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Thrive Online: Supporting students in learning to learn online

Layne Nyman West

Design Project Report
Masters
Instructional Psychology & Technology, Brigham Young University

Purpose
The adoption of online courses has increased, perhaps permanently, due to the COVID 19 pandemic (Arum & Stevens, 2020). Unexpectedly moving to an online learning environment left some students under-prepared. Some students in fully online classes report feeling more disconnected from their peers and instructors, more responsibility to be self-directed since they receive less help from their instructor, and can also feel intimidated by the technological expectations of the online learning environment, particularly if they start without sufficient technical knowledge or support (Holley & Oliver, 2010; Otter et al., 2013; Perris & Zhang, 2004). Students transitioning from a traditional high school to college may have less experience communicating with instructors via email or other electronic means, which might be intimidating. They may feel disconnected from their peers in an online classroom because they are unfamiliar with how to appropriately connect to other learners. In addition, they may be unaware of the resources available to help support them in their online learning. These challenges and deficiencies may be more pronounced among learners from diverse backgrounds and racial/ethnic minorities.

The purpose of this project was to design and develop a 2 to 4 week online course intended to improve the knowledge, attitudes, skills, and self-efficacy of all students (with special emphasis on first-year, first-generation, multicultural, and non-traditional students) to effectively learn online.

The client for my project was BYU Online administration. BYU Online is the office on BYU’s campus that oversees and administers all university-sanctioned online classes. Over the last six years, the number of students enrolled in a BYU Online class has increased from 2,914 students enrolled Fall semester 2016 to 19,919 students enrolled Fall semester 2021. Due to the COVID 19 pandemic, the number of students enrolled in an online course at BYU increased from 11,479 students in Fall semester 2019 to 25,896 students enrolled in Fall semester 2021. Such a shift to online would be expected to pose additional difficulties for first-year, first-generation, non-traditional students, and other students with less online learning experience. BYU Online administration observed a need for a course to orient students to online learning. The learning
outcomes for the course reflect the expectation that students completing the course will be able to do the following:

1. Understand basic learning strategies
   a. Develop an awareness of different types of learning strategies (e.g., Notetaking, time-management, goal setting, self-regulation)
   b. Identify different ways to use learning strategies
   c. Identify application of learning strategies
   d. Demonstrate how to apply a learning strategy

2. Identify techniques to maintain healthy, mental, physical, and spiritual wellness as an online student.
   a. Develop awareness of areas of learner wellness
   b. Identify benefits of physical wellness on learning
   c. Identify benefits of mental wellness on learning
   d. Identify ways to improve or maintain physical wellness
   e. Identify ways to improve or maintain mental wellness

3. Understand what campus resources are available to support students in their online learning
   a. Develop an awareness of campus resources available
   b. Identify ways to access services and resources available through campus resources

4. Understand how to navigate a Learning Management System (LMS)
   a. Demonstrate how to submit an assignment in a LMS
   b. Demonstrate how to navigate Canvas
   c. Know how to review a Syllabus in a LMS

5. Understand how to communicate with instructors, teaching assistants (TAs), and other students in an online learning environment
   a. Develop an understanding of how to communicate with instructors, TAs, and other students effectively
   b. Demonstrate how to communicate with instructors, TAs, and other students.

6. Explain the positive effects of diversity and belonging in educational settings

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**Project Needs and Constraints**

In education, it is important to focus on assisting students in learning how to learn (Barron & Darling-Hammond, 2008) and build not just content knowledge but also 21st-century skills. These skills will help learners navigate formal learning opportunities and also the demands of changing technologies. Formal education should prepare learners with these skills and the desire to be lifelong learners. In addition, it should enable them to be flexible as new expectations arise so that learners can be successful in various learning environments. Underserved students (e.g., first-generation, first-year, and international students) and those struggling academically benefit most from efforts to develop skills to learn in an online learning environment.

