach face-to-face and virtually.

Strategies for Fostering Positive Learning Environments

Lamont employed four key strategies: using differentiated learning with students in his courses, identifying the appropriate technology to use and his skill set in facilitating learning through them, using a humanistic approach to viewing students, and being adaptable in a constantly changing educational environment. Differentiated learning allowed him to tailor instruction to individual student learning styles and needs, promoting engagement and comprehension. Moreover, Lamont emphasized the humanistic aspect of teaching, seeing his

students as individuals with unique experiences and needs. This approach humanized the online learning experience, establishing a sense of connection and understanding. Lamont further adjusted his teaching approach by expanding group sizes from two-person teams to three-person teams. This shift aimed to enhance collaboration and foster a sense of community among students.

Additionally, Lamont embraced technology as a tool to enhance teaching and increase students' readiness for future educational endeavors. He acknowledged the potential apprehension toward technology adoption among faculty, which is a common sentiment in higher education. However, Lamont's approach was open and adaptable, emphasizing the importance of using technology effectively during extreme conditions. Lamont fully embraced available electronic resources and technology, counteracting stereotypes about faculty's reluctance to do so in higher education. He recognized the importance of Learning Management Systems (LMS) in facilitating student learning and engagement.

He adapted to the evolving environment outside of education, acknowledging the radical change brought about by the pandemic and proactively addressing it. Lamont's adaptability extended beyond the boundaries of education, encompassing the broader societal changes catalyzed by the COVID-19 pandemic. He astutely recognized the seismic shifts occurring in the world at large and responded with a proactive stance. The pandemic ushered in a radical change, disrupting not only educational norms but also the very fabric of society. Lamont's ability to acknowledge and address these changes demonstrated his foresight and resilience. He embraced the digital transformation accelerated by the pandemic, integrating technology into his teaching practices to bridge the gap between traditional and online education seamlessly. Furthermore, he recognized the importance of flexibility and adaptability in this rapidly evolving landscape,

emphasizing the need for educators to remain agile in their pedagogical approaches. By acknowledging the broader context and proactively responding to the challenges it presented, Lamont emerged as an exemplary model of an educator who not only navigated the storm but also steered the course toward innovative and effective teaching in the face of unprecedented disruptions.

Documentation Overview

Lamont's changes during the pandemic epitomized his teaching philosophy. He writes about students gaining experiential knowledge through real-life applications and collaborative engagement. The philosophy stayed in place throughout the analyzed time frame. When he first transitioned online, he reshaped the groups to better work together and shared videos of real-life classroom observations. Despite the challenges, he used his teaching experience and creative thinking to adjust to the new learning delivery modes. He adds that he is student-centered, which aligns with his statements about engaging proactively with students during the pandemic.

The approach is evident, as his course syllabi detail the student-centered nature and opportunities for real-world experience. He includes both course objectives and learning outcomes. He also highlights opportunities for out-of-class experience through work at local schools.

Conclusion

This case study explores Lamont's experience with teaching during a turbulent time and fostering positive interaction with students. As an experienced African-American assistant professor with extensive knowledge in education, he used his pedagogical knowledge and work experience to provide a calm and organized presence for his students. He displayed a commitment to quality teaching online and face-to-face, leveraging his Universal Design for

Learning (UDL) and a constructivist teaching philosophy to select and implement strategies with confidence. His proactive approach included utilizing technology effectively, despite the typical stereotype of faculty reluctance in higher education. He understood the importance of learning management systems as both educational tools and communication platforms. Moreover, Lamont's humanistic approach humanized the online learning experience, fostering a sense of connection and adaptability in the face of the pandemic's radical changes. His experiences offer valuable insights into how educators can navigate challenges while maintaining positive interactions with students in unprecedented circumstances.

Case #7 Lexa

Introduction: Teaching Before the Pandemic

Lexa has always been involved in teaching. She initially wanted to teach K-12 students, but a few early work experiences led her to pivot to higher education. Her earlier years helped form her teaching philosophy, which centers on getting students outside of the classroom to engage in real-world situations that will allow them to better understand the industry and community. Before the pandemic, there was more opportunity and flexibility for external assignments. Additionally, Lexa teaches in the diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) space. She noted that as long as she has been teaching, "it's always been a challenge to have those conversations. Prior to 2020, students were a little bit more guarded and hesitant about approaching conversations in the classroom." She continued sharing that students have a sense of being open about their learning, but when faced with being reflective of themselves, where they are and where they want to be, it can be hard. In addition to teaching students in the classroom, she leads a DEI center that started during the pandemic.

Before the pandemic, Lexa taught online for one year before COVID. She led a large lecture course that was open to any student in the institution. It was a short, intensive, 7-week asynchronous course. The course still had in-person engagement built into the curriculum. She met with students face-to-face at least once during the abbreviated semester. She was the first person in her department to teach a course in their program online; one other colleague taught hybrid before her course was created. Lexa fully embraced the courses she designed online. She also did not compromise her teaching approach when moving to asynchronous teaching before or during the pandemic. This was interesting as others did change during the pandemic transition.

Teaching During the Height of the Restrictive Period

Spring 2020: Mid-semester Transition to Virtual Learning. The transition was easy in the spring because she taught the course online before. She communicated to students what the next steps were. She updated her policy to reflect how the classroom would run in terms of engagement, expectations, and support. She wanted them to feel comfortable. "Sometimes that meant needing a backdrop or addressing what was happening behind them during online classes, among other things." Where it became a challenge was in discussing the course material through a virtual platform.

> But what became very difficult was transitioning from this in-person, fully engaged situation, where I could see a student that needed to be addressed, to a situation where I was not only dealing with the emotional side of this and the fear and the unknown but also navigating what really happens in this space and how to look at classroom management very differently.

She shared the following:

> It was a moment in time to engage not only in teaching pedagogy but also in managing emotional intelligence during that time frame because I think there was more emotion and the whole mental side of what was happening across the world. I was trying to balance a whole bunch of things – how people may be feeling, what's going on, does someone have COVID, where are they, do they have the tech? There were so many things running in the background around basic classroom management. It took probably a

> week or so just to get them adjusted while covering content. But I still wonder, did they get it? There's so much going on.

Lexa taught synchronous online during the initial transition. Quickly, it became evident that cameras through video conference platforms were going to be an issue. Lexa shared that it was hard to connect with students on camera because she could not see what they were doing. She realized they were busy doing other things around the house or even outside at certain times during the restrictive period. They should have been focused on the class activities; instead, they were doing chores. "I had students who felt like, 'I'm just at home,' and they would be doing things like cooking breakfast and laundry during class. There were a lot of distractions that I had to address."

Teaching Takeaways: Reflecting on the Entire Period

Teaching Philosophy. Lexa's teaching philosophy is anchored in the belief that her role extends beyond mere instruction; she sees herself as a pivotal figure in molding the future by influencing young minds. She commits to being someone her students can admire, understanding the weight of her influence on them. At the center of her teaching approach is the establishment of a secure learning environment, a "zone" where students feel safe to explore, question and grow. Additionally, Lexa places a high premium on inclusivity, striving to create a classroom atmosphere that welcomes diversity and encourages every student to contribute their unique perspectives.

These foundational beliefs are not just theoretical but are actively applied in her teaching, particularly during the challenging times of the pandemic. Lexa's ability to change based on society's events, her innovative approaches to teaching, and her dedication to maintaining a connection with her students show in her philosophy. Future sections of this study will dive deeper into how Lexa uses these beliefs to teach her diversity courses.

Faculty Satisfaction with Online Learning. In general, Lexa felt comfortable teaching online because of her experience. She highlighted a moment that was one of the best moments but was also representative of the entire experience. She was leading a conversation in class on gender and intersectionality. In the activity, she asked students to then think about what was next following the #MeToo movement and the #BlackLivesMatter initiatives.

> I asked them, "You're young people, you know what's going on. You're the next generation of those being impacted. What do we do? What is the issue? How are we going to fight it? What's your plan?" And it felt like that discussion and their ideas were fantastic. We went over class time a couple of times in our discussions because people were tuned in in a meaningful way. They were willing to share thoughtfully about what was going on and how we could make a difference.

Lexa went on to share that the hard work and dedication to organizing class and leading conversations during such a turbulent time was working in spite of the challenges students were facing. She recalled that everything worked how it needed to work in order for them to get to that point. They read the readings and paused before jumping into the discussion. She even recalled that the international students in the class who had a different experience than the predominantly U.S.-based class contributed to the discussion. Lexa shared that she felt like she could take a deep breath and affirm that her efforts were being rewarded. Her feelings were affirmed when students ended the class, expressing their gratitude for the conversations and learnings.

Lexa was very reflective during this period. With each question I asked, she provided a handful of questions she explored herself to navigate the problems or situations she was facing. For example, when faced with the engagement and cameras being off, she asked, "How am I really connecting with them when some of them I can't even see?" She balanced that with not wanting to enforce restrictive protocols during an already restrictive time. She recognized the frail nature of people and the variation of technology with students at home.

Understanding the Impact of Race, Politics and Social Justice. Lexa teaches diversity courses in the business curriculum, so the social phenomena of race and politics are discussed as part of her curriculum. Early in the interview, she explained her perception of what was happening in the larger society:

> In addition to COVID, we were grappling with numerous situations of social injustice. Being one of the few Black individuals within the school was an interesting experience. Many people wanted to rally around and ensure I was okay, especially given the topics I teach and the creation of [the DEI office] during that time. Some were genuinely engaged and eager to learn, while others became clear that they were not ready for what was happening in our workplace due to COVID, leading to moments of tension.

She recognized that personal safety on various levels was being attacked – health, race, politics, economics, and gender – and that there was great uncertainty about who was next. The dominant narrative and belief centered around at any point you or someone you love could die from COVID, police brutality, or a politically radicalized extremist. The health issues were happening at the same time as the social justice issues, and they threatened to affect everyone.

> People were trying to figure out for themselves how they felt about things. They also grappled with their feelings about the messaging around COVID-19 from a societal perspective. It was like a perfect storm. COVID was the perfect storm for people to be sitting in one place, processing all of their information sources. The inequity was so loud and visible at all levels.

Documentation Overview

In reviewing her course syllabi, Lexa's contact information is placed at the top so students have immediate access to her information. If they have an issue or need to follow up with her, her email and office location are available. Further in the syllabus, she lists course policies and resources. They occupy the final three pages of the document. You can see elements of her teaching philosophy, mentioned earlier, through the syllabi. Additionally, she has the university-mandated COVID policy at the top of the university policies page towards the end of the document.

Outside of the Classroom: The Workplace

The other challenge Lexa faced was administrative. In addition to teaching courses, she launched a DEI center in her college as people were returning to in-person operations. Some people embraced it, while others were distant. Some of her peers felt it was opportunistic. She countered with the fact that she worked in that space for years. She had seen her colleagues online making remarks about a confluence of issues. It made it challenging to re-engage interpersonal relationships in the aftermath of the most restrictive part of COVID. “You could see comments on people’s social media or hear word-of-mouth what others were saying against DEI or criticizing your work.” In being criticized, she was confident because she had the data to support the DEI work. However, it showed the lack of emotional intelligence of others. “People get this information, how they’re processing what’s happening around them and not using their emotional intelligence to do it.”

While her primary work experience was challenging, her overall work experience was fine. She shared that she missed engaging with her colleagues but appreciated the opportunity to balance work with personal commitments. “We found ways to get together as a group, supporting each other and sharing what was happening at work and home.” She reported an increase in productivity during the pandemic.

Off-Campus and At-Home Experiences

Since Lexa worked remotely and was responsible for caring for an elderly relative, the lockdown allowed her to be closer to her family in case there were any issues. It was hard separating her roles when at home. It was hard not leaving the house and feeling pressure or emotion as she moved through her home. “The upstairs was the medical space, the middle level was a hybrid, and the basement was the office. I felt the thickness of it all going from level to

level. I just wasn't taking care of myself at this time in a lot of different ways." She worked in the basement, and her relative was under the care of a nurse on the top floor. She was challenged at times during the beginning and middle of the pandemic, as she had to shift paperwork, supplies and equipment back and forth between her home and her office.

> For example, I needed dual screens in my office and a good camera. I had to move things back and forth and get things set up. When we started going back, I had to get organized because it seemed like there was so much everywhere.

The work provided a reprieve from the medical care responsibilities. It served to occupy some of her time while healthcare staff and other relatives were responsible for her elder relative's care.

Strategies for Fostering Positive Interaction

Lexa shared numerous strategies. She kept her teaching philosophy of students engaging outside of the classroom. She had to rethink requirements/activities to make sure they met learning goals with what was available. The out-of-classroom requirements had to change; she shifted towards reasonable alternatives. "There were a lot of online opportunities, but I hadn't had a chance to vet them to see if they met my goals. So, there was a lot of flexibility on certain things that I had to let go of to see how this would all work out." Since their homes became the new classrooms, she had to think of ways to continue to apply that belief while outside was restricted.

She found numerous solutions because of her approach to problem-solving. She used various sources to solve her issues. When she ran into issues, she made a list and started looking for answers online. She used the blog for the school's LMS platform. She would play around with tools in the sandbox she created when she moved to the new platform. She learned about it when she transitioned to the new LMS platform right before the pandemic. Lexa contacted

colleagues at other institutions to get ideas on how they were managing teaching during COVID. She was able to get ideas and information and build it into the classroom. When she needed help, she worked with the IT and instructional designer. She pulled resources from other courses. It increased her workload; however, she had to find resources to connect them to the industry. Lexa leaned on unorthodox resources such as art museum websites and online conferences to see what they were doing to engage people from a virtual standpoint. She looked at how they were engaging people. She changed classroom management strategies so she could better read students' responses.

Lexa also had to address the attendance policy. The institution changed the policy to be more flexible for students in transition. The policies focused on students who were sick and unable to attend class. They also addressed issues such as cameras, testing and options for meeting course outcomes. "There was a lot of information that didn't quite make sense, and the level of flexibility made me uncomfortable because I wasn't sure if they were truly grasping the material, making it challenging for me to assess them properly."

Lexa also removed online testing. The system availability was inconsistent, and she could not ensure that it was effective at measuring student learning. She tried proctoring software but still was not sure of its effectiveness. "I couldn't be sure whether they were doing the work or if they understood the material. About a year later [into the pandemic], I decided to pull exams and explore other assessment strategies for evaluating students."

One strategy she used to better assess learning during synchronous sessions was using Google documents to work on during class. They worked at first. However, she started seeing unknown individuals in the document. "That was confusing and disruptive." She created an extra layer of security in addition to the policies to ensure that students were accountable for engaging

with the content in a way that aligned with her teaching strategies, which were crucial for proper assessment.

She focused on teaching her students thoughtful comments around diversity, honoring their opinions but also making them from an educated and respectful perspective. Those discussions are tough in person and online. Lexa focuses on teaching students to engage in a respectful and meaningful way. She shared:

> You're not behind a camera. You're not on your social feeds where people can't see how they're feeling as a result of your language. So, let's come to an agreement. So, some of those things I've had to change, you know, I never, I didn't do that before, but I have to intentionally make sure that that's a part of the conversation, so they know we want to be respectful. We want to be open, but we want to be respectful. Perfect, right? You have your opinion, but everything that comes up doesn't have to come out right exactly. And the way that it comes out needs to be a little thoughtful.

Conclusion

Lexa started her teaching career in K-12 education before pivoting to college. She has enjoyed teaching courses in business and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) for over 20 years. Her teaching philosophy and course syllabi both emphasize engagement outside the classroom with activities and assignments that require students to go to professional environments. The pandemic challenged that practice. Lexa was prepared as she taught online before the transition online. She led an asynchronous course that required some in-person interaction. While she did have experience, she faced a new set of challenges in maintaining student engagement and classroom management in a fully online environment. Lexa had to deal with broader societal issues in conjunction with the emotional impacts of the pandemic.

Fortunately, Lexa was ready to adapt her teaching strategies to the virtual format, rethinking classroom requirements and management to maintain engagement and effectiveness. She sought solutions from various sources, leveraging technology and online resources to meet

learning objectives. Despite the challenges, Lexa successfully fostered meaningful discussions and maintained a focus on thoughtful engagement around sensitive topics like gender, race, and social justice. Her efforts to adapt and maintain a supportive, engaging learning environment exemplified her dedication to her students' education and well-being during a tumultuous period.

Case #8 Malcolm

Introduction: Teaching Before the Pandemic

Malcolm has over a decade of teaching experience, a law degree, and experience working for a non-profit organization. He taught as an adjunct instructor before moving to a full-time teaching position. His courses are centered on race, music and politics, which are all related to social phenomena.

> Teaching was something that I loved and took great joy in, but I paused when I went to law school and began practicing law. But, the headmaster at the school where I taught previously before going to law school told me I would find my way back into the classroom, and he was right.

Malcolm taught synchronous in-person courses before the pandemic. He had some experience teaching asynchronous courses over the summer.

Teaching During the Height of the Restrictive Period

Spring 2020: Mid-semester Transition to Virtual Learning. Malcolm heard about the pandemic from a student who asked about it in class. He told the student he would ask a friend who lived in China. After asking his peer, he told the student,

> So, as early as maybe the second and third week of January, he asked me what I thought about the Coronavirus. I actually had a friend in Shanghai at the time, so I was corresponding with her pretty regularly, and I told him, 'You know, my friend in China, she's not very concerned. I don't think we have reason for concern.' But boy, was I wrong!

He shared that his college's leadership gave them little warning of the imminent threat. A few days before campus closed, the department chairs started asking faculty and instructors how

comfortable they were with teaching online and transitioning to online platforms. Since he had some teaching experience, he responded that he felt comfortable with the transition. Additionally, he participated in a unique training program for faculty members at the institution. The program focused on evaluating courses for good teaching practices.

As it looked like in-person operations were going to shut down, Malcolm went back to his students and shared the next steps for the course. They would meet virtually and synchronously for the remainder of the closed period. This proved challenging for two reasons. The first was that he taught controversial topics such as race, police brutality, and social injustice; it was hard to have those conversations online. The second reason is that his teaching approach relies on engagement and interaction. It can be hard to assess non-verbal communication that is present in person but not online. He shared:

> We had our regular meeting dates via Zoom and tried our best to maneuver through the rest of the semester as best we could. It was an adjustment for all of us, especially because much of my teaching style hinges on the ability to be in person and use student feedback and the like. And so it was. It was an adjustment period, but it was something that we were able to navigate.

Fall 2020: First Semester with Mixture of Virtual Learning and Restrictive In-Person Operations. He recalled the institution's attempt to return to in-person operations in the Fall 2020 semester. There was an outbreak on campus and in the city; both were substantial enough that the institution resumed remote learning for all after two weeks. The institution fully resumed operations once the COVID-19 vaccine was available and social distancing restrictions were in place. To his knowledge, everyone on campus had to be vaccinated, wear masks, and be seated at least six feet apart.

Malcolm was not worried about teaching; he was concerned about the public health crisis. He shared:

> Some of that early information was terrifying. Just knowing that one person could spread the virus to 4,000 or 6,000 people, and so many people were having adverse effects, particularly in the earlier part of the pandemic. I had people in my network who had underlying conditions. I wanted to not only protect myself, but protect others, and so I never gave much push back early on, as it related to what the [institution] recommended in terms of whether we would have to be in person and things like that.

Malcolm resumed teaching in-person full-time in the Fall of 2021.

Teaching Takeaways: Reflecting on the Entire Period

Teaching Philosophy. Malcolm's approach to teaching is to engage with students in a way that helps them critically analyze, dissect and examine materials in order to contribute to society at large. He wants students to graduate with the skills necessary to become engaged citizens able to solve complex problems. You can see his teaching philosophy throughout the interview and in his course syllabus. His classes included opportunities to discuss current events. He built space in his schedule as he knew from experience and student feedback that social justice issues would continue to be a topic of discussion amongst his students. Interestingly enough, Malcolm's teaching philosophy and courses were designed to weather the proverbial storm, in this case, a pandemic. He has enough structure, rigor and flexibility to navigate turbulent times.

Understanding the Impact of Race, Politics and Social Justice. This case study was unique in that race and social justice were embedded into the framework of the course; however, the course was not a "diversity course." During the first year of the pandemic, more people were paying attention to racial issues, social injustices, and a volatile political environment. As such, most faculty had to make space for these discussions in the classroom. Malcolm already had space in his courses because the incidents had interrupted his class sessions anyway. Before the pandemic, students wanted to talk about social justice issues in class. He built time into the class

and curriculum, showing students how they connected to the courses' main topics and learning outcomes. He shared:

> I had always made room to have those discussions in my courses, even when it wasn't something that we had scheduled to speak about at the outset of the semester. In my [cultural music] course, prior to maybe 2016, I didn't have a scheduled discussion on police brutality. What I noticed was that every semester, there was a high-profile police killing that we would pause class to discuss. They were all police killings, but they were high-profile cases. Troy Anthony Davis was wrongfully executed in Georgia during my first semester; Trayvon Martin was my second semester. Literally, every semester, this was happening. What we ended up doing was, I ended up creating specific lessons around police brutality, racial disparities in the criminal justice system and other timely topics and making them relevant to the curriculum. As the pandemic intensified, some of these other conversations intensified, too, especially when looking at the George Floyd protest, Briana Taylor protests, and Ahmad Arbery protests. There was already time and space allotted for it. In some semesters, we just had to move some of those conversations up in terms of timeliness. In addition to that, I've always been of the mind to tell my students that there will be occasions when things that are happening outside of the course are relevant to our discussions inside of the course. So, we're scheduled to speak about fill-in-the-blank today, but we're going to talk about what's happening outside. So, for me, it wasn't much of a disruption. Sometimes, I was just literally changing the order of a few lessons or pausing for an extra few moments before class, but some of my colleagues communicated that it was a tremendous challenge for them because they felt compelled to have conversations that they weren't accustomed to having.

Relatedly, Malcolm observed a notable increase in student awareness regarding specific issues following the Trayvon Martin and Mike Brown cases. He noted a decline in this heightened awareness from 2017 to 2020, which then saw a resurgence and intensified focus after the onset of the pandemic. Malcolm remarked that he witnessed a level of engagement and awareness among students that he had not seen in the previous three to five years. This acute awareness was driven not only by the national spotlight on these issues but also by local or personal incidents. For instance, he recounted how a college classmate of his made national headlines after being fatally shot by a police officer. Moreover, students closely followed a local case where an individual was killed less than 15 miles from campus. According to Malcolm,

there was a marked increase in student attunement and engagement with these issues from 2020 to 2021.

Document Overview

Malcolm shared course syllabi for the same course, one in 2019 and one in 2020. He explicitly stated that students will discuss "related topics, many may generally consider provocative or controversial." He states it after the course schedule and follows with a statement about being thoughtful and avoiding offense. He shares this and reviews it in class so that students are prepared to have conversations in class on controversial topics. His goal is to get students to think critically about their comments and practice when they have to engage with others in dialogue. He mentions in the course learning overview that they will discuss "historical, political and spiritual struggles" of a community using a theoretical framework that centers the course's primary topic.

The primary difference between the two syllabi is a section in the middle where he builds on the university-provided text in response to COVID regulations. He lists this information before the standard text from the pre-pandemic syllabi. The policies include public health guidelines, such as wearing masks and washing hands, and technology guidelines, such as getting access to technology and recording videos. He still maintains his stance on conversing respectfully when engaging with others around controversial topics.

Conclusion

Malcolm's experience with teaching, teaching online, and facilitating tough conversations made it relatively easy for him to push through the pandemic. His teaching philosophy and course schedules were designed to incorporate conversations from the larger society. Students were bringing the conversations to class, and sometimes, they dovetailed nicely

with the lecture before the pandemic. As part of his teaching philosophy to encourage students to think critically and solve problems in the larger society, it made sense for him to incorporate this into his classroom.

While he shared plenty of information about his teaching practices, he shared minimal experiences about his workplace and life outside of campus. He also declined to share information about the leadership in his department, college, and university during our interview. The reader will notice a decrease in sections and subsections as a result.

Case #9 Ricky

Introduction: Teaching Before the Pandemic

Ricky has been teaching at the current institution for nearly a decade. He joined the school after completing his graduate program. He instructs a variety of courses, including large lectures, research courses, and special topics classes, catering to both undergraduate and graduate students. Unconventionally, he often eschews the use of slides in most of his classes, opting instead for a discussion-based approach where he engages students through questions and interactive dialogue.

Ricky has not taught asynchronously but does have the institution-required training to teach online courses. He completed the program as part of a department-wide initiative to offer distance learning courses. He shared his preference for online versus in-person:

> We had to get certified to teach online. I did it; it's fine, but it just was something [I did]. If I always have a choice, it will always be in person. My teaching style doesn't translate well to online teaching because I like dancing around, yelling, making jokes, and all sorts of fun stuff.

Teaching During the Height of the Restrictive Period

Spring 2020: Mid-semester Transition to Virtual Learning. Ricky transitioned online and asynchronously. He was in the middle of teaching a large lecture of 80 students when he

learned of the school's impending closure. After moving online, he recorded lectures for students to watch in lieu of going to class. He remembers filming himself with the same passion and energy as when he was in person. He kept his assignments the same, including offering exams. He posted them online instead of giving them in person in class. He commented that he could not measure the effectiveness of learning using tests during this time.

Fall 2020: First Semester with Mixture of Virtual Learning and Restrictive In-Person Operations. In the fall, Ricky started teaching in person before transitioning online after two weeks. "Everyone was saying you shouldn't bring us back. We were in person for two weeks before going back online." He taught synchronously online that semester. He would set up as if he were in person, lecturing during class. He noted that his students mostly kept their cameras off, and their grades dropped following the move online. He hated the empty black windows but understood. He felt it was hard to make the relationships that you wanted with students. "I'm not the type of person who would demand students turn their cameras on. I don't know what's going on in their house. I know I had colleagues who demanded the cameras be turned on. To me, it's not fair." Conversely, as understanding as he was of the cameras, he was also challenged when students were not paying attention in class. He remembers ending class online and having 6-7 students remaining with cameras off after he said class was over.

Once he returned to campus, he taught some courses using the hybrid format. Students could sit in class or join by using videoconferencing software. He was indifferent about returning to campus, neither agreeing nor disagreeing. He did not enjoy the hybrid format. He felt bad for the people in the class because of his difficulty managing communication online and in person simultaneously.

Teaching Takeaways: Reflecting on the Entire Period

In general, Ricky worked through the challenges faced during that time. He found that masks were a little bit of a challenge because it was hard to talk with them. He also shared that he had to remember to bring extra masks. He did notice that with masks, you could read students' facial expressions more easily than on video conferencing platforms.

Teaching Philosophy. Ricky believes that teaching is sharing knowledge. He realizes that it can happen in various places, including large lectures, small group discussions, individual advising sessions or office hours, or through the conducting and presentation of original research. He shares something unique about seeing research and teaching intertwined. He believes that being an active researcher leads to better teaching. He values both and incorporates them into his studies. He specifically mentions the impact COVID-19 had on him as a teacher in his philosophy. He wrote that he tried to be available, fun and empathetic of students' experiences. You can see those beliefs in his course syllabi.

Understanding the Impact of Race, Politics and Social Justice. In moving online, Ricky noticed that parents started sitting in on class. He could see them on the couch together during each session. He shared that this was interesting because they talked about controversial topics. His students sometimes are from areas where the beliefs do not align with those being espoused in the classroom: he could share factually accurate statements that contradicted some of the narratives in other communities. For example, at some point in the course, the class discusses politics. He is aware that students come from families with opposing beliefs, especially considering the polarized nature of politics at the time.

Strategies Used During the Pandemic

Ricky noticed a shift in students' attitudes, beliefs and values during the pandemic. He shared that his students lacked the desire to excel in class. He felt they were comfortable with meeting the standard but lacked curiosity, ambition or drive. He shared:

> I've noticed that, and it's still a problem, students are okay with not turning in work. I've never seen something like that before. If I can be in a class, I'm happy. You have to get the job done. I don't know if that just seems like this kind of thing that's happened post-pandemic where people are good with not handing stuff in. I've never seen that before in any of my classes. It seems to be a recurring thing.

Ricky paid attention to the strategies that worked with students. The method proved beneficial as he kept the practice in the following semesters. He anticipates returning to his pre-pandemic practice of removing slides. He wants to go back to more conversation and spontaneity. He feels the practice is becoming rote.

Ricky created video recordings of his lectures to preserve the essence of his in-person teaching style and presence. His goal was to capture the advantages of his non-verbal cues in teaching. He went the extra mile by writing and playing a theme song and even crafted a cutout paper professor to feature in his videos. He humorously described the production as akin to "really bad public access" television. Nonetheless, the students found it enjoyable, and it effectively conveyed their passion for teaching, even during a significant crisis. This approach not only highlighted Ricky's love for teaching but also his penchant for performing, an interest he pursued outside of his academic duties by playing in a band.

Documentation Overview

In reviewing his course syllabi, he shares his and his teaching assistant's biographies early. This supports his belief that exchanging information is essential; if he is going to connect with students, they have to know who he is. Additionally, he assigns scholarly research,

including some content dating back to the mid-1940s, for every class. He builds students' knowledge of communication theory by starting with early research.

Workplace Opportunities and Challenges

Ricky had a unique situation in that his partner worked at the institution in this study. This helped when explaining policies and verifying information. The partner knew the culture of the institution and could support him in listening, meaning-making and decision-making. This support came in handy when he was navigating challenges within his department. He shared his colleagues' opinions of commitment during this time. He understood that it was frustrating to teach but also felt that people should reevaluate their interests and abilities to teach. He often consoled students who felt like their faculty were struggling to teach during this time. He noticed in meetings and programs a growing disconnect between teaching and commitment.

Despite living with someone who worked at the university, he also missed having people around the office. He remarked that he could get work done by walking down the hall and knocking on doors. With the reduction in in-person operations and slow return to pre-pandemic capacity in the workplace, it was hard to identify when faculty and staff were working on campus and what their preference for physical distancing was. He added:

> [The pandemic] kept people out of the buildings. You used to get a lot of work done by just knocking on a door, and asking a quick question. Now those things that you probably could get a lot more done by just going, "Hey, can I ask a question?" You don't want to bother people with Zoom, you don't want to bother people with an email. So those things don't just get done. And therefore, the collaboration, particularly around research and collaborative ideas like, maybe, "Hey, you want to come to my class and teach?" Oh, that doesn't happen that much, and I feel like I have the buzz of the hallway. I kind of miss it, when we could actually talk to people and have those quick conversations.

Conclusion

Ricky's love of and approach to teaching guided him through the tumultuous time. He shared that his initial transition online was rocky due to the quick nature of the shift and his zest

for an engaging learning environment. Through the back-and-forth of the year following the initial move online, Ricky tested strategies for measuring learning and building relationships with students. He shared his concerns about teaching virtually, especially around contentious topics with students whose parents would disagree with the theoretical claims being made. He ended with a more profound love for teaching and a more substantial commitment to being an empathetic teacher.

Case #10 SH

Introduction: Teaching Before the Pandemic

SH taught courses while earning her graduate degree. After joining the institution in this study, she increased her workload to between two and four undergraduate and graduate courses each semester. SH participated in online teaching training and taught asynchronous courses online before the onset of the pandemic. SH did not teach hybrid classes or synchronous courses virtually before the pandemic, but she did participate in online training experiences offered by the university.

Teaching During the Height of the Restrictive Period

Spring 2020: Mid-semester Transition to Virtual Learning. SH shared insights about the challenges associated with transitioning from traditional in-person classes to online instruction.

> So, I wasn't freaked out by it. I wasn't like, "How do I set up a Canvas course for this?" I wasn't scared; I was able to make Zoom links fairly easily. All of that was manageable. I had not done teaching synchronously through Zoom, though, so that was new for me. I had to adjust to ideas around class participation, calling on people, and making sure the chat was useful. Then, I started to use Jamboard and Google Docs more extensively, where each group had its own Google Doc, and I could see what they were working on. I particularly enjoyed that aspect of synchronous teaching.

SH recognized that what was happening with the pandemic was significant. It was emotional but not insurmountable: there was joy, confusion, anxiety, stress, and other feelings throughout the experience. SH felt that she could figure it out. She shared that it helped that she had time in person before moving online. The rapport that was established carried over into virtual space. She taught synchronously following the closure of in-person operations.

> The nice thing was that I had established a rapport with my students, having been in person first for those classes. So I knew their names and a little bit about them. By the time March hit, I had already kind of gotten to know them, so I appreciated that later. I realized that made a difference. But when we made the switch, nobody knew what was happening. We had no idea what was going to happen, but I had the comfort of knowing that I had done online teaching before.

SH felt that students needed the structure that the class provided. She saw students struggling emotionally. The courses provided organization, connection and structure during a time when students were looking for certainty.

> Emotionally, I feel like my students had a tough time. They were uncertain about how long this would last and had their issues with work and home life. But everyone was open to the idea that we're figuring this out; it's going to be okay. The whole university was on the "struggle bus" together, but we sided with the understanding that we would figure this out together. I tried to keep some sense of structure by continuing to meet online asynchronously, and I think they found that comforting. One is that I do feel like students needed some regularity in their lives. They felt like nothing is normal, so just showing up for them offered some sense of consistency. That was one reason.

Fall 2020: First Semester with Mixture of Virtual Learning and Restrictive In-Person Operations. SH shared that teaching with masks was hard; she preferred either being without masks or being entirely online. She understood the health risks that were posted; students had a hard time hearing and understanding her. This led to a lack of connection during in-person classes during the restrictive time of the pandemic. It grew harder to organize small groups in class due to the complicated nature of social distancing. "I questioned the point of

being in person when you can't see my face, hear me clearly, or interact in small groups." Her teaching style relied on these strategies.

Teaching Takeaways: Reflecting on the Entire Period

Teaching Philosophy. SH's teaching philosophy was well-suited to the challenges presented during the pandemic. She stated, "The best teachers continuously adapt their teaching style, informed by techniques that effectively aid student learning." This philosophy underpins her proactive approach to identifying and implementing strategies to resolve issues that arise in her class. It underscores her inherent curiosity in developing courses that cater to student needs. She identified strategies that addressed issues such as managing discussion boards, controversial conversations and students' motivation to learn during a pandemic. Additionally, there is clear alignment between her teaching and research interests and the courses she teaches.

In her interview, she called herself a "compassionate professor" in the midst of explaining her struggle between grace and accountability. She shared that she was always willing to listen to students and work with them to create an alternative plan. She stressed the importance of students communicating their issues and needs to her. She experienced many students not submitting assignments or showing up in class. When approached for a discussion about their performance, they expected grace without a plan. "I'm willing to listen and work with you to create an alternative plan. But, you have to talk to me."

Classroom Management. Overall, transitioning online was easy; however, SH shared that her discussion-based course presented a challenge. The students were scheduled to present during the course. They were supposed to ask questions ahead of time to determine the patterns and themes that could guide their in-class discussion. It was challenging to recreate this in an asynchronous course.

SH had to reconsider classroom attendance, grappling with the complexity of implementing the university's policy. Students would inform her of their pending absence submission for a religious exemption. Some students were eligible for exemptions from in-person courses, necessitating a virtual or alternative option. There was a delay in processing requests, which led to confusion. Students could receive their exemption at any time. Moreover, accommodations for students requiring disability support (ADA) added another layer of consideration. While she initially favored traditional methods, such as hybrid learning, she found the attendance policy challenging her approach to delivery modes and enforcement.

> Then, students were requesting Zoom because they couldn't be there in person. So then you're trying to do in-person and Zoom at the same time, while the administration is telling you not to do that. So, there was a lot of confusion around what's the right thing to do in these situations, and I think nobody really knew.

Further, she shared a story of a student taking her online class at work. She was teaching an undergraduate course as part of a dual-enrollment program for high school students. She taught it synchronously since it was initially scheduled to be in person. She was checking in on students when one student said she had a question.

> One of the students, who did not have their camera on, said, "Actually, I do have a question." When I looked at the screen, I saw it was face up, and she was at a cash register. She was working. She asked about a due date. She turned her camera off but left her microphone on. She went back to working the register.

Understanding the Impact of Race, Politics and Social Justice. SH shared that racial and political incidents disrupted her class during the first year. She reflected on how eventful that period was. She recalls being in class and receiving a message from her sibling, who was tear-gassed at a local protest. Her sister, who lived with her in the same city where the institution in this study is located, was in a crowd trying to leave the area when she was affected. SH shared the message with her students, who were shocked and expressed a desire to discuss the incident.

Another time, she shared that race protests broke out right outside her door. She recalled:

> Students asked me, "Are you going to attend these events?" Ninety-nine percent of the time, I try to keep my personal opinions out of it. But, in this situation, I felt compelled to say that it's a daunting prospect to attend one of these events. Yet, I'll probably also join to some extent because I want to stand up for what's right.

Relatedly, she noted that students referred to her as a woman of color more than classes in previous years had.

> Previously, it was rarely mentioned. Now, students were asking, "As a woman of color, what is your perspective?' I find that intriguing because I am seen as a model minority in some circles and "close enough to Black" in others. Once the conversation broadened to include "Black and Brown," it felt like an invitation.

Strategies for Fostering Positive Learning Environments

SH opted to keep things simple for her classes. "It was incredibly hard to make those adjustments and feel confident in them." She kept the tools the same to make it easy for students to use. When she returned to the classroom with COVID restrictions, she used strategies from her online courses in her in-person classrooms. "I had everyone bring in their laptops, and we used Google Docs for group work. We treated it like a synchronous class even though we were in person. I did not prefer this."