Fostering lifelong learning and 21st-century skills in online courses is important in education today as more classes are online. This isn’t limited to education either, as technology and job
expectations are also changing. These skills cultivate new mindsets and learning habits necessary for the future (Fischer, 2000). One way to foster the development of these new skills is to teach them in a course (Saavedra & Opfer, 2012). In support of these formal, intentional efforts to teach these skills, it has been noted that "We should start focusing on making space for iterative improvements and allow for the risk of failure in the face of moving forward" (Ciabocchi, 2020, p. 287). An additional challenge and opportunity is to target these training efforts on vulnerable student populations engaging in online learning for the first time.

Online learning is new to many university students, and many of them feel unprepared to thrive in this setting. There are various reasons students do not feel prepared for online learning. One such reason is that online learners may feel uncomfortable if they have no previous experience with tools like Canvas, Zoom, Google Drive, or Microsoft Suite. Students unfamiliar with these tools may feel disadvantaged as they begin taking online classes for the first time. Next, online communication can be an integral part of successful online courses. Students, especially those transitioning from a traditional high school to college, may have less experience communicating with instructors via email and video, which could be intimidating. Students may also disengage from other students in an online classroom because they are unfamiliar with how to connect to other learners appropriately. In addition, they may lack the skills and motivation to complete the online course. Other universities have found promising results in summer bridge programs, which has increased BYU Online’s optimism for this course. For example, Strahorn (2010) suggests that summer bridge program (SBP) participation positively affects specific academic skills and academic self-efficacy.

Under the direction of BYU Online administration, I was the project lead tasked to design and develop the BYU Thrive Online course with a team of 4 graduate students working as instructional design assistants. Our team of graduate students was not comprised of subject matter experts (SME) in online learning. Finding SME and accurate, researched-based content was challenging and required several drafts and iterations.

In addition, the course was intended to be a short, 2-4 week asynchronous course. Creating a short course that sufficiently addressed all the learning material was challenging. BYU Thrive Online is a non-credit course. So, to get students to participate, a recruitment email was sent to a number of students enrolled in an online course (see appendix).

**Learner Analysis**

There are varying degrees of online learning experience among students at BYU. The range of resources and skills of the target population of the project I designed was likewise wide and varied. Some students were familiar and comfortable with online learning resources (e.g., Canvas, Zoom, Examility, video and audio assignment submissions, GoReact). Others had limited online learning experiences, again, putting them at risk of not completing their online course. Some students lacked skills, knowledge, and confidence in their ability to communicate with others.

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1 The stakeholder of the BYU Thrive Online course was the BYU Online administration. I was the project lead for this course. Insomuch as this report is mine and for my degree, from this point forward, I use 'I,' referring to what my team and I have done to design and develop the course. My team consisted of four instructional design assistants at BYU Online.
online. Some students lacked the knowledge of how to access campus resources to help support their learning. Not only did students have different degrees of online learning experience, but each learner also had a unique situation. Some worked part or full-time, some had family responsibilities, and some had mental and physical health concerns. Creating a course that met the various needs of all learners was difficult.

The complexity of the needs of the students called for the course to be adaptable, allowing students to move through the course focusing on areas of online learning that are most relevant for them. In addition, the course needed to be designed to be accessible and culturally sensitive.

I created personas based on information collected from BYU Online teaching assistants and administrators. I updated the personas after a group of students completed the pilot course. I used information from the course's discussion board, focus group, and informal interviews with BYU Online teaching assistants and administrators to create personas that accurately reflected the learning audience (see appendix).

**Environmental analysis**

Some students enrolled in an online course have the technical skills to navigate the online learning environment. Yet, some report they fall behind their classmates because they are unfamiliar with these tools and drop out of the course because of technology issues (Arrowsmith, 2017). University students’ stress can be associated with poor physical and mental health and well-being, poor sleep quality, high levels of stress and burnout, and poor quality of life (Riberiro, et al 2018). According to BYU Online teaching assistants (TAs) and administrators, students have reported that having mental health information and resources has been beneficial to their online learning. The findings from my environmental analysis exposed the need to focus on (a) technology skills, (b) learner wellness, including how to access available resources to support students with mental health concerns, and (c) bridging the gap between students who are comfortable and confident learning online and those that are not.