SH incorporated video responses into her courses, too. She explained:

> I'd have them post a video as part of their discussions every other week or something like that. But, it wasn't as effective, even though I had them post earlier so that they could then respond to each other and have time to do multiple responses if needed. It was still fragmented, and the ideas were getting passed, but my voice in that discussion wasn't as heard. I couldn't manage everything in real-time to be able to get there and share my ideas as well, and so it just did not.

SH balanced strategies that she knew, ones that she felt were good practices, and tactics that were working with the students. She also considered what she could manage. The university provided, and in some cases, mandated training for instructors unfamiliar with online teaching.

SH attended but found it unhelpful (or not meaningful). She taught using discussion boards before, so she felt confident in assigning and assessing their submissions. She added:

> For example, with Jamboards and Google Docs, there are always things that could go wrong. I forgot to make things visible or forgot to allow students to edit. There are so many things that could go wrong online. I didn't want too many factors that would mess everything up.

Faculty-Student Interaction. SH immediately noticed a difference in the connection between herself and the students. She shared,

> Not seeing students in person does affect connection and engagement. Emails from unfamiliar names become confusing. Yet, when I contracted Covid, I was heartened by emails from my students saying they were praying for me. So there was a connection, albeit a different kind.

SH had to rethink strategies in between semesters because of the lack of rapport with the Fall 2020 semester classes. She also could see when strategies were not working well and was able to pivot.

> But, then the next semester, when I had to teach a discussion class online, it was probably the worst class I've taught because I tried to implement more Google Docs and Jamboards and integrate them into the discussions instead of just having a discussion board. But I still just felt like there was a lack of real-time conversation, building off ideas, and seeing everyone else's ideas. And the way I've always done discussions in online classes, for better or worse, has been in smaller groups. So that's good for building a safe space for them to have these conversations and a back-and-forth where they're not overwhelmed with too many ideas at one time. But they don't benefit from hearing others' ideas, right? And in the share-out, there's just no time for that.

SH shared that it was tough to manage the classroom and determine strategies to use to combat the leniency and flexibility students needed and wanted. It was also hard to determine whether the students were cheating the system or they needed flexibility. SH noticed that one characteristic that came out of the pandemic was leniency for students. She shared that:

> I do feel like students still—and I wrestle with this, to be honest—ask for and expect a level of forgiveness and grace. "There's a lot going on in my life; I can't do this and that." Some of that is a carryover from COVID times, right from the pandemic. And some of it is understandable. But some of it's like, "Okay, but now we're getting back to

> the real world, right? You can't have everything be late all the time just because life is challenging." Life was challenging before, and it'll continue to be challenging. There was a temporary dip, and now we have to get back to being responsible adults.

She shared that relationships are sometimes built from a shared struggle. The environment is hard to control, but everyone understands that everyone is navigating the complex landscape together. "The casual interactions have humanized the teaching experience." Further, she believed that students felt a lack of interaction with faculty. It showed up during times of struggle or conflict. Issues escalated over Zoom and email when, in the past, the same issues would have been resolved with a quick conversation after class or in the hallway. "It wasn't easy to say, 'Hey, why don't you step into my office? I hear you're having issues."

SH thought some of the challenges of managing relationships could have been due to changes in her role. She took on a leadership position and taught a class in which she lacked experience.

> So, where I could have in person just said, "Hey, let's be real. This isn't cool; you need to take this class. We need to figure this out," it didn't happen. Instead of coming and talking to me in person—perhaps because Zoom is intimidating—they would immediately send an email and CC the chair, the dean, the provost, and whoever else they needed to. So things escalated much more quickly. I felt that they felt isolated in terms of voicing their concerns.

Documentation Overview

SH submitted two syllabi from the same course before and after the pandemic. In the pre-pandemic syllabus, she offers recommendations for her students to succeed on the first page. This was unique to her syllabi. She encouraged them to keep up with the readings and assignments and observe their study habits. She told them to reach out to her if they needed help through her preferred method of communication. In the post-pandemic syllabus, she leads with technical information on how to reach her and how the course will be taught. Her encouraging words are still shared early; however, they are on the second page.

Outside of the Classroom: The Workplace

SH caught COVID early in the pandemic when people were still wondering what was going to happen. It was expected that she had a full plan for teaching her courses. It was hard to make decisions, including what faculty could step in and teach for her. There were other challenges that she declined to list.

SH missed informal interactions with her peers. She enjoyed working with her peers before the shutdown; she missed connecting with others during the lockdown. She continued to share that she was lonely without interaction with others, students, faculty and administrators. She lived alone for most of the pandemic, outside of the time when her sister moved in. "And so, I actually looked forward to the meetings. I was like, "Yes, people! I'll get to use my faculty Zoom room!" while everyone else was like, "Can we just talk on the phone? I'm so sick of Zoom." I found that to be the most isolating part of the whole experience." She returned as soon as the school resumed in-person operations.

Leadership at All Levels: Department, College, Institution

SH's school leadership encountered various challenges. First, there was a public disagreement with the faculty of the college, leading to confusion amongst the students regarding the return to in-person learning. Second, rule enforcement was inconsistent; faculty were sometimes directed to be strict while at other times instructed to be lenient. Lastly, course delivery methods faced challenges. She fought against it because she believed it was best for her students. "Again, this could be because of the way the college operated at the time, but I felt like there was no discussion. They just said, 'This is what we're going to do.'" They defaulted to asynchronous delivery; she pushed back, requesting her undergraduate courses to be asynchronous.

Off-Campus and At-Home Experiences

As with some of the other study participants, SH interacted in person and online with family.

> The other thing is, speaking about identity and what's going on in your life, I don't have children. I had a partner, but he lived separately. I had my sister with me, but I didn't have huge commitments at that time. So, I felt like if I can do this, I'll do it.

SH taught from home, so students saw her home environment. SH lived alone and missed her family, colleagues, and students. "I was also living alone at the time. It was lonely both personally and professionally because there was no one really to talk to unless you scheduled a formal Zoom meeting."

Conclusion

SH navigated the transition from in-person instruction to virtual teaching with minimal issues. She used her prior online teaching experience, education and training in teaching, and recent technology to ensure her courses met the learning objectives and supported her students. She focused on providing structure, empathy and guidance for students from the onset through the return to in-person classes. This approach stemmed from her teaching philosophy and was communicated through her course syllabi.

SH did face some challenges, including enforcing policies, managing attendance, and keeping up with the changing attitudes, behaviors and values. Her solutions can help others see a model for a positive learning environment. She used Jamboard and Google Docs to actively connect students with the materials. She balanced adapting and innovation in the class throughout the time by managing her own personal and workplace issues. This transition highlights the broader shift necessary for many faculty during a pandemic.

Case #11 Siena

Introduction: Teaching Before the Pandemic

Siena taught at two universities during her teaching career. Her approach to teaching at her initial school differs from the approach she uses now at the institution where the study is taking place. For example, she has a higher instructor-student ratio; she teaches more students. As such, she changed her teaching methods and assessments to adjust to the increase. She did not have to change her philosophy. “I was one of the first people doing flipped classrooms. I’ve been doing them since the early 2000s.” Despite having extensive experience teaching asynchronous online courses, she enjoys the face-to-face classroom. She moves around the physical environment, connecting with her students. She designed easy-to-grade assessments to make the transition easier; she preferred application essays. One of the assessments she used was timed tests. She gave students just enough to evaluate the retention of the material and did not allow for open-book or open-note usage.

Even though her course load is mostly in-person, she employs online distance learning strategies in her classroom. She uses a strategy called Functional Friday, which replaces Friday’s synchronous or live session with an asynchronous activity. You apply what you learned on Monday and Wednesday to your independent activity. “It’s a lot of thinking about ways that people can manage their learning.” Applying a mixture of synchronous and asynchronous approaches could be the future of higher education as leaders and faculty members look to what they can retain from being forced into virtual learning due to the pandemic restrictions. Additionally, it may help faculty feel more prepared because of experience with asynchronous coursework.

At her current institution, she teaches both undergraduate and graduate students. She teaches a sociology course within her academic discipline, where she looks at the intersection of personal, psychological, and sociodemographic. She also teaches another course on global management within her industry. She also teaches a capstone writing-intensive course in which students work with an industry partner on a consulting project.

Teaching During the Height of the Restrictive Period

Spring 2020: Mid-semester Transition to Virtual Learning. Siena learned of the severity of the COVID-19 outbreak while preparing for a spring break trip. Before she left, she saw other trips canceled by the sponsoring institution or the newly implemented restrictions in the destination countries. Her trip was still scheduled. However, concerns started to rise while she was abroad. She was overseas as things were shutting down. She was concerned about everyone's wellness and about the challenges they would face re-entering the United States. "I was terrified. We had a student pass out on public transportation. It ended up being a personal issue, but I was so fearful. At first, I wasn't thinking about my classes; I was thinking about getting back home."

When she returned from England, she learned that her courses would be moved online and synchronously. She felt that the transition was easy because she had taught online before; she had experience and materials. Additionally, she presented on using various pedagogical approaches in online learning programs. She understood how to engage students online. She knew from experience that her flipped classroom would work online. She also knew that simply transitioning from lecturing in person to lecturing online would be problematic. Thus, she felt that she understood the nuances of virtual learning.

Siena had a course that required her to make some changes beyond moving presentation slides online and posting a Zoom meeting URL. One of her courses required a lecture. In that class, she recorded lectures and posted them for students to watch before class. She then had to figure out how to break it up with group work conversations. “If I’m putting them in breakout rooms, I have to go in there. I made it to every single group to make sure they are [completing the work].”

The department made the decision, and while Siena was comfortable teaching online, she did not appreciate the forced synchronous courses. She felt that this mode of delivery was unfair to students and anticipated that her peers would struggle as well. Siena wished the leadership had considered the broad spectrum of living situations of the students. As the university transitioned everyone to virtual learning, she hoped they would either demonstrate knowledge of or create policies that acknowledged the diverse situations students would be transitioning from. Additionally, she wished the faculty in her academic department believed that some courses in their program could be taught virtually. These courses heavily relied on the in-person element and were deemed essential to their industry.

She missed her students. She was familiar and comfortable with teaching online, but she missed in-person interactions with her students, administrators and peers. “I definitely was lonely. [Online] teaching was hard. I didn’t have as much engagement with students as I would have liked. My feedback was really good because students enjoyed coming to class.”

Fall 2020: First Semester with Mixture of Virtual Learning and Restrictive In-Person Operations. Siena returned to campus briefly in the Fall of 2020. She volunteered to teach on campus and in person. She had a class of 20 seated in a large lecture hall. She fought the hybrid option. She explained that the teaching styles online are different from in-person.

She posted a schedule for each 50-minute class. She timed everything, including listing everything the students needed to accomplish that day: “We’re going to have seven minutes in the breakout groups; we’re going to do eight minutes. Bring it back. Give me your highlights. Then, we’re going to learn this thing for 10 minutes.” The class time was never enough, and they had no time to check out because it would be going really fast.

Teaching Takeaways: Reflecting on the Entire Period

Teaching Philosophy. Siena shared a few insights that helped understand her experience. First, her teaching philosophy remained the same. “It only reinforced what I was doing before. Teaching is not about lecturing, and we have to evolve as educators.”

Third, faculty must know their value. “You have to bring value to the course. You need to bring something to the course that you wouldn’t otherwise get. You help them manipulate the information, process it and apply it.” Third, teaching online could be fun. “You can bring flavor asynchronously. You can bring flavor online. We’re not just here, regurgitating information and hoping they absorb it.” Related to this, some faculty positions lack incentives related to teaching. Siena shared this truth and how it shows up in class. She learned to teach because she was interested in it. The metrics for other faculty members do not reward teaching.

Faculty-Student Interaction

Siena made an exciting and unexpected comment. She felt that after the pandemic hit but before the restrictive period ended, students started craving interaction.

> I felt like [administrators and faculty] felt like they needed to be hard to get through. I didn’t see it that way. It could be the mother in me. We know that humans need to be taken care of as humans. They are not going to benefit from whatever we’re doing in the learning environment if their basic needs aren’t met.

She noticed that her students were violating university policy in class. She shared stories of how students sat closer together each class time despite knowing they needed to space out.

The cleaning person yelled at them one time because they were violating the distance policy. “They are creeping [closer] because they are desperate for human closeness.

She continued, “COVID gave me enough pause, and I was able to have better relationships with a small percentage of students.” She explained that before COVID, students rarely walked her back to class to continue talking. After COVID, she felt that students saw her as a person. They shared what they were thinking or things that made them cry in class. “More people were willing to talk to me as a person. I had higher-quality relationships with a [small] percentage of students.”

Outside of the Classroom: The Workplace

In addition to missing her students, she missed her peers for two reasons. They are a close-knit group, and she missed seeing them every day during the initial isolation period. “We love each other. That’s really strong for me to say. We don’t see eye to eye a lot, but we’re committed to each other, and I feel like because we lost that ability to be together, it was really hard for people, myself included.”

On top of that, she knew they would be challenged by teaching online. It took a lot of work for them to navigate because it was a different teaching style. They needed to be equipped to navigate this change. They needed more experience online and even less with asynchronous. They tried to lecture online but quickly found out that they would need to learn a new method. Faculty satisfaction is essential to quality online teaching. This is a good point of discussion for this reason. Suppose administrators told them to move to synchronous mode because it would keep things as close to normal as possible despite the instructors’ hesitation and beliefs about online learning. In that case, the quality is more than likely going to be low because of the

beliefs. The delivery will solve the short-term issue of consistency but fail in the long term because of limiting beliefs.

Related to that, Siena could not only see her peers struggling, but she also felt powerless. “I think my biggest challenge was feeling like I couldn’t help my colleagues as they didn’t have the experience I had, and no matter what I told them, it was still going to be tough.” She had the mindset and had been teaching for years. She shared throughout the interview that her teaching philosophy stayed the same because she was prepared for this experience. She recognized, “It’s such a shift in how you teach and how you do what you’re doing. And suppose your personality and teaching philosophy aren’t in line with that kind of shift. In that case, it’s really hard.” Her peers would have needed to believe that online instruction could work and have been trained over some time instead of flash training during a global pandemic. In the same way instructors scaffold material and concepts into their courses, instructors would have to do something similar to learn about distance learning.

Leadership at All Levels: Department, College, Institution

Awareness of and openness to online learning have to come from the top. At this institution, Siena felt that it was not a collective priority. “You have to be open to online learning and the differences in pedagogy. [The institution] was not.” She felt that if they had been committed, then others would have been trained, and the university would not have needed to make recommendations during the pandemic. A plan would have been in place. For example, instructors were told that as a method for allowing flexibility for students, they should offer an in-person option and an online option once the campus re-opened under restrictions. Siena said, “I wonder who was deciding to offer a hybrid.” Numerous instructors across the case studies agreed that the hybrid option was flawed. Siena furthered her point by sharing that online and

face-to-face instruction requires different approaches. If you choose one over the other, you are shorting the students.

Off-Campus and At-Home Experiences

Siena is married with children. Her children are older, so they can access their learning management platforms with little support. She has support in the house; she has in-home childcare, and her husband works from home. Her one child loved distance learning, so she stayed online after everyone went back to school.

Strategies for Fostering Positive Learning Environments

Explaining Siena's organized approach to class sessions can help us understand how she built relationships with students. First, she started class by checking in with them.

> I would spend five minutes warming students up. I would randomly call on someone and ask them what was happening in their life. I have a mom vibe and everyone was cool with that. I could call them out because of that.

She used Google Docs to measure learning and get students involved. Second, she used more sensitivity during the pandemic. She recognized that sometimes people are going to be checked out. She experienced people not being involved. She shared a story of another student sharing with her how they saw other students checked out. Siena had a different perspective. She saw it as engaging as needed or necessary.

> Everybody experienced COVID differently. I wasn't saying anything to them in class because I didn't know what was going on at their houses. I didn't know if someone had COVID or if someone had died. I didn't know if they were sad or felt that being at home sucked.

She recognized that other faculty were forcing them to turn on cameras when many didn't have a private space. "We weren't reminded that a lot of students don't have a good living situation. A lot of students' housing situations changed when they left for college."

Conclusion

Siena used her experiences teaching online at two different institutions to navigate the pandemic. Once she returned from her study abroad trip and realized courses were moving to virtual learning, she leaned on her experience and course content to rethink her courses. Further into the pandemic, she continued to rely on her teaching philosophies and approaches to provide a positive learning environment for students as they met the outcomes of each course. Siena watched her peers struggle with the transition as they lacked the teaching experience and course materials, as well as the belief that their academic program could be effectively delivered online. Overall, Siena's experience affirmed that her teaching philosophy and strategies were effective with the changing student attitudes, values and beliefs.

Case #12 Zeteta

Introduction: Teaching Before the Pandemic

Zeteta has been teaching since the early 1980s, making her the most experienced participant in this study. She is part of an arts academic program, where she has witnessed significant changes in teaching styles over the years. Initially, her approach mirrored mentorship; she demonstrated her art process in the studio rather than dictating best practices like a "sage on the stage" would. This method, as she puts it, involved "pulling back the curtain" to reveal her creative process to the students.

Over time, her teaching style and the broader role of instructors in arts education have shifted towards a more structured pedagogical approach. Similarly, student expectations and roles have evolved, which will be discussed in a subsequent section.

In terms of her methodologies, Zeteta noted that, even before the pandemic, she incorporated traditional tools into her teaching. She provided handouts and encouraged note-taking, suggesting a preference for older teaching methods.

> I was still teaching my classes using an older format, which was: You take notes, or I'll give you handouts. You can take notes on top of [the handouts]; students love that. Many of the things I was teaching needed formulas, which is what students were used to. It was an interesting transition again.

While she used the traditional approach, she also noted that computers were introduced into her academic discipline, and she had integrated them into some of her classes.

> Again, I taught upper-level undergraduates, like in the Senior Seminar, guiding them through their thesis projects. I also initiated a digital arts class, which evolved from that period because, you know, I taught before computers were integrated. Then, once computers were introduced, it was a fascinating transition, incorporating computer use, software, and all that into the curriculum.

While there is a common misconception that some faculty members resist technology, Zeteta clarified that she was not apprehensive about embracing it. However, she understood her colleagues' reluctance, linking it to the industry's slow adoption of new technologies. Despite this, she proactively integrated technology into her courses, ensuring they aligned with industry standards.

> It was exciting. We started with five computers for everyone to share, not to mention sharing a single software copy across the room, navigating the "wild, wild West" of integrating computers into art. Unlike painting or printmaking, our area needed to keep pace with industry developments. We had limited computers, but the excitement was palpable, especially in the late 1990s. Students were eager, and some were already knowledgeable. Interestingly, some high schools had better facilities than our college.