**Addressing constraints**

Since this course was not offered for credit, it needed to be engaging enough and have sufficient perceived value that students would want to participate in the course. Feedback from the first iteration indicated that the assignments were too time-consuming for a non-credit course. For obvious reasons, some students were not interested in completing the course if it was too time-consuming and irrelevant. Since it was not for credit, the course was not being developed like a traditional online course. For example, there was a course design budget for the course. Also, I applied for and received additional funding via an experiential learning grant from the library.

**Content or Task Analysis**

Consulting with the stakeholders I concluded that there were five major elements of effective online learning.
Technology

- Know how to navigate a course in Canvas
  - Find the course modules
  - Update settings
  - Check announcement
  - Review a syllabus
  - Message an instructor or TA
  - Participate in a discussion
  - Download and assignment
  - Complete and submit a quiz or exam

Learning Strategies

- Understand how to apply various learning strategies
  - Knowledge of various learning strategies
  - Understand the benefits of learning strategies
  - Desire to apply learning strategies
  - Confidence in applying learning strategies

Student Wellness

- Know how to develop, maintain and improve student wellness
  - Understand how wellness impacts learning
  - Understand steps to maintain and improve wellness
  - Identify resources available to support student wellness
  - Know how to connect with resources available to supportness
  - Confidence to connect to resources to help support student wellness

Connection

- Know how to connect with resources to improve learning
  - Know how to connect with other students
    - Practice sending a message to another student
    - Know how to appropriately participate in a discussion board
    - Know how to use other tools like GoReact
    - Know how to effectively communicate with other students
  - Know how to connect with an Instructor or TA
    - Know how to contact an Instructor or TA
    - Practice contacting an Instructor or TA
    - Understand how to effectively communicate with an Instructor or TA

College Community

- Understand that diversity and civility benefit the learning environment
  - Know about college culture and expectations
  - Understand the positive effects of diversity in an education setting
  - Identify resources that support various kinds of learners
  - Understand the need for civility in an educational setting
Product Design

Design Details

BYU Thrive Online was designed to increase students' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and self-efficacy in navigating the online learning environment and was guided by Gagné's principles of instruction (Gagné et al., 1992). The Thrive Online course, a short, asynchronous bridge course, consists of seven modules using the Canvas learning management system (LMS). It was designed to meet learners' diverse needs by focusing on five design strategies: (1) creating appropriate and engaging activities, (2) creating an environment that draws from and contributes to the knowledge and experience of the learners, (3) regular communication with the instructor and TAs, (4) manageable workload appropriate for the learning conditions, and (5) multiple means of processing the material to diversify and scale the learning materials that are relevant and applicable to the student's learning needs. Using these strategies, the course materials address the following content areas: (a) orientation and navigation to the LMS, (b) technical skills in online learning, (c) online learner wellness, (d) online learning strategies, (e) developing a growth mindset, (f) accessing available campus resources to support online learning, (g) connecting with instructors, TAs, and other learners, and (h) engaging in a campus community creates an environment of inclusion and belonging.

There was a need for BYU Online students to learn how to learn in an online environment. Indeed, BYU Thrive Online was designed specifically to address this need. Using Bloom's Taxonomy framework, the course was designed first to build knowledge and understanding and awareness of the content and then provide opportunities to implement the learning into real-world situations.

Working with stakeholders in BYU Online administration, it became apparent that various students (e.g., students on academic probation, new to online learning students, first-generation students, neurodiverse students, non-traditional students) could benefit from this course. So I focused on applying Universal Design for Learning (UDL) guidelines. To provide multiple means of engagement, I created a deep dive assignment. The deep dive assignment gave students the choice and autonomy to select a topic for online learning they wanted to learn about in greater depth. To provide multiple means of representation, I clarified vocabulary and supplied background knowledge and resources to learn more about the chosen content area. In addition, I offered alternatives for auditory and visual information. To provide multiple means of action and expression, I offered multiple examples of novel solutions to authentic problems.

BYU Thrive Online consists of seven modules:

Module 0: Getting started Technology—In this module, learners are introduced to the course instructor and the TAs and have the chance to practice communicating with them. Second, students participate in a course orientation and complete a pre-test. Third, students are introduced to other elements of online learning (e.g., participating in online discussions, reviewing a syllabus, downloading an assignment).
Module 1: College Culture and Expectations/Course Navigation—In this module, learners review the terminology used in an online learning environment. They learn about college culture and expectations. Students demonstrate how to navigate the course. In addition, they connect with other students through an online discussion board.

Module 2: Learning to Learn Online—In this module, learners are introduced to various learning strategies and know where to find additional resources about specific learning strategies. Second, participants learn about the role of each of the following:
- Mental wellness: Students learn about the importance of and identify strategies to maintain mental wellness while learning online.
- Physical wellness: Students learn about the importance of and identify strategies to maintain physical wellness while learning online.
- Spiritual wellness: Students learn about the importance of and identify strategies to maintain spiritual wellness while learning online.
Third, learners compare and contrast a fixed mindset versus a growth mindset and learn about the benefits of a growth mindset in a learning environment.

Module 3: Connecting—In module 3, learners have experience communicating with an instructor or TA. They learn about communication strategies and then practice connecting online with other students. Students are made aware of the many campus resources available and focus on learning about specific campus resources that can help support their online learning. Students gain experience familiarizing themselves with at least one campus resource.

Module 4: Deep Dive—Here, learners expand their knowledge of online learning by exploring an area of online learning of their choice in-depth. Learners create a short 2-minute presentation on an online learning topic. They share what they learned with other students using GoReact.

Module 5: Diversity in Learning—College can be the first time students encounter others from drastically different cultures or who have different political views and lived experiences than theirs. In this module, students learn about the benefits of diversity in an educational setting and the importance of effective communication in an online environment. In addition, there are pages with information and resources to support various kinds of learners.

Module 6: Application—In this final module, students complete a final assessment where they review and create various scenarios and use the content knowledge from the course to:
1. Identify the issue or problem
2. Identify resources and people that are available to provide support
3. Execute an action plan to address the issue
Lastly, students complete the post-test survey.

Video Walkthrough

Thrive Online Video Walkthrough
Design Process and Evolution

Several models, (a) Plomp's OKT Model, (b) the Pie Model, and (c) the ADDIE Model, were used to inform each phase of this project. The process can be described in roughly four major phases.

Phase 1: Planning
The first step in this phase was working with stakeholders to analyze the learning need, objectives, and learning gaps. COVID-19 exposed that student retention and engagement were low in an emergency remote learning environment. Stakeholders observed a gap between students with online learning skills and knowledge and those without. We concluded there was a need to increase BYU Online students' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and self-efficacy in learning in an online environment. I created learning profiles, interviewed BYU Online administration, and researched related learning resources.

The next step was designing the course and included:
1. Creating learning goals, outcomes, and objectives.
2. Selecting and aligning the learning activities, content, and assessment to the outcomes and objectives.
3. Designing the layout and flow of the course.
4. Considering appropriate technology use for the course.
5. Selecting the course progression.

The final step of phase 1 was developing the course content. This step included selecting material to include in the course, and consulting with SMEs to check the accuracy of the content, and finding open sources with quality content. I created instructional guides, assessments, and selected media. In addition, I created the look and feel of the course, including colors, images, and fronts. We developed ways for learners to connect and engage with the course material and content.

Figure 1: Wireframes of the course layout, team responsibilities, ideas for content, interactions, assignments, and assessments.
Phase 2: Implementation
The first step in this phase was to test the course with BYU Online TAs. After the TAs completed the course and provided feedback, I revised the course before full implementation. The next step was to prepare the instructor and TAs for the course by reviewing the learning outcomes, assignments, and assessments that required timely feedback. Finally, students enrolled in the course. During this time, I worked closely with the instructor and TAs to address barriers to learning (e.g., broken links, negative feedback, low participation). I worked to modify and improve the course in real-time with the feedback I received from students and instructors.