In addition to managing the computer transition, Zeteta played a pivotal role in adopting learning management systems (LMS) for both in-person and online courses. She reflected on her evolving use of the LMS portal before and after the pandemic. Before March 2020, she primarily used the portal as a repository. Subsequently, it became a tool for communication and

information storage. Reflecting on her initial LMS course content and structure, she couldn't help but laugh at the inefficiencies. "Looking back, it's comical. The posts were nonsensical and disorganized," she admitted. Zeteta then collaborated with the institution's teaching center to develop best practices for configuring LMS for arts programs, enhancing its effectiveness in her teaching approach. She continued:

> I got a lot of experience [trying to] figure out the logistics not only for an asynchronous class but also for a synchronous class. How could one entice students to use it? How could you use all of the bells and whistles to create a more engaging learning experience?

While integrating computers into an art program might seem challenging, Zeteta shared that the school faced a more daunting transition: academic program relocation. During a period of cost-cutting, the university decided to move her school from one campus to a larger one. Initially, students, faculty, alumni, and most administrators opposed the move, believing it would have detrimental effects. The program's culture was deeply intertwined with its physical location, and everyone, except for the university's leadership, resisted the change. Despite the involvement of three different architects, the relocation eventually proceeded. The administration timed the move between the fall and spring semesters. "We finished the semester and had six weeks to transition from one campus to the other," Zeteta recounted. She added that the new facilities were not fully prepared for their arrival. "The buildings weren't ready. The bathrooms were out of order. We had to pack our belongings for the movers and then unpack once everything was delivered." Zeteta labeled the situation as chaotic, noting that enrollment experienced a temporary decline following the move.

Teaching During the Height of the Restrictive Period

Spring 2020: Mid-semester Transition to Virtual Learning. Zeteta learned about the pandemic under unique circumstances. She was planning a trip to Japan with colleagues when

her daughter, who was closely following the news, updated her about the escalating situation, aware of her upcoming travel. Coincidentally, Zeteta had just hosted a colleague from Japan and fell ill shortly after the colleague's departure, suspecting later that it was COVID-19. However, her doctor diagnosed it as the flu, as they weren't testing for the Coronavirus at the time. She believed it was a misdiagnosis.

When the department met to address the situation and plan their response, Zeteta could not attend in person. She sent her teaching assistant to represent her at the meeting while she participated virtually, observing through a computer her assistant held. She described the atmosphere as chaotic, with faculty members expressing confusion and uncertainty. "Everyone was saying, 'We don't know what to do, we're not familiar with [the LMS], what is Zoom?'" she recalled. In contrast to her faculty colleagues, she felt somewhat prepared, having had experience teaching asynchronous courses during the summer.

Fall 2020: First Semester with Mixture of Virtual Learning and Restrictive In-Person Operations. Zeteta was comfortable with online teaching and felt well-prepared, thanks to her prior training and experience. She had introduced online courses to her program as part of a university-wide initiative to expand distance learning offerings.

> We had already been developing online classes before the pandemic. These were only for summer school, and they were all asynchronous. Having taught those was really beneficial for me. No other art program [in the school] was doing that, maybe just one other department. But, we truly took a leadership role in offering asynchronous classes before the pandemic.

She also appreciated the new perspective that teaching through the Zoom platform offered. Unlike in physical classrooms, where she often saw only the backs of students as she walked around, Zoom allowed her to see their faces and their work directly, enriching her teaching experience. Zeteta continued teaching online until the Fall 2022 semester, when she

returned to in-person teaching with fewer restrictions, although students were still required to wear masks and maintain social distancing.

Zeteta was able to get a paper vendor to donate paper so she could print their work and mail it to them. She would print a copy and make comments. She would then make adjustments to their submission and print it out so they could see the difference. She felt that this was a better way to critique their work, at least at the start. She also saw that it was an exciting and different way to teach them.

Teaching Takeaways: Reflecting on the Entire Period

Zeteta opted to continue her courses online after the Fall 2020 semester for several reasons. First, she observed a preference for virtual learning among her students, as indicated by their feedback and evaluations. Second, she found that course outcomes could still be met virtually, an important consideration given the need for physical space in her school to accommodate other classes that required in-person sessions due to their design.

Zeteta observed the impact of global health, racial, and political crises on student mental health, which manifested in two significant ways in her classroom. Firstly, she noticed a decrease in students' tolerance levels, affecting their receptivity to feedback and their behavior when challenged. For instance, she had to contact emergency services after a student experienced a severe episode requiring medical intervention, highlighting the challenges of the Spring 2023 semester. Secondly, Zeteta facilitated discussions on more controversial topics, encouraging open conversations about students' experiences, such as participating in Black Lives Matter protests.

As students returned to in-person learning, Zeteta observed a notable shift in their readiness to engage in physical tasks. Previously, a simple instruction to hang work would

prompt immediate action, but now, students hesitated, displaying a form of resistance that differed from pre-pandemic behaviors. This change in student engagement indicated a broader social and emotional adjustment to the post-restrictive period. Related to that, she is reflecting on what is her responsibility and what is the student's.

> That's been a real struggle for me this year. Before, I would post everything, deadlines and announcements. I would write an announcement every Monday morning. In the spring [2023], I stopped doing that because I thought, "Why would a student come to class if everything was on [the LMS]?"

Even though Zeteta has resumed in-person teaching, she shared two things that changed for her upon her return to campus. The first is that she continues to conduct office hours via Zoom, recognizing the increased availability and flexibility it provides. Early in the pandemic, she observed that she was overly available to her students, motivated by empathy for their circumstances and an understanding of their need for emotional support. This prompted her to extend her availability beyond typical hours, scheduling Zoom meetings outside of regular class and work times. Eventually, Zeteta reassessed her boundaries, realigning her availability closer to pre-pandemic standards. However, this adjustment in office hours was not listed in the syllabi reviewed in this study.

The second is that her teaching approach integrates her engagement with current events with contemporary teaching and art-making methods. This integration enables her to comfortably discuss a variety of issues with her students, including racial and political tensions and emerging technologies in industry and society.

Strategies for Fostering Positive Learning Environments

To foster positive interaction and exchange innovative teaching strategies, Zeteta engaged in various collaborative learning activities online and at her institution. Zeteta joined faculty groups on social media related to her area of expertise, which expanded significantly over

time. Within these groups, faculty members exchanged ideas on classroom management. She observed that her colleagues in other arts disciplines were less active on social media than those in her field. Additionally, Zeteta actively participated in and led training sessions at the teaching center associated with the institution in this study. She noted the center's extensive offering of workshops, appreciating the broad range of training opportunities available. These sessions ranged from individual training to general teaching advice and support, although they were less targeted than the discussions in her social media group.

Zeteta mentioned something unique about her learning experience. She shared that reading newspapers like the *New York Times* gave her ideas and insight into teaching. It also helped her navigate tough conversations around race, politics and police brutality. While she did not share specific incidents, she firmly believed the following:

> These are college-age or mid-twenties students who were very informed and had opinions on [what was happening]. Engagement with contemporary social issues was important. My engagement with the news really made a difference.

Zeteta used the knowledge from the online groups and training center to engage with her students. For example, she would give them assignments that forced them to leave their rooms safely. She saw the struggle with being inside and encouraged them to go outside for a project. When they returned, they talked about the pictures but also spent some time conversing about their experiences outside of their rooms or homes.

Faculty-Student Interaction. Zeteta employed encouraging strategies to foster engagement at the beginning of class. She recognized that students needed to talk because they were not getting that interaction outside of class or in their homes. She was aware that some students were living alone, isolated from others, and needing interpersonal interaction. Understanding that her struggles were different from those of her students, she aimed to support

them and alleviate some of their challenges. She did not face the same difficulties; she was a widow, her only child was living independently, and she could do her job remotely. She reflected:

> That's why I made myself so much more available. It was just like I needed to share my good fortune with somebody, and so I would listen for hours to somebody complaining. I'll take your call at 10 p.m. because I didn't have those kinds of struggles. If there was any way that I could make the path a little bit easier for the students, I tried to do that.

Once the class shifted from interpersonal communication at the beginning of class to addressing the learning outcomes for that session, Zeteta called on everyone in the virtual room. She taught a small group of 20 students. In addition, she often had them share their screens. She would draw her comments on the screen so everyone could see. She saw this as a benefit that enhanced both the student being critiqued and the other students' learning. She would also print their work and hang it up behind her. "I wouldn't say anything until somebody went, 'Wait, that's my print behind you.' I tried to keep everyone engaged, not only just with my face but also with what was behind them." She asked them to also hang their work.

Emotional Intelligence. Zeteta noted the significant need for connection among her students during this challenging period. She began her classes by acknowledging their difficulties, inquiring about their well-being, and allowing time for informal conversations. "You guys are facing a tough situation," she would say, expressing her empathy and understanding. "It's really hard right now." She aimed to uplift them, emphasizing that they were not alone in navigating the hardships brought on by the pandemic. This practice of fostering connection continued even after the return to in-person classes.

Following class, students often stayed online to engage in further discussion or visited her during office hours. Zeteta observed that students would linger to express their gratitude or to say goodbye, sometimes for up to 45 minutes. Eventually, she would have to end the sessions to

attend meetings or prepare for other classes. This behavior contrasts with previous studies on office hours, which suggested a student's reluctance to utilize them. Zeteta believes the pandemic has enhanced faculty accessibility, changing the dynamics of student-faculty interactions.

> This semester [Spring 2023], I really had to [rethink my availability]. By the end of the semester, I realized my boundaries needed to be set in a whole different way because I was so available because of Zoom. They were used to seeing me, and they were very comfortable with that kind of exchange. I was making myself way too available too often.

She shared that the experience underscored the humanity of her students and their struggles. They were seeking attention and personal interaction, which is significant because previous literature often views student interaction predominantly through an educational lens. This means that while students sought interaction within the context of their classroom, what they truly desired was to be acknowledged as individuals, potentially discussing topics beyond the curriculum. "I could see that people were exhausted," she observed. "In class, they would lean back in their seats or wear dark glasses under their hoodies. It was evident that they were emotionally burdened." This realization motivated Zeteta to take proactive steps to address their needs.

> I had the agency to help some of those students through those difficult times by talking to them as people, not just as students, and acknowledging how difficult it was. It wasn't just them. If they were having a hard time, I'd be having a hard time, too, and here's the hard time I'm having. How can we make that better? And so I would spend at least the first half hour just engaging personally with people.

Technology Integration in Teaching. Zeteta was familiar with computers and had used technology in her courses for a long time. During the restrictive period, she continued to introduce new technologies into the classroom. While her students were already using LMS platforms in her classes, she introduced Zoom, ChatGPT and Dall-E, which are web-based

content creation programs to her students. “This semester, I introduced artificial intelligence, ChatGPT, and Dal-E into my classes while it was still free. A lot of my students hadn’t even heard of it before.”

Zeteta also reduced her method for announcing assignments. She felt that if students saw the deadline, they would wait until the last minute to start working on it. “This semester, I started saying, ‘You have to take paper notes while I’m talking and find the deadlines.’” She also had them post their notes to see how students were listening. She wanted to see what information was being gleaned from the in-class announcements. “There was a lot of pushback. They asked, ‘Where is the deadline?’ and I responded that you posted the note with it. It’s there. I felt like I was feeding a little bit too much to students and not giving them the responsibility for their learning styles.”

Document Overview

Zeteta submitted two course syllabi for review in this case study. She shared a course schedule from before the pandemic and a syllabus from a later semester. She listed an inclement weather policy. She wanted to communicate to her students what they should do in case the school or campus is closed. She was the only one who listed this information. Her syllabus also included a statement on respect and equity in the classroom. While her course did not focus on controversial topics, her experience from the pandemic showed in including a section on the syllabus on meaningful conversation and respectful dialogue. The second document listed the week-by-week topic schedule for the semester.

Outside of the Classroom: The Workplace

Zeteta employed the same caring approach with her peers as she did with her students. She volunteered to mentor other faculty members who were transitioning to the LMS. She

recognized how hard it was to use and knew that others shied away from it for that reason. She eventually volunteered to help faculty create LMS platforms in the year before the pandemic. Many of her peers lacked interest in and the skillset to use the platform. “Nobody was interested in that; it just wasn’t the climate. It also wasn’t required.”

After the pandemic, she checked in with her peers individually. She asked about their classes and could support them as they made decisions about the curriculum. “Because I had taught all of those classes already, I was able to help them figure some of it out.”

Zeteta was productive outside of the classroom. She channeled her knowledge of teaching in arts programs to support the teaching center as they sought to improve instruction in that area during turbulent times. Since she had a relationship with the department, she enrolled in and taught certification classes for creative academic programs. Her programs were for graduate students who were getting certified in teaching and for faculty peers in the arts who wanted to learn how to teach online. She taught her peers how to incorporate LMS platforms into arts courses.

> I took the certification twice, once as a faculty member and once as a student. I was surprised by all the reading that had to be done. I had already gone through a lot of training, before this happened, about writing syllabi, curriculum and course goals. I was on this track of looking at teaching more.

Conclusion

Zeteta relied on her teaching knowledge and experience coupled with her technology knowledge and skills to navigate the pandemic successfully. Once she knew the change was happening, she quickly organized her courses and supported her peers. During the more restrictive period, she used strategies that helped her maintain positive interactions with students, ensure she was meeting the course learning goals, and that students were comfortable with the technology being used during the disruptive time.

Zeteta employed best practices learned through her engagement with peers online and in the teaching center, as well as by reading feedback forms from her students. She stated in her interview that she had to pay even more attention to students to ensure that they were having a quality educational experience. Since moving away from the restrictive time, she has noticed changes in the students, including less preparedness, lower willingness to try new things, and lower management of mental health issues. Overall, her experience helps us better understand how one faculty member experienced art education before and during a tumultuous time.

Cross-Case Analysis

This study addressed two research questions: What did faculty members experience teaching between January 2019 and May 2023, and how did faculty members foster positive interaction with students? This section explores the intersection of experiences of the cases in this study.

Teaching Takeaways: Reflecting on the Entire Period

First, transitioning courses from in-person to online platforms was relatively easy for the participants in this study. They faced challenges managing classroom behavior and using videoconferencing during synchronous sessions. Most faculty had experience teaching in person and online and had course materials to post during the fast transition to virtual learning platforms. As they moved content online, they identified and found solutions to problems that arose. Most faculty shared that they conducted online research, contacted faculty peers through online communities of practice, and used the teaching center resources. In general, they felt they could teach their courses effectively through virtual platforms.

One of the primary factors in a quality education is faculty satisfaction (Bolliger & Wasilik, 2009; Miller, 2014). Faculty satisfaction with online instruction means that instructors

believe they can teach their courses effectively in virtual settings. Lexa, Siena, Heidi and Zeteta demonstrated faculty satisfaction in their respective courses. Heidi and Siena had extensive experience with online instruction, and Siena worked for a university that strongly supported virtual learning experiences. Lexa and Zeteta taught a few courses online but believed that online instruction could be effective in their disciplines. Both fully embraced the transition as they were early adopters of distance learning in their departments.

Additionally, most instructors maintained their teaching philosophy despite the disruption. This was surprising as at least six of them listed real-world or out-of-classroom experiences in their teaching philosophies and pre-COVID syllabi. Lexa avoided compromising her teaching philosophy in moving to asynchronous learning. She maintained a philosophy of connecting classroom learning with industry experience. Students were still required to engage with professionals in the industry or complete assignments in spaces outside of the virtual and physical classrooms. This was one of the most valuable elements of her courses, as workplace experience was essential to joining the industry after graduation. Lamont shared similar sentiments, as part of his job is teaching students to teach in physical classrooms. He was able to add real-world experiences through pre-existing course videos and online classrooms through the local school system. The fact that both could identify the value in their courses and maintain it supports Miller's (2014) work that part of satisfaction is determining the value in students' online experiences.

Relatedly, faculty-student and student-student interactions play a prominent role in determining faculty and student satisfaction with online courses (Miller, 2014). In most cases, faculty members encouraged student discussion not only with faculty but also with each other. They recognized the educational value of connecting with the instructor, students and course

materials. This showed up positively and negatively for some of the instructors. For example, Kurdene and Malcolm managed challenging discussions with students over controversial topics; students were emotional in their response to racial, political and social justice issues happening in their lives. The student-to-student and faculty-to-student discussions helped all find a space to process the events and their emotions. Conversely, Eoin mentioned incidents where student-to-student interactions caused emotional strife. A student in his class made controversial remarks that upset other students. He had to meet separately with that student to discuss their impact on the course. These examples support Bolliger and Wasilik's (2009) call for more research on the dynamics of online learning as they become more complex.

In the context of classroom management, attendance emerged as a nuanced challenge, particularly under the evolving dynamics of student engagement. This was an emergent code from the data and came up in various interviews. It also showed prominently in the syllabi. Most classes had a policy at or near the top of the document; all included the institution-issued text. In managing this, faculty members relied on attendance policies provided by the university as part of its crisis management response. This aspect prompts a reflection on how such shifts might be integrated into the faculty's perspective and future preparedness strategies. The complexity of managing attendance was underscored by unclear policies, which some faculty found contradictory to their experiences. Again, looking at faculty satisfaction scholarship, Bolliger and Wasilik (2009) noted that factors affecting interaction could be institution-related. The case study participants shared that the ambiguity made it difficult to discern genuine needs from potential abuses of leniency. Lexa highlighted these challenges, noting that the university and her school had implemented attendance policies accommodating students who were sick or unable to

attend classes physically. These policies extended to online behaviors, such as camera usage during classes and adapted testing strategies.

Teaching with Technology

Teaching with technology was forced on some faculty members. The pandemic presented an opportunity for faculty to explore their myths about teaching with technology. Surprisingly, most of the faculty interviewed in this study shared concerns about two things: discussion boards and camera usage. They all shared concerns about their peers and teaching with technology. While the general myth was that faculty did not want to teach with technology, the cases provide a few nuanced arguments that are worth exploring. Most preferred to teach in person but had online teaching training or experience. Others watched or supported their peers in introducing technology during the pandemic. All agreed that interaction and relationship building was more complicated virtually, regardless of experience or asynchronous or synchronous delivery mode. Technology in relationship building and interacting will be discussed later in this section.

Overwhelmingly, the faculty in this case study preferred teaching in person despite having online teaching training and experience. Those who went through training did so for various reasons. Some did so because the department provided training, a stipend and an opportunity to teach asynchronous courses during the summer.

While most instructors felt comfortable using simple technology such as videoconference or LMS platforms, all watched or supported their faculty peers in introducing technology to their courses during the pandemic. Most participants shared that they supported their peers, especially those without training or experience teaching online, during the more restrictive part of the pandemic. Trust and Whalen (2020) noted that continuity of learning required “educators to be fluent users of technology, creative and collaborative problem solvers, and adaptive, socially

aware experts throughout their careers" (p. 189). The perception was that their peers were not familiar with technology, and despite being good problem solvers, they were going to struggle to get up to speed in a relatively short time during a highly stressful time. The challenges for faculty transitioning during the pandemic centered on their beliefs, lack of training, experience, and pre-organized resources. Heidi shared that her transition was easier because, in addition to training and experience, she had content created for her class. She was able to support others from a non-positional leadership role. She said, "We got very little notice. I know that was hard for a lot of my colleagues." Siena shared similar sentiments in that she had training, experience, and materials, and she also presented research on engagement in online learning. Zeteta and Amy both supported their arts peers in formal and informal roles within the school and through the university.

Exams and Tests During Online Learning

Some faculty members discussed exams, cheating and low grades. Ricky kept all his assignments the same, including exams. He created them online as opposed to handing them out in class. He shared that he could not measure the effectiveness of learning through using exams during that time. Lexa shared a similar sentiment, removing tests entirely after the first year online. In addition to measuring student learning, she shared that system availability was inconsistent. Siena was the lone faculty member who discussed exams positively. She shared that she used timed tests in her courses to speed up the grading process for more extensive courses. She gave students just enough time to test retention of the material and did not allow for open-book or open-note resources.

Teaching in the Classroom Under Pandemic Restrictions

In the same way that faculty struggled with getting students to turn their cameras on, they struggled with wearing masks. While students respected and abided by the mask policy, a few shared that it was hard to teach with them. It was a challenge talking with them. You had to remember to bring them with you and put them on when you were inside or near people. Ricky shared that you could at least see partial facial expressions when students wore masks. This was in comparison to cameras off when you get no feedback in virtual classrooms.

Connected to classroom management was classroom performance by the faculty. They had to project calm and confidence to students while providing support and empathy. For some, they were worried about the health concerns during the pandemic. Arete and Malcolm explicitly mentioned watching the news for updates on the health crisis. Others shared that they could not show their emotion – unhappiness, fear or worry – because students needed them to be strong. Further, some did not struggle personally during this time and instead chose to spend extra time comforting and providing a space for students. SH, Amy, Heidi, Zeteta, and Siena stayed after class for extended periods or created informal spaces for students to gather as a way of providing support during this time.

Despite the challenges with teaching, all faculty mentioned adopting or re-affirming the holistic view of students, acknowledging their connections outside of class and how current events were both helpful and harmful. Siena shared,

> I felt like people felt like they needed to be hard to get through. I didn't see it that way. It could be the mother in me. We know that humans need to be taken care of as humans. They are not going to benefit from whatever we're doing in the learning environment if their basic needs aren't met.

Faculty Student Interaction and Relationships

This section helps focus on the second research question—how faculty members fostered positive interaction with students between January 2019 and May 2023. The data showed that faculty still held limiting beliefs about engaging online, that building relationships remained a focus and challenge in virtual learning and that avoiding negative outcomes was on faculty members' minds. I elaborated on each of these points below.

First, faculty members still held onto limiting beliefs about engagement in online learning. One myth that existed pre-pandemic was that instructors could not build relationships with students virtually (Carr et al., 2021). Before the pandemic, Felten and Lambert (2020) suggested relationship webs instead of individual relationships to ensure valuable experiences amongst undergraduate students. In this system, students build relationships with other students, peers, faculty, staff, and administrators to create a blanket of support instead of relying on instructor relationships to survive college. The pandemic complicated that notion as it hindered informal interactions and face-to-face interactions between faculty and students; they now had to rely on asynchronous and synchronous virtual interactions to continue to develop meaningful relationships. Eoin and Ricky shared that the chances were lower compared to face-to-face courses and that faculty members and students could build relationships through online courses. Amy seemed to believe that it could be done, but it robbed the faculty of the best part of the teaching experience.

Their concepts connected to this notion of humanizing the student, one that various teachers brought up during the interview process and in their teaching philosophies. Felten and Lambert's (2020) work showed that faculty members could be humanized and seen as people instead of being a one-stop solution or the ultimate determining factor in an individual student's

success at the undergraduate level. Schwartz (2019) encouraged faculty to explore their social identities more and determine how to bring themselves into the learning environment to foster connectedness with students. SH brought up this point when describing teaching moments. She shared that teaching from home and having students hear protests made her pause; the students saw her as a woman of color instead of just a professor. Kurdene made a similar comment in that as he saw the students struggle, he felt it was helpful to share more about himself to show that he recognized what they were experiencing. Schwartz (2019) suggests that faculty members will have to explore their beliefs in relation to their teaching practice.

Second, faculty members shared that building relationships online is hard. Some faculty believed that relationships could and should be built wherever the student is. However, they did share their frustrations with how hard it is, especially with a pandemic, racial and political reckoning and social justice issues playing in the back of everyone's minds. Kurdene noted that he had better relationships online, pre-pandemic, than following its onset. He shared that his relationships improved because he could see the students' struggles more than before. Additionally, he recognized that he had to share more about himself with his students to build relationships. As he opened up more, he saw a response from the students.

Some faculty members were able to build relationships with students online during the restrictive period of the first year of the lockdown, between March 2020 and March 2021. Siena felt that after the pandemic hit but before it was over/restrictive period was over, students wanted interaction. She shared, "COVID gave me enough pause that I was able to have better relationships with a small percentage of students." She explained that before COVID, students rarely walked her back to class to continue talking. After COVID, she felt that students saw her as a person. They shared what they were thinking or things that made them cry in class. "More

people were willing to talk to me as a person. I had higher-quality relationships with a [small] percentage of students."

Third, cameras presented a challenge for instructors, especially when interacting with students. Most faculty had strict instructions about camera usage in their syllabi after the Spring 2020 semester. Cameras were a pain point for all in engagement for all but one participant, Zeteta. She shared in her interview that she usually saw their backs and sides because of the class seating arrangement in her studio. Being on Zoom allowed students to see her face and her to see their faces. She went so far as to post their submissions on her wall so they could see them while she was on camera. She encouraged students to do the same. This is not surprising as meaningfully integrated interaction can increase students' chances of meeting their learning outcomes (Hodges et al., 2020). Using the videos to showcase work and see each others' faces for the first time in that course created a meaningful experience for her and her students.

Everyone else struggled. Eoin, Ricky, and Amy shared that the video conferencing platforms used in class lacked the same ease and ability for building relationships. Ricky explained that he would set up his video camera for Zoom in the same way he would for class. He would stand behind his camera and talk to the screen of black boxes. It was a challenge to manage the chat, stay on track, and call on students for discussion. It required a skillset he developed through training but was out of practice when it came to teaching during the pandemic.

Adding to the complexity of using video platforms, Lexa and Malcolm taught diversity courses. Kim and Sax (2017) listed civic outcomes as an area for research in measuring faculty-student interaction. As such, the discussions held in these courses had broader implications for student performance in college and beyond. Lexa had to make sure students could engage

meaningfully and thoughtfully and that they realized that they might see their peers in person one day and would have to deal with any backlash. A return to in-person instruction was imminent, and students would remember the harmful remarks made. That could show up in a face-to-face classroom. “You are not behind a camera. You are not on your social feeds where people can’t see how they’re feeling as a result of your language.”

In addition to video issues, discussion boards, a common assignment used in face-to-face and virtual courses, were a source of contention. Most faculty had discussion board assignments in their post-pandemic course syllabi. My perception is that faculty members used both options based on ERT or online synchronous learning best practices. Despite not being designed for the situation caused by the pandemic, faculty members relied on emergency remote (ERT) and online teaching strategies during the pandemic (Hodges et al., 2020). ERT is a temporary shift of instructional delivery to an alternate mode due to crisis circumstances (Hodges et al., 2020). ERT is typically for emergencies, not elongated disasters or situations like those experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic. ERT assumes that teaching will return to normal once the area is rebuilt or safe to return to operations.

Lastly, faculty members can inadvertently undermine the student-faculty relationship. Eoin was highly critical of his teaching performance during the pandemic. He initially transferred in-person strategies online, adjusting them based on student feedback. Conversely, Heidi mentioned that she did the same thing. However, she did not have any adverse reactions from the students. Engaging and interacting with students remotely requires practices that differ from in-person methods. Kurdene mentioned “losing a few students,” which could be interpreted as a failure to establish connections within the classroom. He described scenarios where students were online but invisible throughout the semester. This finding aligns with scholarship

advocating for positive engagement, which suggests that stronger relationships can enhance student retention (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014). Moreover, students' awareness of their peers' absence can further influence their own experiences. Positive engagement benefits not only the individuals directly involved but also fosters a broader sense of community engagement (Anderson & Carta-Falsa, 2002). Faculty members in this study expressed a shared concern and made concerted efforts to address these issues individually.

To better understand whether interactions online are effective, faculty could look at their experiences through Kezar and Maxey's (2014) four qualities of high-quality faculty interactions:

1) faculty members were approachable and personable;

2) faculty members had enthusiasm and passion for their work;

3) faculty members cared about students personally;

4) and faculty members served as role models and mentors.

Applying their study to the case findings, one can see elements of these qualities in the participants' experiences. For example, almost all faculty members listed multiple ways to connect with students and instructions for engaging professionally with them through email or video conferencing interactions. This provides an opportunity for faculty to show how approachable and personable they are. Further, some faculty members hosted informal virtual sessions to communicate the openness found in Kezar and Maxey's (2014) study. Amy, Heidi, Zeteta and Siena hosted virtual sessions to spend time informally with students. Ricky, Amy, Zeteta, Siena, and Lexa showed enthusiasm and passion for their work and caring about students personally. Ricky created an introductory song for his recorded lectures and synchronous classes. Amy shared her experiences collaborating with clients during relevant class topics, as noted in

her course syllabi. Zeteta used class time to praise students' work and even went as far as mailing original and corrected submissions to students through the U.S. Postal Service. Lexa and Lamont's passion was shown in their commitment to maintaining their teaching philosophy. Last, despite the lack of in-person connection, Amy still mentored award-winning student presentations, and Kurdene guided students to complete their capstone projects.

Faculty-Student Typology in Online Teaching and Learning

One of the core tenets of the literature review centered on Cox's (Cox & Orehovec, 2007; Cox et al., 2010; Cox, 2011) various works on faculty-student interaction. He was one of few researchers who explored it from both the student and faculty perspective. He, alongside other authors, sought to understand students' experiences interacting with faculty on various levels. Their work can help us understand the case studies.

First, disengagement and incidental contact increased interaction because of the lack of contact outside of the classroom (Cox & Orehovec, 2007). Typically, faculty and students would meet walking into or out of the classroom, at campus-sponsored programs, or various locations on the physical campus. During the pandemic, informal opportunities dropped at various points due to government restrictions. It became relatively easy for students and faculty to avoid each other.

Faculty tried to create both functional relationships and personal interactions. Functional relationships are school-related opportunities, such as advising or program attendance. Amy, Zeteta, Heidi and Siena discussed creating video conference rooms to connect with students. In most cases, the participants were their students. Heidi advised her student organizations while Amy oversaw student presentations and awards submissions. Personal interactions happen when

faculty and students have a shared interest. While some of these overlap with functional relationships, this was not explicitly mentioned in any case studies.

Mentoring is defined within typology as when faculty and students develop professional relationships (Cox & Orehovec, 2007). Because the study focused on in-class interaction, the cases lacked sufficient data on these relationships.

Outside of the Classroom: The Workplace

The experiences in this study did not align with the research on the workplace and productivity during COVID-19. As noted earlier, little literature exists on the faculty perspective of faculty-student interaction. However, faculty job satisfaction during COVID-19 is a growing area of research. In general, the participants in this study had a relatively calm experience, which contradicts reports that faculty members were stressed and overworked from pivoting during an emergency (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2021). In that study, almost 50% of the faculty population surveyed were tenure track faculty, and more than two-thirds of the participants had taught for 11 years or more. In viewing the experiences shared in this study, most faculty members reported relatively low stress to teaching in general but some stress related to cameras and masks. Additionally, most respondents identified as women in that study; the participants in this study were equal at six men and six women.

Majsak et al. (2022) stressed the importance of institutions being more flexible in their work expectations to allow for home and childcare needs. Department leadership should only host meetings or require service for tasks that are necessary during restrictive periods. Department chairs should ensure that faculty believe that flexibility is necessary. In all cases, faculty reported no issues with flexibility with department leadership. Many even shared that despite their workload increasing, they were more productive during this time; writing research

papers, increasing institution service commitments or offering non-class time to engage with students, staff, administrators and faculty. Eoin shared that he published more articles during the pandemic because of the increase in time due to him not commuting to campus. After he returned to campus, he noted that his office building was quiet because his peers were working at home. Heidi agreed to teach a larger course load. Amy shared that her department hosted social events through Zoom. Heidi and Zeteta mentioned staying after class to help students process the global pandemic and social phenomena in society.

Leadership at All Levels: Department, College, Institution

While most participants felt the institutions were more flexible with their personal needs, some participants mentioned poor leadership, noting various issues with college- or university-level leaders. The faculty wanted empathetic and transparent leaders who communicated regularly and showed an understanding of the student body and the learning environment. Two schools within the institution experienced leadership changes at the top level.

Part of the challenge was communication about decision-making. Communication during turbulence is essential. Most faculty received minimal advance notice, including some whom students prompted. Additionally, as policies and restrictions were changing, they felt they were given no explanation about what was happening. Decision-making during this time lacked clarity and transparency. For example, when asked who made the decision about the learning delivery mode, synchronous or asynchronous, each participant gave a different response based on their remembrance of what they were told at the time. Generally, most participants said the university chose the learning delivery mode but then shared conflicting responses.

Participants questioned the university leadership the most. All understood it was hard to manage the complexity of the issues – global pandemic, racial and political reckoning, sizeable

urban environment and large high research institution with multiple campuses. Yet, most felt they failed as an institution to navigate the pandemic effectively. One participant noted that they needed the leadership to be united instead of falling apart during a tough time. Students could see this and were taking their anger out on instructors. Zeteta said:

> [School leadership] tried to standardize it. We all went synchronous. Everybody had to start using the LMS platform, and everybody had to start using Zoom. The standardization got more and more intense as we got further away from the pandemic.

Off-Campus and At-Home Experiences

As referenced earlier, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (2020) wrote that faculty were frustrated, stressed, and experienced increased anxiety. Social contingencies, events that happen in faculty members' lives and affect their work, are even higher during a public health crisis (Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995). During the turbulence, faculty faced the potential for more stress because of the changing nature of the pandemic. Some faculty left, adding more responsibilities to those who stayed, including managing coping strategies (Ramlo, 2020). In addition to life in the classroom changing, instructors' lives outside of the classroom changed.

In this study, faculty members' home experiences varied during the pandemic. Some supported the *Chronicle* report (2020) about increased stress or anxiety; it was specifically related to the growing public health crisis and its implications for family, friends, colleagues, and students. The participants were worried about their health and that of their family, their friends, and coworkers. They were worried more than usual, given the turbulent state of society and the complexity of managing the social phenomena happening in the country.

Some of the fear stemmed from mass confusion, communication challenges, including misinformation and disinformation, and the pre-existing health conditions of their family members. Some felt they had to hide their concerns and calm student concerns before getting

into teaching the course content. Some instructors had time built into their courses to discuss the more significant societal concerns, such as the public health crisis, police brutality and social injustices based on demographics. While the *Chronicle* report shed insight into the overall negative emotions, this dissertation detailed more nuanced perspectives of stress-related factors.

Specifically, the faculty in the case studies were more worried about their adult relatives and less worried about their children. In examining how the pandemic affected individuals' home and personal lives in our study, I found that caregiving responsibilities played a significant role for three participants. Amy, Heidi, and Lexa each had to care for a sick adult relative—Amy's and Heidi's partners and Lexa's grandmother. This responsibility deeply influenced their priorities, with their concern for their family's health taking precedence over their work and teaching responsibilities. They also shared the challenges of balancing their professional and caregiving roles, highlighting how they had to juggle work and school commitments. Despite these challenges, they noted the empathy and understanding from their peers, pointing out the accommodations provided to support them during this time. Providing care for adults eased during the pandemic. They were able to be home or in close range if anything happened. They protected their family from bringing in outside diseases. They could also still work. The autonomy of faculty increased due to the confinement at home and the institution administration's belief that courses could be taught remotely effectively. The flexibility Majsak et al. (2020) wrote about was demonstrated by the faculty members who had to care for older relatives.

Similarly, the parents in the study had varying experiences as well. The results were surprising in this space. First, the men in this study had more challenges. Two fathers expressed concerns with parenting. One father mentioned children but did not discuss his family. One

father disclosed his children on the pre-interview questionnaire but did not discuss them during the interview. Another man disclosed that he did not have children on the questionnaire. Second, most mothers were not challenged by parenting. Siena had in-home childcare; Heidi and Zeteta's children were older, either in college or graduated from college. Their children helped them teach by alerting them to the pandemic or answering questions about teaching or classroom management strategies for current college students.

During the interviews, the participants would end the conversation with an expression of gratitude and appreciation for the opportunity to process their complex experiences. A few mentioned that it felt cathartic to talk about what happened individually and reflect on both the good and bad of the time. The gratitude was not recorded but noted; as such, there are no quotes from that part of the interview. However, it is important to note that expressing gratitude is one way to move through a challenging or painful time. It can help someone think about or speak about their experience as a way of releasing or processing the emotion related to the time. The emotional response allows participants to share their resilience and adaptability in the face of adversity. Additionally, speaking with a researcher who is also a faculty member could be helpful in the process as the participants do not have to explain the basic tenets of teaching in higher education. Relatedly, speaking to someone who also taught during the pandemic could have made it easier to speak openly and earnestly.

Fostering Positive Interaction

Most faculty tested existing strategies and learned new strategies in various ways. They taught themselves what they needed to know and gathered information through various places, including communities of practice, social media, and teaching centers. Two mentioned talking to

their children about their teaching style; one mentioned watching her children's teachers lecturing during their classes.

All faculty explained that when faced with a problem or need for a new teaching strategy, they turned to the internet to search for ideas. SH shared:

> When it came time to set it up myself, I just played around with it. I Googled how to do things and asked friends to check if things were working. At that point, I felt able to explore. It feels like you are figuring it out as you go, not like a formal, structured learning process.

Often, faculty relied on communities of practice and connected through social media platforms. They generally stayed within their academic area for connection.

Two people mentioned using instructional designers in a teaching center as a primary resource. Both taught in the same school and used the school's staff as opposed to the institution's staff. Lexa mentioned asking the instructional designers for help when she ran into an issue. Heidi also shared that she would ask for help and then hang out on Zoom to socialize. A third person, Zeteta, mentioned the teaching center but primarily as an active partner. This person took classes and led courses. They were eventually paid for their participation in developing a program.

While all participants were required to undergo online training, either before the pandemic or during the first fully remote semester in Fall 2020, they did not often or regularly return to the teaching center.

Facilitating Conversations Regarding Controversial Topics

Multiple people mentioned that their teaching style relied on being in person for various reasons. Zeteta mentioned body language differently, unrelated to the controversial topics. It helped her understand when students were struggling with a concept. Eoin shared a similar experience. Eoin attempted to teach the same way in person as he did online. It did not work.