Figure 2: Thrive 1.1 Home Page
Phase 3: Evaluating

I collected pre-and post-test data, conducted focus groups, and interviewed TAs. After collecting data from these sources, improvements were made to the course design, organization, assignments, and assessments. I first prioritized what changes were most critical. For example, students were not completing an assignment to connect with their instructor or TA. After communicating with the course instructor, TAs, and conducting focus groups with students, I then concluded that there were barriers to connecting instructors and TAs. I made adjustments to the assignment by clarifying the expectations for the assignment, simplifying the assignment, and demonstrating how to complete the assignment. Second, I worked with my colleagues as a team to decide how to make those changes (e.g., videos, open education resources, experiential learning activities). Third, I choose how to use the grant money to improve the design. Fourth, I update the course’s design, content, and organization. I improved the learning goals and objectives. I created improved assignments that fostered online communication and learner interactions. I made adjustments to the assessments that created more authentic assessments. In addition, I worked with SMEs to check for the accuracy of the content. Finally, I conducted user testing on the course before I recruited participants for the next iteration. I used the feedback from the user testing to make final adjustments to the course.

Figure 3: Thrive 1.3 Home Page
I went through this process of planning, implementing, and evaluating three times creating three iterations of the course.

**BYU Thrive Online 1.1**

After I evaluated Thrive 1.1, I prioritized improving accessibility and cultural sensitivity. In the initial phase of planning, I selected the acronym I.C.E for Identity, Connect, Execute an action as a central theme of the course. I received feedback that I.C.E. carries a negative connotation for some people as it represents a federal agency that enforces immigration and customs laws. I removed I.C.E. and adjusted the focus to technology, learning strategies, learner wellness, and connecting. Accessibility was also an issue I addressed, correcting color contrast, descriptive words for hyperlinks, providing text descriptions of content for images, providing transcripts for videos, removing screenshots, and using headings. I also observed that some students didn’t have experience using Canvas, so additional information, directions, and demonstrations were needed to for students to have baseline knowledge to effectively navigate the LMS.

**Figure 4:** Thrive 1.1 content focus
Figure 5: Updated Thrive Online module focus

Figure 6: Thrive 1.1 Course Navigation Page
Welcome to Thrive Online! The purpose of this course is to help you thrive as an online learner. You already have online learning skills and abilities. You can add to the knowledge and skills you have to enrich and enhance your online learning experience. The content of this course focuses on this three-step THRIVE process:

1. **Identify** what you can work on to improve as an online learner
2. **Connect** with resources to help you
3. **Execute** your action plan

It may seem simple and easy to remember, but the steps require effort. The skills, tools, and resources we discuss in this course can give you help and support to thrive in an online learning environment.

Here is a brief video overview to help orient you to the layout of this course (refer to the syllabus for additional information).

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**Course Overview - Video Summary**

**Unit 0**
This unit will provide a general overview of the course. You will be introduced to the instructors and TAs. In addition, you will participate in a canvas scavenger hunt and online discussion board.

**Unit 1**
This unit will focus on the "identify" portion of the three-step process. You will complete a self-check and work through 3 lesson pages that provide a brief introduction to learning strategies, cognitive theories, and learner wellness practices.

**Unit 2**
This unit focuses on the "connect" portion of the three-step process. You will learn and demonstrate ways to connect with campus resources, instructors, TAs, and other students.

**Unit 3**
This unit allows you to practice the "execute" portion of the three-step process by completing the "Deep Dive" assignment (see below for more detail). Essentially, you will decide which topics from Unit 1 you want to learn about in more depth.

**Unit 4**
In this unit, you will complete the final assessment, which gives several scenarios you may face. You will select one scenario in each section or create your own and explain how you could use the three-step process to address the issues in each scenario.