Ricky said he was more engaging and comfortable with face-to-face courses. However, he, along with Malcolm and Lexa, discussed classroom management when discussing controversial topics, and as such, hosting them in person solved a myriad of issues. Lexa and Malcolm teach diversity courses, while Ricky teaches about communication in society. Teaching face-to-face offers some benefits. They did not have to worry about family members' listening and hearing contrasting opinions. They did not have to worry about getting recorded and posted online. They could read body language and respond appropriately. Instructors who taught courses with diverse topics expressed differing views. Additionally, Malcolm built the race, politics and social justice conversations into his curriculum. He mentioned in his case study that this started about eight years ago and continued through the pandemic.

Kurdene teaches courses through the lens of DEI but does not prefer in-person instruction. He used hybrid delivery modes before the pandemic and has built a skill set for having those conversations virtually or in person.

Multiple faculty members mentioned that controversial conversations emerged in their classes when that was not the topic. Amy, Eoin, SH, and Zeteta's courses were not DEI-related, yet they all mentioned managing those conversations. Students brought them to class when asked about their experiences or reactions to societal injustices/social injustices—all created space for the discussions. Amy shared several times that she was uncertain if the challenges stemmed from the pandemic or were fanned by the broader issues around race, politics and social justice.

> When I approached this interview, I was reflecting on the summer of 2020, pondering the civic unrest. If COVID-19 hadn't occurred, what would the impact have been? It's something we'll never truly know. However, I believe the events were more impactful because we were all glued to our screens, witnessing what was happening. We all saw George Floyd's incident, capturing everyone's attention. There were no distractions, as everything was unfolding right before us. I often think about how these events influenced my teaching. Entering this conversation, I'm curious whether the changes were due to COVID-19 or the events of that summer. It's a topic that merits significant study.

Specifically, multiple participants talked about an officer-involved shooting in the city of the institution in this study and how students were affected by it. Malcolm remarked that students were not engaged in class because of it; he discussed it with his class. SH remarked that the students heard the protest outside of the instructor's house (through Zoom) and discussed it. Eoin mentioned it generally in the interview, while Kurdene debriefed about it in his class. In general, the participants shared that students did not know where to go to talk about it. Additionally, some shared that they had to support students because other instructors were uncomfortable speaking about criminal justice police brutality happening in the region.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I reviewed the individual cases and compared significant findings to each other in the cross-case analysis. In the individual cases, participants explained their transitions, mostly citing that it was relatively easy to move classes online. The faculty shared challenges with cameras during online sessions, wearing masks during in-person classes with heavy restrictions, and facilitating controversial conversations online and during the height of the pandemic. Each case presented a picture of how faculty experienced the turbulent times and selected teaching strategies to maintain positive engagement. The faculty members' love and passion for teaching are shown in their philosophies and experiences, and all are immediately focused on providing structure and support for students. Many shared that they felt students needed it; I surmise that the faculty benefited from being needed or serving as a distraction during an awful time in more recent history.

Despite the hurdles, faculty members shared strategies for engaging and interacting with students effectively and positively. Some discussed creating functional engagement opportunities where students could socialize with one another and faculty. Other faculty members increased

their availability and working hours to ensure students felt supported. Overall, faculty modeled the empathy they wished to see from university leaders. Many shared their experiences with colleges and universities lacking the skills and ability to communicate during this complex time.

Chapter V explains the findings in relation to the literature and provides implications for future studies and practice.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

This dissertation sought to contribute to the literature on faculty perspectives of faculty-student interaction through a multiple case study methodology. The first chapter provides an overview of the study, including the problem statement, researcher background and positionality, and plan for future research. The second chapter delves into the literature on three related topics – teaching in higher education, teaching during a pandemic and faculty-student interactions. In that chapter, the need to explore all three is outlined. Higher education needs to change to adapt to a new generation of learners. The pandemic has changed both faculty and students, and there is a lack of sufficient research from the course instructor's perspective. In chapter three, the methodology is outlined in detail, explaining the research questions used to guide the exploration of the literature, the setting of the institution in this study, the recruitment of 12 participants from a single institution, and the process for collecting data. The data collected included semi-structured interviews, CVs and resumes, teaching philosophies, and course syllabi from before and during the pandemic. Chapter Four presents the findings of the study. The participants in this study were able to transition online effectively but struggled with the uncertainty of the institution and society. The chapter answers the questions in the study, highlighting the results from the data collected. The cases touched on teaching with technology, challenges for online classroom management, faculty perspectives of interaction, and issues and opportunities in the workplace, off-campus and at home.

This chapter discusses the key takeaways from the findings, implications for future research and practice, and a closing reflection on the study.

Summary of Findings

The findings show that higher education researchers can better understand how faculty process the events at home and work during turbulent times. In the previous chapter, I shared a thorough examination of the findings from the individual cases and a cross-case analysis. Across the cases, participants shared that they could transition from in-person to virtual relatively easily. Those who taught online courses before the pandemic had it slightly easier because they had resources available; they did not have to stop, research and create materials.

Faculty Members' Experience Teaching Before and During the Pandemic

The first question focuses on what faculty members experienced between the Spring 2019 and Spring 2023 semesters, the time before and during the social restrictions, race and social reckoning and the global health pandemic. Faculty-student interaction was slightly stifled because of the general nature of the pandemic. Faculty members were intent on creating positive learning experiences. However, the conditions caused by the pandemic made it challenging to engage with students in the same ways as before. Faculty had to alter their interaction to maintain any connection, especially at the beginning of the pandemic. This was mainly due to faculty using technology in their courses that they had not used in class before that transition. Additionally, students were swamped with learning recent technology for multiple courses; faculty felt the brunt of their frustration with their experiences. Teaching with technology was easy for this group; most had online teaching training and experience with computer hardware and software in asynchronous challenges. They did experience challenges with video camera usage during synchronous courses. To ensure connectedness, faculty created new virtual spaces with no barriers; they invited students to show up and socialize, vent or listen. Some faculty turned to playing games or creating spaces for socialization.

Effective Strategies for Fostering Positive Interactions During Virtual Learning and Restricted In-Person Classrooms

The second question sought to uncover the strategies that worked to foster positive interactions with undergraduate students during disruptive times. While they ran into issues, all were able to use internet searches, communities of practice and teaching centers to identify solutions to their problems. When returning to in-person operations, all expressed minimal challenges; most faculty hated teaching in large but empty classrooms wearing face masks. While they did not mind complying with the policy, it was uncomfortable and required more effort to teach through the facial barrier. Despite the obstacles, faculty generally shared effective and engaging teaching strategies. Other faculty re-evaluated their assignment and exam usage to ensure it met the new learning environment. Some faculty focused on keeping things as close to the original setup as possible to maintain consistency and structure during a time of massive uncertainty.

Overwhelmingly, seeing students or peers as humans consistently showed up in the transcript or teaching philosophies of each case; there was a minimal presence in the CVs or course syllabi. Faculty members shared more about their personal lives through their backgrounds in virtual courses or class discussions on controversial topics—all mentioned understanding and empathizing with young people during a tough time. I will speak more about the relational nature of teaching and share strategies that others can test in their classrooms.

Implications for Future Research on Faculty-Student Interactions during Turbulent Times Teaching in Higher Education

Currently, scholars within the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) community are turning pandemic blogs, presentations and website articles into peer-reviewed scholarship

that helps faculty members, faculty developers and institutional leaders clarify what happened during both online learning and in-person, post-pandemic education to guide the future of teaching (Aaron et al., 2022; Supiano & McMurtrie, 2021). Supiano and McMurtrie (2021) recommended considering students as partners in the learning experience during a tumultuous time. The author wrote that assigning student consultants to courses could help strengthen course instructors' teaching practices. While this was not identified in this study's cases, faculty used immediate student feedback from anecdotes, digital communication and grades to confirm the effectiveness and impact of the strategies being used. Faculty in this study continually questioned the methods used to measure effectiveness and engagement.

Relatedly, SoTL scholars need to expand the body of literature on ERT and the emerging field of Sustained Remote Teaching (SRT) (Stewart et al., 2022). It described the time after the initial emergency move online but before a return to full in-person operations. In this study, participants did not reference ERT or SRT but described practices associated with both. More scholarship in the area would equip teaching and learning centers with more data to train faculty members. Faculty members in this study tested strategies using academic performance and student satisfaction measurements instead of applying evidence-based strategies specifically designed for a severely disruptive time to meet learning outcomes. Current research, including learning- and student-centered research, focuses mainly on classroom environments during less tumultuous times (Weimer, 2013). However, a growing body of research is evaluating pandemic pedagogy as it gets further away. Scholars recognize a need to identify teaching methods that address the special circumstances of natural and human disasters, one that accounts for the widespread nature of uncertainty, anxiety and disruption that can occur.

Faculty-Student Interaction in Virtual Environments

Faculty-student interaction continues to be an essential point across all learning delivery modes for instructors (Craig et al., 2022), especially during turbulent times. While this study contributed to the literature gap surrounding faculty perspectives and experiences, more research should be conducted. Faculty members struggled to find valuable strategies. Further, they struggled with how to measure positive interaction. When asked about meaningful moments that supported positive interactions, some participants shared their feelings coupled with an anecdotal response by students. This affirmed the faculty's perspective but failed to confirm the students' perspectives with the faculty's. It was unclear if the student viewed the interaction positively. They described the students' expressions and comments, but they lacked a specific measurement.

Earlier in the study, I discussed the history of distance learning in higher education. In the last ten years, especially since the onset of the pandemic in 2020, the digital platforms for teaching have improved tremendously. COVID forced institutions to expand their use of learning modalities to a larger portion of the student population. Most of the participants in this study used some technology to teach before moving online; they understood the technical nature of the tools, but some lacked knowledge and held limiting beliefs about engaging positively through digital platforms. For many faculty members, the extent of their virtual communication with students was restricted to email, LMS platform messaging, and social media.

The limiting beliefs could be due to the human element that virtual courses seem to miss; that is, faculty could have held limiting beliefs because of the lack of a solution to positive and meaningful relationship-building and interaction online. Some referred to the missing human element of online courses. They saw the human element as something simple, such as greeting students as they entered the classroom. Some faculty in this study greeted students using their

names as they came into the virtual classroom. Others labeled the human element as seeing the holistic nature of students and understanding that students are typically involved in or committed to school. Grace et al. (2018) explored the effectiveness of 14 teaching tools in face-to-face versus online instruction; those related to interaction include group sessions, one-on-one or individualized instruction, scenarios, team presentations, lectures, role-playing and guest speakers. Craig et al. (2022) narrowed the online tools to the following: pre-recorded lectures, breakout rooms, virtual class sessions, virtual office hours, online group projects, current events/examples, discussion posts on LMS, online polls/chat and online discussion. While an argument could be made for interaction in all learning tools, the ones listed require students to engage in either one-way or two-way communication with the instructor. Future research could explore the tools designed for faculty-student interactions amongst undergraduate students and during massive disruptions.

It would be interesting to study students' perceptions of online teaching tools that foster positive interactions against faculty members' preferences. Craig et al. (2022) shared that online polls and chat tools were the most effective tools within their online spaces. They preferred interacting through text-based platforms in synchronous learning environments; the faculty in this study did not list those as teaching strategies. Personally, I offer students the opportunity to respond verbally, through chat, or on the LMS platform during synchronous sessions. I recognize that students have various preferences and prefer to control their interactions with others in the class. Students use the option to send a private message, share their thoughts without interrupting someone else's speech and hold a discussion in addition to the larger group discussion. Future research could also explore why students prefer text-based tools when interacting with faculty in class.

Additionally, the Faculty-Student Interaction Typology could be expanded to evaluate different learning models and crisis and non-crisis times (Cox & Orehovec, 2007; Ruben et al., 2021). The FSI typology initially organized outside-of-the-classroom interactions into categories based on frequency and behaviors. The experiment in that study involved a residential faculty member and students in the residential program. The interactions were solely based on in-person opportunities between faculty and students. Subsequent studies related to the typology called for more scholarship from the faculty perspective to better understand their response to the interactions. Students could see an interaction as mentoring, while a faculty member could view that same interaction as fundamental. More work needs to be done to align the types of interactions and incorporate virtual interactions.

Implications for Future Practice Interacting with Students during Turbulent Times

Teaching in Higher Education

Faculty members should be required to teach online courses periodically. This should address a few challenges. First, it would require faculty members to be familiar with pedagogical best practices and new methods for teaching. Online learning requires a different approach than hybrid or face-to-face teaching. Instructors have to think about how to communicate information and intentionally design activities that can help students meet or exceed the course learning outcomes, goals and objectives. In the past, the value of higher education has been criticized for not requiring teachers to learn how to teach and using poor teaching methods. In face-to-face courses, faculty members can rely on likeability or performance instead of structured, organized and well-communicated course design that effectively measures student learning.

It was evident after interviews and reviewing teaching philosophy and course syllabi that faculty members in this study were coincidentally prepared for teaching during a pandemic. Most

were able to scramble to transition online, but no one had an emergency teaching plan before the pandemic. Most of the participants completed online training. However, none mentioned researching or going through special training in ERT. In fact, the faculty that reported the smoothest transitions had taught for over a decade, been through online training, but more significantly, had course material in asynchronous formats readily available. ERT should be the first thing that instructors go to when an emergency happens.

As mentioned earlier, SRT is an approach that addresses the element of time during an emergency that requires a switch to virtual learning. The primary difference between pedagogical approaches is the length of time the course is online. This is critical as the length of time informs the strategies an instructor applies. Having access to pedagogy that factors in the length of time faculty and students will operate in before resuming the intended course delivery method could help lower anxiety and uncertainty, at least in the classroom space, an area that instructors have some control over. This ensures that instructors have the training, experience and resources readily available should another pandemic occur.

In addition to required training and teaching experience, faculty should be responsible for ensuring they are using current teaching practices. One strategy that could be employed is embedding evaluation of current teaching methods in a department's peer review of teaching programs. Reviewers could organize a list of teaching approaches, rank them based on effectiveness, and measure the frequency of use of the older and newer practices. The process should be holistic and include in-class activities and learning management systems. This could ensure that faculty members are focusing on adding value through best teaching practices. Further, teaching contracts could hinge on teaching reviews from at least two of the three primary learning delivery models: face-to-face, hybrid, and virtual.

Faculty-Student Interaction in Virtual Environments

Overall, faculty must recognize the totality of the student more than ever before. I bring over a student-centered mindset from my work experience in student affairs and college athletics. Both experiences require that the students are the center of the work; administrators and staff support them or, in my case, tell their stories. I spent the first 15 years of my professional career in those units within multiple universities, seeing students and student-athletes as humans; that belief has helped me connect with students in meaningful ways in my teaching role.

To that point, faculty members should continue to use empathy and flexibility to lead their classrooms. While the restrictive period may have ended, higher education institutions will see a shift in college students' attitudes, values and beliefs for the next decade. As such, the practices that worked this semester may change. Faculty members should embrace this shift in college student characteristics by researching the area and organizing a list of strategies to use as issues arise. It would be helpful if faculty members crafted their own "teaching guidelines" document to manage their practices. Additionally, they can journal about their experiences.

Faculty members will want to provide fast and clear instructions and feedback to students. During times of uncertainty, it is vital to communicate what you know and do not know. In the same way faculty want transparency and clarity from senior leaders, they should model that behavior in class. Related to that, the feedback should be constructive and offer recommendations for improvement. Instructors should see multiple opportunities to communicate—through the LMS platform, in class, during office hours and through email or social media.

Last, instructors need to be aware of the resources available to support student issues in the classroom. In this study, some participants expressed their concerns about growing mental

health issues and how to connect students to resources to support them as they address them. In addition to understanding the resources on campus related to the issues, faculty should also encourage students to participate in opportunities to build interpersonal and group dynamic skills. The pandemic restricted everyone's socialization for an extended period; as such, students coming out of that restrictive period during a pivotal stage in their age development are going to require more teaching from faculty members. Essentially, they lost multiple years of in-person practice but gained some experience engaging through electronic devices during a heightened period of stress and anxiety from the pandemic restrictions.

Department Efforts to Improve Teacher Effectiveness

Relatedly, departments could explore the feasibility of co-teaching more courses in their curriculums. Teaching is already a lonely field; many faculty in this study wanted connections with other instructors during this time and served as mentors in supporting their department peers with the transition. While co-teaching or team-teaching is not used widely in undergraduate programs due to costs, the experience could address several issues with faculty job satisfaction, student satisfaction and teaching in higher education (Rooks et al., 2022). Co-teaching could reduce the workload of instructors and allow for more research and service opportunities. It could reduce student frustration with old or outdated teaching methods. The innovative approach has been used in K-12 education and could demonstrate to stakeholders that higher education leaders and faculty members are looking to address the questions about the value of college degrees. Conversely, department chairs would have to identify whether the instructors are assigned from one department or across departments or schools and colleges within a university. Also, the faculty and chairs would need to outline who is responsible for curriculum ideas and resources for the class and how salary would be shared between units.

De Hei and Audenaerde (2023) recently published a scale to measure the components of the co-creation process within co-teaching that factor into positive teaching experiences. The scales measure positive interdependence, individual accountability, collaboration, shared mental models, safe and supporting conditions, creative community and group evaluation. The areas listed could be built into a proposal for departments to build co-teaching programs.

Teaching and Learning Centers

In addition to offering recommendations for individuals and departments, teaching and learning centers are even more valuable now and must make a stronger push for engaging with more faculty members. In this study, most of the faculty turned to the internet or fellow faculty in their academic discipline before reaching out to the teaching center or instructional designers to find teaching strategies. Only four of the 12 participants mentioned the teaching and learning center or instructional design. Two used the instructional designers in the business school; one partnered with the department to provide workshops and for-credit courses in creative arts. This was an opportunity for teaching and learning centers to take center stage. Jones (2022) wrote that more collaboration is happening between faculty and teaching and learning centers. The faculty developers spend time reading, writing and discussing "course design, training and development, technology implementation, DEI research and culturally responsive teaching" (Jones, 2022, p. 903). Course instructors can ease the stress by going to the campus experts in teaching.

Higher Education Leadership and Transparent Decision Making During a Crisis

Faculty in this study were largely left out of the crisis management and communication conversation. At certain points throughout the global pandemic, higher education leaders were responding to issues such as the global health crisis, a national reckoning on race and social justice, a louder and stronger push by youth leaders to address climate change issues, and

increasing protests and calls for stricter gun regulation (Ruben et al., 2021). This is in addition to lower-level but still serious incidents involving sexual assaults, shootings, discrimination, hazing, academic integrity and faculty and staff misconduct (Ruben et al., 2021). Faculty members are subject to, but not involved with, institutional decisions, including determining the type and severity of crises and the next steps for their classrooms. Decisions are made in large part by administrators who may relate on some level but not directly as they teach courses as an option or secondary position. Higher education decision-makers have to be more transparent with faculty in the decision-making process.

Ruben et al. (2021) wrote the following.

> A leader cannot hope to be successful in these situations without a systemic understanding of the nature of organizational crises, a well-rehearsed and well-informed set of principles for approaching crisis situations, and perhaps most important, a clear sense of how institutional values should guide one's decisions and actions (p. 315).

Further, Ruben et al. (2021) grouped crises into types based on scholarship and compiled a list applicable to higher education specifically. The latter are academic, athletics, clinical, facilities/technological, financial, human resources, leadership, natural disaster, public safety, racial/identity conflict and student affairs. Future research can explore faculty members' roles in each and how teaching will be further impacted. The pandemic belongs in the broad category of academic, however, we know other areas could be considered. "84% of America's undergraduates were found to have had some or all of their classes moved to online-only instruction during Spring 2020. 28% of students experienced housing disruption, and 40% experienced financial challenges" (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). Researchers could re-evaluate overlapping crisis categories such as academic, facilities, and student affairs, or student categories, such as degree type and classification, to determine the classroom management strategies and teaching practices for each.

Workplace and Personal Lives during Turbulent Times

The assumptions I had about the workplace and personal lives of faculty members during the pandemic varied from the responses. Before writing this dissertation, I assumed that the parents would have challenges managing work and personal responsibilities, specifically finding childcare or supporting students in K-12 schools at home during some of the pandemic. The parents in this study reported having a relatively easy experience, while the adult caregivers were both relieved and faced with new challenges. I had no assumptions about taking care of adult relatives in the same household as the faculty member. Three reported taking care of sick partners during the pandemic, including two whose partners were diagnosed with cancer and receiving treatment in March 2020. It is essential to continue to research this area to surface other personal issues that occurred during the tumultuous time.

Limitations

One of this study's limitations is related to the retrospective nature of the data collection. Faculty were asked to recall their experiences from the onset of the pandemic almost three years before the study was conducted. There is a potential for memory decay or distortion, mainly because the period in question was marked by significant stress and upheaval. Participants might have forgotten specific details or misremembered events, which could affect the accuracy of the recollections provided.

In almost every case, participants indicated difficulties in recollecting past events with clarity. This was evidenced by numerous instances where participants either expressed their inability to remember details or required time to recollect their experiences. One participant, Arete, aptly summarized this challenge by stating, "You'll have to forgive me as I reconstruct," highlighting the difficulty in piecing together past experiences after a considerable lapse of time.

Another limitation is the selection of participants, as the group consisted of people willing to discuss their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was essential to recruit faculty who would be open about their experience. However, the faculty in the study generally shared mostly good experiences. Eoin was the primary outlier in sharing experiences that were harsh or critical about his experiences. The group does not represent all faculty, but it was a random selection of participants who sought to share their stories of teaching during the selected time. Future studies could identify faculty who quit teaching or felt they did not foster positive interactions during the pandemic.

Another limitation arises from my dual role as both the researcher and a faculty member. Having taught classes both part-time since the Fall of 2012 and full-time since the Spring of 2018, my experiences and perceptions might introduce an inherent bias into the study. My familiarity with the academic environment and the shared experiences with participants could influence the interpretation and presentation of the findings.

To mitigate this potential bias, several strategies were employed. The analysis was grounded in existing scholarship, and quoted passages were used to maintain clarity and fidelity to the participants' perspectives. Additionally, a coder was engaged to review the data, offering an external perspective to enhance the study's objectivity and reduce the risk of bias.

The study's demographic limitations also present a notable constraint. The sample lacked substantial representation from Black, Latina, Middle Eastern, and Asian women, groups whose perspectives could have significantly enriched the study. The predominance of White and male faculty in the sample reflects broader issues of diversity within the academic field, but it also limits the study's comprehensiveness and the generalizability of its findings.

Another missed opportunity for this research was the limited engagement with STEM faculty members. Understanding how these faculty navigated the transition to virtual lab environments and adapted their teaching methods could have provided invaluable insights. Hearing directly from STEM educators about their processes for selecting and implementing alternative activities and assignments would have added depth to the study.

Finally, while the study captured some perspectives about courses that rely on in-person meetings transitioning to virtual platforms, it would have been helpful to hear and review written documentation and gather direct insights from STEM faculty on their decision-making and adaptation processes. This could have offered a deeper analysis of the swift transition to online education and the long-term learning delivery mode plan during the pandemic. The arts faculty in this study shared rich and valuable perspectives. They shared the changes in software use and reduced the amount of materials used in class. Incorporating views from STEM instructors, especially those preparing students for future careers in medicine or engineering, would explain how they replaced hands-on lab experiences in online courses. For example, chemistry courses require students to mix chemicals to get reactions; in biology courses, students would dissect animals. This point highlights the need for further research in this area.

Reflections

This research project was an incredible learning experience that offered me profound insights into the nuances of the multiple case study methodology. Engaging deeply with this approach, I not only refined my research skills but also gained a more intricate understanding of how to effectively design and conduct case studies in educational contexts. The process allowed me to immerse myself in the rich, complex data that multiple case studies provide, enabling a more nuanced analysis of educational phenomena. This deep dive into methodology underscored

the importance of rigorous research design and the potential of case studies to illuminate the multifaceted nature of educational settings.

Additionally, my engagement with this study expanded my knowledge of college student characteristics and the best teaching practices that cater to these attributes. By exploring diverse student experiences and educational environments, I acquired valuable insights into how students' unique characteristics influence their learning journeys. This understanding is crucial for developing teaching strategies that are responsive to student needs and promote effective learning outcomes. The research reinforced the significance of tailoring educational practices to accommodate diverse student populations, highlighting the dynamic interplay between student characteristics and pedagogical approaches.

Moreover, the study has further fueled my interest in investigating faculty perspectives, particularly in how educators are adapting and innovating to create positive learning environments for students. The overwhelming evidence pointing to the necessity of nurturing classrooms as safe, engaging, and supportive spaces is a clarion call for educators to continuously evolve their practices. I aspire to contribute meaningfully to the existing body of knowledge by exploring and sharing practical strategies for organizing and managing classrooms that foster student well-being and engagement. This future research direction is not only a pursuit of academic interest but also a commitment to enhancing the educational experience for both students and faculty.

Conclusions

Instructors who had undergone extensive training and accumulated significant experience found themselves better equipped to navigate the shift to online learning. Their familiarity with digital tools and pedagogical strategies greatly enhanced their adaptability to the new teaching

environment. Access to a broad array of resources, ranging from technological platforms to support networks, further facilitated this transition. These instructors were not only able to maintain the quality of their instruction but also innovate their teaching methods to engage students remotely. Consequently, their comfort with the transition was palpable, setting a positive tone for their students' online learning experience.

Furthermore, instructors who leveraged their emotional intelligence skills adeptly navigated the intricate balance between supporting and challenging their students. By tuning into their students' emotional cues and understanding their unique needs, these educators created a nurturing environment conducive to learning. Their ability to empathize allowed them to provide tailored support, boosting students' confidence and motivation. Simultaneously, they harnessed their emotional insights to pose appropriate challenges that stimulated critical thinking and resilience among their students. Thus, through their nuanced application of emotional intelligence, these instructors fostered an educational atmosphere where students felt understood and were encouraged to stretch their capabilities.

Instructors should look at themselves as classroom leaders, adopting a perspective that extends beyond mere content delivery to encompass guiding, motivating, and inspiring their students. While existing research primarily concentrates on academic leadership for faculty in administrative roles like department chairs, deans, or provosts, there is a burgeoning recognition of the need for leadership training among all teaching staff. This training should encompass various leadership frameworks, including adaptive challenges and leadership, which equip instructors to navigate and thrive in the ever-evolving educational landscape. Additionally, emotional intelligence is another critical component, enabling educators to connect with students on a deeper level and fostering a supportive and understanding classroom environment. Change

management is also essential as it prepares faculty members to coordinate changes in curriculum, teaching delivery, or class environments. Learning more about the leadership concepts within their classrooms allows instructors to better prepare for teaching and enhance their effectiveness and impact in the classroom.

References

Aaron, G., Cabot, A.Z., Forlino, D., & Adoboe, S.S. (2022). It took a village: A demonstrated need of institutional support for successful online teaching. *Dimension,*130-145.

Adams, J. A. (2000, November). The GI Bill and the changing place of U.S. higher education after World War II. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Sacramento, CA.

Ambrose, S., Bridges, M. W., DiPietro, M., Lovett, M. C., & Norman, M. K. (2010). *How learning works: 7 research-based principles for smart teaching.* Jossey-Bass.

Anaya, G., & Cole, D. G. (2001). Latina/o student achievement: Exploring the influence of student-faculty interactions on college grades. *Journal of College Student Development, 42*(1), 3-14.

Anderson, L. A., & Carta-Falsa, J. (2002). Factors that make faculty and student relationships effective. *College Teaching, 50*(4), 134-138. https://doi.org/10.1080/87567550209595894

Arao, B., & Clemens, K. (2013). From safe spaces to brave spaces. In L. M. Landreman (Ed.), *The art of effective facilitation: Reflections from social justice educators* (pp. 135-150). Stylus Publishing.

Association of Public Land-grant Universities. (2020). How COVID-19 changed everything and nothing at all. https://www.aplu.org/library/how-COVID-19-changed-everything-and-nothing-at-all/file

Astin, A. W. (1993). What matters in college?: Four critical years revisited. Jossey-Bass.

Auger, G. A., & Formentin, M. J. (2021). This is depressing: The emotional labor of teaching during the pandemic spring 2020. *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator, 76*(4), 376-393. http://doi.org/10.1177/10776958211012900

Bain, K. (2004). *What the best college teachers do*. Harvard University Press.

Barkley, E. F., & Major, C. H. (2020). *Student engagement techniques: A handbook for college faculty*. Wiley.

Baum, S., Kurose, C., & McPherson, M. (2013). An overview of American higher education. *The Future of Children*, *23*(1), 17–39. https://doi.org/10.1353/foc.2013.0008

Beckowski, C. P., Gebauer, R., & Arminio, J. (2018). Cultivating deeper life interactions: Faculty–student relationships in a nonresidential learning community. Journal of College Student Development, 59(6), 752-755. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2018.0070

Berry, S. (2019). Faculty perspectives on online learning: The instructor's role in creating community. *Online Learning*, *23*(4), 181–191. https://doi.org/10.24059/olj.v23i4.2038

Bikowski, D., Park, H. K., & Tytko, T. (2022). Teaching large-enrollment online language courses: Faculty perspectives and an emerging curricular model. *System, 105*, 102711. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2021.102711

Blackburn, R.T. & Lawrence, J.H. (1995). *Faculty at work: Motivation, expectation, satisfaction*. Johns Hopkins University Press.

Bolliger, D. U., & Wasilik, O. (2009). Factors influencing faculty satisfaction with online teaching and learning in higher education. *Distance Education, 30*(1), 103-116. https://doi.org/10.1080/01587910902845949

Brooks, F. E., & Starks, G. L. (2011). The origins of historically Black colleges and universities and their expansion. In *Historically Black Colleges and Universities: An encyclopedia* (p. 1). ABC-CLIO Greenwood.

Burns, R. (2020). A COVID-19 panacea in digital technologies? Challenges for democracy and higher education. Dialogues in Human Geography, 10(2), 246–249. https://doi.org/10.1177/2043820620930832

Carnevale, J. B., & Hatak, I. (2020). Employee adjustment and well-being in the era of COVID-19: Implications for human resource management. *Journal of Business Research, 116*, 183–187. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.05.037

Carr, J. M., Rogers, K. S., & Kanyongo, G. Y. (2021). Improving student and faculty communication: The impact of texting and electronic feedback on building relationships and the perception of care. *Research in Learning Technology, 29*. https://doi.org/10.25304/rlt.v29.2463

Cerci, P.A. & Dumludag, D. (2018). Life satisfaction and job satisfaction among university faculty: The impact of working conditions, academic performance and relative income. *Social Indicators Research, 144*, 785-806. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-018-02059-8

Chang, J. C. (2005). Faculty-student interaction at the community college: A focus on students of color. *Research in Higher Education*, *46*(7), 769–802. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-004-6225-7

Chickering, A. W., & Gamson, Z. F. (1987). Seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education. AAHE Bulletin, 39(7), 3–7. https://doi.org/10.1002/tl.37219914708

The Chronicle of Higher Education. (2020). On the verge of burnout: COVID-19's impact on faculty well-being and career plans. https://connect.chronicle.com/rs/931-EKA-218/images/COVID%26FacultyCareerPaths_Fidelity_ResearchBrief_v3%20(1).pdf

Cole, D. (2006). Do interracial interactions matter? An examination of student-faculty contact and intellectual self-concept. *The Journal of Higher Education*, *78*(3), 249–281. https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2007.11772316

Conklin, S., & Dikkers, A. G. (2021). Instructor social presence and connectedness in a quick shift from face-to-face to online instruction. *Online Learning, 25*(1), 135-150. https://doi.org/10.24059/olj.v25i1.2482

Cook-Sather, A., Bovill, C., & Felten, P. (2014). Engaging students as partners in learning and teaching: A guide for faculty. Jossey-Bass.

Cotten, S. R., & Wilson, B. (2006). Student-faculty interactions: Dynamics and determinants. *Higher Education*, *51*(4), 487–519. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-004-1705-4

Cox, B.E., & Orehovec, E. (2007). Faculty-student interaction outside the classroom: A typology from a residential college. *The Review of Higher Education 30*(4), 343–362. https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2007.0033.

Cox, B. E. (2011). A developmental typology of faculty-student interaction outside the classroom. *New Directions for Institutional Research, 2011(S1),* 49–66. https://doi.org/10.1002/ir.416

Cox, B. E., McIntosh, K. L., Terenzini, P. T., Reason, R. D., & Quaye, B. R. L. (2010). Pedagogical signals of faculty approachability: Factors shaping faculty-student interaction outside of the classroom*. Research in Higher Education, 51*, 767–788. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-010-9178-z

Craig, C.M., Bergstrom, A.M., Brooks, M.E., & Bichard, S. (2022). Navigating the new normal: Teaching in the time of COVID. *Journal of Effective Teaching in Higher Education, 5*(2), 1-21. https://doi.org/10.36021/jethe.v5i2.287

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches (5th ed.). Sage Publications.

Creswell, J. W., & Guetterman, T. C. (2019). Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research (5th ed.). Pearson.

Cuseo, J. (2018). Student-faculty engagement. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 154, 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1002/tl.20294

Dam, L. (2021). Pandemic pedagogy. In Chan, R., Bista, K., and Allen, R. (First edition). *Online teaching and learning in higher education during COVID-19* (pp. 28–39). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003125921

Darwin Holmes, A. G. (2020). Researcher positionality - A consideration of its influence and place in qualitative research - A new researcher guide. *Shanlax International Journal of Education*, *8*(4), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.34293/education.v8i4.3232

Davis, B., & Neely, P. W. (2009). *Tools for teaching* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons Inc.

de Hui, M., & Audenaerde, I. (2023). How to support co-creation in higher education: The validation of a questionnaire. *Higher Education Studies, 13*(3), 54-68. https://doi.org/10.5539/hes.v13n3p54

Dost, G., & Mazzoli Smith, L. (2023). Understanding higher education students' sense of belonging: A qualitative meta-ethnographic analysis. *Journal of Further and Higher Education, 47*(6), 822-849. https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2023.2191176

Dunne, E. & Owen, D. (2013). *Student engagement handbook*. Emerald Group Publishing.

Felten, P., & Lambert, L. M. (2020). Relationship-rich education: How human connections drive success in college. Johns Hopkins University Press.

Fletcher, J. & Ragins, B. (2007). Stone center relational cultural theory: A window on relational mentoring. In B.R. Ragins & K.E. Kram (editors), The handbook of mentoring at work: Theory, research and practice (pp. 373-399). https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412976619

Frazer, C., Sullivan, D. H., Weatherspoon, D., & Hussey, L. (2017). Faculty perceptions of online teaching effectiveness and indicators of quality. *Nursing Research & Practice*, 1–6. https://doi.org/10.1155/2017/9374189

Freeman, T. M., Anderman, L. H., & Jensen, J. M. (2007). Sense of belonging in college freshmen at the classroom and campus levels. *The Journal of Experimental Education, 75*(3), 203-220. https://doi.org/10.3200/JEXE.75.3.203-220

Gannon, K. (2021, June 9). Faculty evaluation after the pandemic. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. https://www.chronicle.com/article/faculty-evaluation-after-the-pandemic

Geiger, R.L. (2016). *The History of American Higher Education: Learning and Culture from the Founding to World War II*. Princeton University Press.

Gigliotti, R.A. (2021). The impact of COVID-19 on academic department chairs: Heightened complexity, accentuated liminality, and competing perceptions of reinvention. *Innovative Higher Education, 46*, 429-444. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-021-09545-x

Grace, B. K., Henderson, K., & Lyons, B. (2018). Picking pedagogical practices students prefer: An analysis of the effectiveness of teaching tools in face-to-face versus online delivery. *Business Education Innovation Journal, 10*(1), 47-50. https://scholarworks.moreheadstate.edu/msu_faculty_research/893/

Grantham, A., Robinson, E. E., & Chapman, D. (2015). "That truly meant a lot to me ": A qualitative examination of meaningful faculty-student interactions. *College Teaching*, *63*(3), 125–132. https://doi.org/10.1080/87567555.2014.985285

Goldrick-Rab, S., & Cook, M. A. E. (2011). College students in changing contexts. In P. G. Altbach, P. J. Gumport, & R. O. Berdahl (Eds.), *American higher education in the twenty-first century: Social, political, and economic challenges* (3rd ed., pp. 254–278). Johns Hopkins University Press.

Goodenow, C. (1993). Classroom belonging among early adolescent students: Relationships to motivation and achievement. The Journal of Early Adolescence, 13(1), 21–43. https://doi.org/10.1177/0272431693013001002

Graham, P. A. (1978). Expansion and Exclusion: A History of Women in American Higher Education. *Signs*, *3*(4), 759-773. https://doi.org/10.2307/3173112

Hagenauer, G., & Volet, S. E. (2014). Teacher-student relationship at university: An important yet under-researched field. *Oxford Review of Education, 40*(3), 370–388. https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2014.921613

Harper, S.R. (2020). COVID-19 and the racial equity implications of reopening college and university campuses. *American Journal of Education*, *127*(1), 153–162. https://doi.org/10.1086/711095

Hodges, C., Moore, S., Lockee, B., Trust, T., & Bond, A. (2020, March 27). The difference between emergency remote teaching and online learning. Educause Review https://er.educause.edu/articles/2020/3/the-difference-between-emergency-remote-teaching-and-online-learning

Hoffman, E. M. (2014). Faculty and student relationships: Context matters. *College Teaching, 62*(1), 13-19. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24760532

Hurtado, S., & Carter, D. F. (1997). Effects of college transition and perceptions of the campus racial climate on Latino college students' sense of belonging. *Sociology of Education, 70*(4), 324-345. https://doi.org/10.2307/2673270

Hurtado, S., Han, J. C., Sáenz, V. B., Espinosa, L., Cabrera, N., & Cerna, O. (2007). Predicting transition and adjustment to college: Biomedical and behavioral science aspirants' and minority students' first year of college. *Research in Higher Education, 48*, 841–887.