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**Deep Dive Assignment**
The "Deep Dive" assignment is for you to personalize. As you go through the pages in unit 1, pay attention to what interests you and what you would like to learn more about. For the "Deep Dive" assignment in Unit 3, you will learn more on the topics of your choice and share what you learned.
Figure 7: Thrive 1.3 Canvas Navigation Page

Configure Your Canvas Settings

**Essential Account Settings**

- 1. Verify or Add your Email Address
- 2. Set Notification Preferences
- 3. Set Your Time Zone
- 4. Add Your Profile Information

**Basic Navigation**

Here are some basics about Canvas that will help you to be successful in the course.

1. **Viewing pages.** It is important that you view and read each page in every unit and lesson in order. The easiest way to do this is to start from the Home page, click on the first page of the module you want to view, and click the "Next" button until you get through all the pages. You can, of course, return to the home page at any time to see what's coming in future modules.

2. **Viewing the Syllabus.** Look at the navigation links on the left, click on Syllabus, and then read it carefully.

3. **Viewing the Schedule.** The calendar is a great place to see your schedule of assignments. You can also review a list of all assignments at the bottom of the syllabus.

4. **Staying Current.** Your To Do and Coming Up lists on the right side of the screen will tell you what is due this week and beyond. But be sure to still click through and read all the lesson pages in your course so you will be prepared. In other words, these To Do links are shortcuts to the assignment submission pages and do not replace the normal path through the course.

5. **Reviewing Feedback.** Most of your assignments will include personalized feedback from your instructor or through a rubric. Review feedback by clicking on the Recent Feedback items (under the Coming Up list on the right panel). You can also access feedback in the gradebook by clicking Grades link in the left navigation.

6. **Messaging.** Use the Inbox icon on the left panel to send and receive messages within Canvas.

7. **Getting Help.** If you have any Canvas questions, click on the Help link in the far left navigation. It links to just about every question and answer you could ever have about Canvas.

**Meeting Module Requirements**

Sometimes, modules contain requirements or prerequisites that must be met in order to trigger the availability of a subsequent module or a student grade. In some cases, this functionality is added to help a student keep track of where they are in the course. Modules with requirements will be indicated by text on the right hand indicating whether one or more items will need to be completed (3). Items with a requirement will contain text under the item title to let you know what you need to do (7).

If a module has a prerequisite module, you will see a lock icon in the top right (7) as well as text that indicates which module is its prerequisite (4).
BYU Thrive Online 1.2
Progressing through the design process to the second iteration, I found that there was low participation for one assignment, which required students to contact the TA. I simplified the assignment, clarified the instructions, and demonstrated how to complete the assignment to address this issue. I reviewed all the assignments to improve the student-to-student interaction.

Figure 8: Thrive 1.1 Deep Dive Assignment

Figure 9: Thrive 1.3 Deep Dive Assignment Instructions (part 1)
Deep Dive Assignment

Instructions

For the Deep Dive assignment, you need to select one of the three topics in this unit (Learning Strategies, Growth Mindset, or Wellness) and learn about it in more depth. There is information in the unit about each of the topics. You can use the resources we have provided or search for additional information on your own. As you study your topic, think about how you could teach someone else what you are learning.

Here are some possible questions you could think about as you study the Deep Dive materials:

- What ideas were new to me as I studied the material?
- How is what I'm learning relevant to my life right now?
- What parts of this information would I want my friends to know about?

When you are finished studying, you will create a 2 minute video using GoReact where you share some of the things you have learned. You will be placed in a small group with other students to share your videos. You will be able to watch the videos from each person’s deep dive and leave a comment about their presentation.

⚠️ Please Note

You will find instructions for how to use GoReact on the assignment page. The next step is to explore all the pages in this module and decide what area of online learning you want to learn about (e.g., learning strategies, growth mindset, or student wellness).