Johansen, R. (2012). Leaders make the future: Ten new leadership skills for an uncertain world. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

Jones, M.K. (2022). Centering Teaching and Learning Centers in Instructional Systems Design Conversations. TechTrends 66, 903–904. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11528-022-00786-x

The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education (n.d.). Key events in Black higher education. https://www.jbhe.com/chronology/

Kebritchi, M., Lipschuetz, A., & Santiague, L. (2017). Issues and Challenges for Teaching Successful Online Courses in Higher Education: A Literature Review. Journal of Educational Technology Systems, 46(1), 4-29. https://doi.org/10.1177/0047239516661713

Kentnor, H. (2015). Distance education and the evolution of online learning in the United States. *Curriculum and Teaching Dialogue*, *17*(1&2), 21–34. https://digitalcommons.du.edu/law_facpub/24/

Kezar, A. & Maxey, D. (2014). Faculty matter: So why doesn't everyone think so? Thought & Action, 2014, 29-44.

Kim, Y. K., & Lundberg, C. A. (2016). A structural model of the relationship between student-faculty interaction and cognitive skills development among college students. *Research in Higher Education, 57*(3), 288–309.https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-015-9387-6

Kim, Y.K. & Sax, L.J. (2009). Student-faculty interaction in research universities: Differences by student gender, race, social class, and first-generation status. *Research in Higher Education*, *50*, 437– 59. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-009-9127-x

Kim, Y.K., & Sax, L.J. (2017). The Impact of College Students' Interactions with Faculty: A Review of General and Conditional Effects. In: Paulsen, M. (eds) *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research* (pp. 85–139), vol 32. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-48983-4_3

Kirk-Jenkins, A.J. & Hughey, A.W. (2021). Abrupt adaptation: A review of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on faculty in higher education. *Journal of the Professoriate., 12*(1), 104-121.

Kniffin, K. M., Narayanan, J., Anseel, F., Antonakis, J., Ashford, S. P., Bakker, A. B., Bamberger, P., Bapuji, H., Bhave, D. P., Choi, V. K., Creary, S. J., Demerouti, E., Flynn, F. J., Gelfand, M. J., Greer, L. L., Johns, G., Kesebir, S., Klein, P. G., Lee, S. Y., . . . Vugt, M. v. (2021). COVID-19 and the workplace: Implications, issues, and insights for future research and action. American Psychologist, 76(1), 63–77. https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000716

Komarraju, M., Musulkin, S. & Bhattacharya, G. (2010). Role of student-faculty interactions in developing college students' academic self-concept, motivation, and achievement. *Journal of College Student Development*, *51*(3), 332–342. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.0.0137

Kuh, G. D. (2001). Assessing what really matters to student learning: Inside the National Survey of Student Engagement. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning, 33*(3), 10–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/00091380109601795

Kuh, G. D., & Hu, S. (2001). The effects of student-faculty interaction in the 1990s. *The Review of Higher Education, 24*(3), 309-332. https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2001.0005

Kuh, G. D. (2009). The national survey of student engagement: Conceptual and empirical foundations. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, *141*(1), 5–20. https://doi.org/10.1002/ir.283

Kurz, L., Metzler, E. T., & Ryan, K. C. (2021). Teaching in the Time of COVID-19: Reconceptualizing Faculty Identities in a Global Pandemic. *Journal of Teaching and Learning with Technology, 10*, 172-184.

Kvale, S. (2011). *Doing interviews*. SAGE Research Books.

Kyle, M. J., Schafer, J. A., Burruss, G. W., & Giblin, M. J. (2017). Perceptions of campus safety policies: Contrasting the views of students with faculty and staff. *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, *42*, 644-667. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1007/s12103-016-9379-x

LeBlanc, P. J. (2018). Higher Education in a VUCA World. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning, 50*(3-4), 23–26. https://doi.org/10.1080/00091383.2018.1507370

Magnusson, E., & Marecek, J. (2015). *Doing interview-based qualitative research: A learner's guide*. Cambridge University Press.

Majsak, M., Hall, C., Kirsch, N.R., Krencicki, D.B., Locke, E. and Hyland, N. (2022). Physical therapy education program faculty challenges, concerns and priorities during the COVID-19 pandemic: Looking back and moving forward. Journal of Physical Therapy Education, 36(2), 97-106. https://doi.org/10.1097/JTE.0000000000000228

Means, B., Bakia, M. & Murphy, R. (2014). *Learning Online: What Research Tells Us About Whether, When and How* (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203095959

Medvide, M. (2020). Introduction to the special issue on teaching during the coronavirus pandemic. *Pedagogy and the Human Sciences, 7* (1), 1–5. Retrieved from https://scholarworks.merrimack.edu/phs/vol7/iss1/8

Meishar-Tal, H., & Levenberg, A. (2021). In times of trouble: Higher education lecturers' emotional reaction to online instruction during COVID-19 outbreak. Education and Information Technologies, 26, 7145–7161. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-021-10569-1Miller, M. (2014). *Minds Online: Teaching Effectively with Technology*. Harvard University Press.

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation. Wiley.

Mucci-Ferris, M., Grabsch, D.K., & Bobo, A. (2021). Positives, Negatives, and Opportunities Arising in the Undergraduate Experience During the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Journal of College Student Development 62*(2), 203-218. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2021.0017

National Center for Education Statistics (n.d.). Fast Facts: Historically Black Colleges and Universities. https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=667

National Center for Education Statistics. (2022). Undergraduate enrollment: Condition of education. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cha.

National Survey of Student Engagement (n.d.) What does NSSE do? https://nsse.indiana.edu/nsse/about-nsse/index.html

Oberlin College (n.d.) About us. https://www.oberlin.edu/about-oberlin.

Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Civil Rights (n.d.). Minority serving institutions program. U.S. Department of the Interior. https://www.doi.gov/pmb/eeo/doi-minority-serving-institutions-program

Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (n.d.). Title III language instruction for English learners and immigrant students. https://oese.ed.gov/offices/office-of-formula-grants/school-support-and-accountability/essa-legislation-table-contents/title-iii-part-a/

Parker, S. W., Hansen, M. A., & Bernadowski, C. (2021). COVID-19 campus closures in the United States: American student perceptions of forced transition to remote learning. *Social Sciences, 10*(2), 62. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci10020062

Pascarella, E.T. & Terenzini, P.T. (1978). Student-faculty informal relationships and freshman year educational outcomes. The Journal of Educational Research, 71(4), 183-189. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220671.1978.10885067

Pascarella E.T. & Terenzini, P.T. (1991). How college affects students. Jossey-Bass.

Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (2005). *How college affects students: A third decade of research* (Vol. 2, 1st ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Quinlan, K.M. (2016). How emotion matters in four key relationships in teaching and learning in higher education. *College Teaching, 64*(3), 101-111. https://doi.org/10.1080/87567555.2015.1088818

Ramlo, S. (2021). The coronavirus and higher education: Faculty viewpoints about universities moving online during a worldwide pandemic. *Innovative Higher Education*, *46*, 241–259. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-020-09532-8

Renn, K. A., & Reason, R. D. (2021). College students in the United States: Characteristics, experiences, and outcomes. Stylus Publishing.

Reynolds, J. R., & Parrish, M. (2018). Natural mentors, social class, and college success. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, *61*(1-2), 179–190. https://doi.org/10.1002/ajcp.12209

Rooks, R. N., Scandlyn, J., Pelowich, K., & Lor, S. (2022). Co-teaching two interdisciplinary courses in higher education. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, 16*(2), Article 8. https://doi.org/10.20429/ijsotl.2022.160208

Ruben, B. D., De Lisi, R., & Gigliotti, R. A. (2021). *A guide for leaders in higher education* (2nd ed.). Stylus Publishing LLC

Saldana, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3rd ed.). Sage.

Schwartz, H. (2019). *Connected teaching: Relationship, power and mattering in higher education*. Stylus Publishing.

Seifert, T.A. & Umbach, P.D. (2008). The effects of faculty demographic characteristics and disciplinary context on dimensions of job satisfaction. *Research in Higher Education, 49*, 357-381. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-007-9084-1

Sessions, L.C., Ness, M., Hayley, M. & Yang, B.K. (2023). Nursing faculty job satisfaction during COVID-19: A mixed methods study. *Nursing Education Perspectives, 44*(6), 353-358. https://doi.org/10.1097/01.nep.0000000000001143

Snijders, I., Wijnia, L., Dekker, H.J.J., Rikers, R.M.J.P., and Loyens, S.M.M. (2021). What is in a student-faculty relationship? A template analysis of students' positive and negative critical incidents with faculty and staff in higher education. *European Journal of Psychology in Education, 37*, 1115-1139. https://doi.org/10.1007/210212-021-005490-x

Soares, A. E. And Lopes, M.P. (2020). Are your students safe to learn? The role of lecturer's authentic leadership in the creation of psychologically safe environments and their impact on academic performance. *Active Learning in Higher Education, 21*(1), 65-78. https://doi.org/10.1177/1469787417742023

Solis, O.J. & Turner, W.D. (2016). Strategies for building positive student-instructor interactions in large classes. *The Journal of Effective Teaching, 16*(1), 36-51.

Solis, O.J. & Turner, W.D. (2017). Building positive student-instructor interactions: Engaging students through caring leadership in the classroom. *Journal of Empowering Teaching Excellence, 1*(1), 23-36. https://doi.org/10.15142/T37P72

Stake, R. E. (1995). *Art of case study research*. Sage Publications.

Stake, R.E. (2006). *Multiple case study analysis*. The Guilford Press.

Stewart, W. H., Baek, Y., & Lowenthal, P. (2022). From emergency remote teaching (ERT) to sustained remote teaching (SRT): A comparative semester analysis of exchange students' experiences and perceptions of learning online during COVID-19. *Online Learning, 26*(2), 170-197.

Supiano, B. & McMurtrie, B. (2021, May). The future of Teaching: How the classroom is being transformed. Chronicle of Higher Education. https://store.chronicle.com/collections/teaching/products/the-future-of-teaching

Taylor, Z. W., Meghani, S., & Nguyen, L. (2022). Nudging in a pandemic: Lessons learned from text messaging college students amid COVID-19. *Strategic Enrollment Management Quarterly*, *10*(1), 3–11.

Teddlie, C. & Tashakkori, A. (2009). Foundations of mixed methods research: Integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches in the social and behavioral sciences. Sage Publications.

Terenzini, P. T., & Wright, T. M. (1987). Influences on students' academic growth during four years of college. *Research in higher education, 26*(2), 161-179. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00992027

Thelin, J. R. (2004). *American higher education: Issues and institutions*. Routledge.

Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition* (2nd ed.). University of Chicago Press.

Trolian, T.L., Jach, E.A. & Archibald, G.C. (2020). Shaping Students' Career Attitudes toward professional success: Examining the role of student-faculty interactions. Innovative Higher Education, 46, 111-131. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-020-09529-3

Trust, T. & Whalen, J. (2020). Should teachers be trained in emergency remote teaching? Lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Technology and Teacher Education*, *28*(2), 189–199. https://www.learntechlib.org/primary/p/215995/

Umbach, P.D. & Wawrzynski, M.R. (2005). Faculty do matter: The role of college faculty in student learning and engagement. Research in Higher Education, 46(2), 153-184. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-004-1598-1

U.S. Department of Education (n.d.). Laws and guidance. https://www2.ed.gov/policy/landing.jhtml?src=ft

U.S. Department of Education (n.d.). Office of Postsecondary Education - Programs. https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/programs.html

Vito, M. M. (2007). *The impact of faculty-student interaction outside the classroom on faculty satisfaction, engagement, and retention* (Publication No. 3273748) [Doctoral dissertation, Northern Arizona University]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

Walker, C. & Gleaves, A. (2015). Constructing the caring higher education teacher: A theoretical frame. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *54*, 65–76. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2015.11.013

Weimer, M. (2013). *Learner-centered teaching*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Wergin, J. (2020). *Deep learning in a disorienting world*. Cambridge University Press

Yin, R. (2014). Case study research: Design and methods. Sage.

Yuval-Davis, N. (2006). Belonging and the politics of belonging. *Patterns of Prejudice, 40*(3), 197–214. https://doi.org/10.1080/00313220600769331

Zhang, X. (2020, March). Thoughts on large-scale long-distance web-based teaching in colleges and universities under novel coronavirus pneumonia epidemic: A case of Chengdu University. In *Proceedings of the 4th International Conference on Culture, Education and Economic Development of Modern Society (ICCESE 2020)* (pp. 1222–1225). Atlantis Press. https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.200316.266

Zhao, Y., & Watterston, J. (2021). The changes we need: Education post COVID-19. *Journal of Educational Change*, *22*(1), 3–12. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-021-09417-3

APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Note: Please note that the participant requirements have changed. Antioch IRB has approved all changes.

Hello,

My name is Lauren Bullock, and I am a doctoral student in the Graduate School of Leadership and Change Management at Antioch University.

I am conducting a research study for my dissertation titled "Teaching during turbulent times: A multiple-case study exploring faculty experiences in fostering positive interaction with U.S.-based undergraduate students."

The purpose of this study is to better understand faculty members' experiences teaching during a tumultuous period in U.S. higher education and how they fostered positive interactions with undergraduate students.

I want to invite you to participate in this study or share this email with a fellow faculty member who meets the requirements listed below.

Participants should:

- be a full-time faculty member at the institution
- taught a minimum of four undergraduate courses total between Spring 2019 and Spring 2023
- taught multiple semesters between Spring 2019 and Spring 2023

If you decide to participate, you will be:

- invited to a 60-minute semi-structured interview about your experience teaching before and during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- asked to share your CV, teaching philosophy and two syllabi – one from before Spring 2020 and one after Spring 2020
- asked to complete a short pre-interview questionnaire to gather demographic information and supporting documentation (items from the previous bullet)

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without any effect.

I can answer any questions you have about the study. You may also contact my dissertation chair, Dr. Jon Wergin.

If you are interested, please respond to this email, and I will provide more information about the next steps.

Thank you for your time.

Best,
Lauren

APPENDIX B: CONSENT EMAIL WITH FORM ATTACHMENTS

Subject line: Consent Form, Survey and Scheduling for Dissertation Study

Hi,

Thank you for confirming your participation. I appreciate your willingness to participate in my dissertation study, "Teaching during turbulent times: A multiple case study exploring faculty experiences in fostering positive interaction with U.S.-based undergraduate students."

First, I've attached the consent form to this email. Would you read, sign and return it?

Second, you will also need to submit some demographic information and documentation for review in this study. You'll be asked about your personal and academic background in the questionnaire. All information will remain confidential.

Before you click on the link below, please do the following:

- Choose a pseudonym to use throughout the study.
- Please gather and be prepared to upload Word or PDF versions of your most recent CV, teaching philosophy, and two syllabi – one from before Spring 2020 and one following the Spring 2020 semester.

You can click the survey link when you are ready.

Last, we'll need to schedule a time to meet. Please share a few dates/times you are available to meet. I'll follow up with a Zoom URL once we've confirmed.

Thank you again,
Lauren

APPENDIX C: ZOOM INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Hi (participant). How are you?

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview.

As I've shared, the study's purpose is to better understand how faculty members experienced teaching between Spring 2019 and Spring 2023, a disruptive time in society.

This interview is semi-structured. I have six questions I'll ask, plus a few follow-ups. The questions are broken up into three areas – before COVID-19, after COVID-19 and takeaways from your experience.

It should take approximately 45 minutes to complete.

You can take a break if anything becomes uncomfortable or overwhelming, or you can withdraw at any time from the study.

Starter questions:

- Do you have any questions before we get started?
- Before I get started, are you ok with me recording this conversation?
- Would you switch your name to your pseudonym?

Study questions:

- Please tell me about your teaching experience prior to January 2020.
    - How did you get into teaching?
    - What types of courses do you normally teach?
    - What topics?
    - What delivery mode did you use?
- Would you describe your experience teaching during COVID-19?
    - You can start with the Spring 2020 semester and then the following semesters.
    - How did your sense of the workplace change during your transition? Meaning, you were working at home, students could see your space, etc.
- What challenges did you face during this time?
- How did you adapt to the changes in instruction?
    - What strategies did you use?
    - How did you feel?
    - How did you know those changes were going to be helpful?
- Was there one moment in your teaching experience during that time that you feel summarizes your entire experience?
    - Were there any highlights? Meaning, were there valuable moments or occurrences that helped you through this experience?
- Overall, how has your teaching approach or philosophy changed since we've moved away from the severe restrictions and height of the turbulence?

- Is there anything else you want to share that maybe I didn't ask but you would like to add?

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. I appreciate your responses.

APPENDIX D: PRE-INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Please complete the following descriptive questions based on your personal and academic background. This information will not be used to identify you in the dissertation. It helps me to ensure diversity in the participant pool and social issues that could arise in the interview based on your background.

Personal Demographics
This section helps me understand your background.

What is your age?
*Write in response
*I prefer not to respond

What race/ethnicity best describes you? *Please check only one*
American Indian or Alaska Native
Asian or Pacific Islander
Black or African American
Hispanic or Latino
Multiple ethnicities
White
I prefer not to respond.
I prefer to write in my response.

How would you describe yourself? *Please check only one*
Genderqueer/Gender non-conforming
Man
Non-binary
Trans male/Trans man
Trans female/Trans woman
Woman
I prefer not to respond.
I prefer to self-describe in the box below.

How many children (newborn to 18 years old) are you responsible for providing childcare for?

Academic Demographics
This section helps me understand your academic background.

What is your current academic discipline(s) (business, communication, leadership, education, interdisciplinary, multiple disciplines, etc.)?

What is your current academic title(s) (assistant professor, full professor, etc.)?

What year did you start teaching credit-bearing undergraduate courses at a U.S. college or university (2003, 2019, etc.)?

How many years of teaching experience do you have?

Are you considered full-time or part-time by your institution?
Full-time
Part-time
Other – please specify.

Before teaching credit-bearing courses, where were you employed in a non-teaching capacity? Please check all areas that apply. Avoid part-time work, internships, or assistantships.
Corporate or For-profit
Non-Profit or Government
K-16 Education (non-teaching role as administrative or staff member)
Arts or Cultural organization
STEM organization
Medical/Health organization
None of the above

APPENDIX E: PERMISSION TO USE OOC FSI MODEL

Permission to reproduce the Conceptual Model of Out-Of-Class Faculty-Student Interaction in Figure 1 with permission from Springer Nature. From "Pedagogical Signals of Faculty Approachability: Factors Shaping Faculty-Student Interaction Outside of the Classroom" by Cox, B.E., McIntosh, K.L., Terenzini, P.T., Reason, R.D. & Lutovsky Quate, B.R., 2010, *Research in Higher Education, 51*, p. 770. Copyright 2010 by Springer Nature.