Figure 10: Thrive 1.3 Deep Dive Assignment Instructions (part 2)
BYU Thrive Online 1.3

After iteration 1.2, my stakeholders suggested a new style for the course. In response, I created a style guide for the course, including templates for pages, assignments, and quizzes. Stakeholders also suggested adding an additional module to the course about diversity's benefits and providing information and resources about various learners. I added a related learning objective to the course and created a diversity and belonging module. I received feedback that some of the videos were coming from other university learning centers and didn't seem relevant to BYU students. I worked with the Harold B. Lee Library to create videos about the library's resources for online students. I also worked with media services to make videos about how to review a syllabus online and introduction to online learning. In addition, I created a copyright tracking form.
to ensure the legal and ethical use of online materials. Currently, I am using two software to ensure the course meets and exceeds accessibility standards.

**Figure 11**: Thrive Online Style Guide

**Figure 12**: BYU Thrive Online Canvas Course Style Guide

- Use descriptive headings and titles they help a user navigate the page
- Use sentence case for headings and titles
- Use heading tags to structure your content
Figure 13: Thrive Online 1.3 Updated homepage
**Figure 14:** Thrive Online 1.3 New Module 5

- **Module 5 Overview**
  - Mark done

- **Benefits of Diversity in Learning**
  - Mark done

- **Neurodiverse Learners**
  - Mark done

- **First-generation learners**
  - Mark done

- **Multicultural learners**
  - Mark done

- **Nontraditional learners**
  - Mark done

**Figure 15:** Thrive Online 1.3 Module 5 Overview
Module 5 Overview

College may be the first time we encounter others from drastically different cultures or who have different political views and lived experiences than ourselves. In this module, we will learn about the benefits of diversity in an education setting, the importance of effective communication, and the resources available to support various types of learners.

Objectives

- Explain the positive effects of diversity in an educational setting
- Identify resources that support various learners
- Understand the need for civility in an educational setting

Key Concepts

| Diversity | Communication | Resources to support learners |

Module Flow

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To Do</th>
<th>Estimated Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>3 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefit of diversity in learning</td>
<td>15-30 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Various kinds of learners content pages</td>
<td>30-60 min</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 16: Thrive Online 1.3 Diversity and Civility Page (Module 5)
Diversity and Civility

College may be the first time encountering others with different backgrounds, perspectives, and lived experiences. We may be the ones that feel different from those around us. Yet, the benefits of diversity in college are immeasurable—affecting students’ academic and social experiences, communication skills, and future experiences.

Benefits of Diversity in College

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diversity Enriches Our Learning Environment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whether you grow up in a diverse community or a community where people looked like you, college offers the opportunity to enhance your circle of connection and experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each person is more than the sum of surface clues presented to the world. Personal experience, social and family history, public policy, and even geography play a role in how diversity is constructed. As you think about your professional identity, consider the value and importance of being able to work collaboratively with diverse groups of people.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Diversity matters in college**

When you are exposed to new ideas, viewpoints, customs, and perspectives, which invariably happens when you come in contact with diverse groups of people, your frame of reference for understanding the world expands.

- Your thinking becomes more open and global.
- You become comfortable working and interacting with people of all nationalities.
- You gain a new knowledge base as you learn from people who are different from you.
- You think “harder” and more creatively and begin to perceive in new ways, seeing issues and problems from new angles.
- You can absorb and consider a wider range of options.
- Your values may be enriched.

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**Developing cultural competence**

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*Figure 17: Thrive Online 1.3 Module 5 Content Page*
Assessment and Evaluation

Pre- and post-test surveys were used to assess participants' knowledge, attitudes, skills, and self-efficacy at both time points and to estimate the course's impact. An example of the instrument that I used can be found in the Appendix. The surveys were created in Qualtrics, and participants received a message in Canvas containing a link to the survey, one at pre-test and one again at post-test.

Table 1 reports the differences from pre- to post-test (Thrive 1.1) in students' perceptions, knowledge, and confidence in connecting with other students online, the value of connecting with others online, the value of improving their knowledge and skills in online courses, managing their mental health, setting goals, and applying the skills and strategies they have learned. The percentage of students who were undecided, disagreed, or strongly disagreed about these
different areas was higher before taking the Thrive Online course. There was an increase from pre- to post-test in all areas for students who strongly agreed with the statements. Glazier (2021) points out that there must be intentional actions to make human connections online, whether you are an instructor, TA, or student. After taking the Thrive Online course, 52% more (total of 63%) of the participants indicated that they strongly agree they now know how to connect with other students in the online environment. And with that, 50% more (total of 57%) strongly agree that it is important to connect with other students in the online environment. It was encouraging to see these results after Thrive 1.1 and 1.2 iterations.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Asked</th>
<th>Respondents who strongly agree</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>Undecided, disagree or strongly disagree</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Connecting with other students in my online class is important to me.</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving how I learn online is important to me.</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know how to connect with other online learning students.</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know how to connect with online instructors and/or teaching assistants.</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know about a variety of online learning strategies.</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know how to manage my mental health while learning online.</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am confident that I will set goals to help me learn online.</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am confident that I can apply a variety of online learning strategies.</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color Code (absolute value)</td>
<td>0-9</td>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>30-39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Focus group data were analyzed using thematic analysis, with one global theme: course experience. This is not a surprising theme, but the four organizing themes of (a) navigation, (b) content, (c) applying skills, and (d) comfort levels provide insight into the elements of this course that were important to the students. Figure 18 reports the global theme, four organizing themes, and a sample of some of the associated basic themes.

**Figure 18** Global, organizing, and sample of basic themes
I worked with our stakeholders to conduct three focus groups. The following are comments from the focus groups:

“The time management skills that Thrive helped me with . . . have been really important to me.”

“[Online learning] is a reality; it isn’t going to go away. . . . All my training for my job is online. . . . I want to get better acquainted with it.”

I really liked learning about the growth mindset . . . [and] the campus resources. I also liked how there was a lot for student wellness and for planning out your future as a college student.”

“The time management skills that Thrive helped me with . . . have been really important to me.”

After each iteration of BYU Thrive Online, I meet with stakeholders to share focus group results, pre-and post-test surveys, and interviews with TAs. We discussed how the results could guide the design of the next iteration. I worked with stakeholders to prioritize tasks for course improvement.

Stakeholders were interested in learning more about participants who did not complete the entire course. I sent the following email to ask non-participants to complete the survey.

Hello, Former Thrive students,
In an effort to improve the Thrive course, we are asking all previous Thrive students to complete a quick Qualtrics survey. We are grateful for your participation in the course and value any feedback you are willing to give us. Below we have attached a 4 question survey. Please complete this at your earliest convenience.

Thank you,

BYU Online

https://byu.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_4GzPu37j0v5Ux5I

Outcomes

In total 55 students completed the Thrive Online course. Figure 19 shows the difference between attitude, knowledge, and confidence in learning online from pre to post-test.

**Figure 19:** Difference in Attitude, Knowledge, and Confidence Between and Pre to Post

Thrive Online is a resource that could be implemented to foster a successful transition to online learning for students, particularly first-time online students, students on academic probation, first-generation, and underrepresented minority students. Collection and analysis of future data will be utilized to create multiple versions specifically designed to support the unique needs of marginalized student learners.
Budget and Timeline

BYU Online did not specify a budget for this project. They allowed 3 to 4 instructional design assistants to assist with the design of the course. Each design assistant made $15-17/per hour. We budgeted for one designer (myself) to work 9 hours a week for a semester (11 weeks), estimating the cost to be approximately $1,683. It was estimated that the other assistant designers would work a combined 10 hours a week on this project for $1,870. The stakeholder planned to spend 1-2 hours a week working on this project, costing $800.

We applied for an Experiential Learning Grant from the Harold B. Lee Library to make this project possible. We were awarded $1,000 for media development and $3,000 for the participant outcome study (incentives for participants). The table below is our initial budget.

**Table 2:** BYU Thrive Online Budget Proposal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thrive Online Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholder wages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design assistant wages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incentives for participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This project developed into a larger project. Stakeholders allowed additional time for the instructional design assistants to work on the project. The project grew in scope and required extra hours from instructional design assistants (IDAs). The exact amount of hours IDAs worked on the project could not be determined. It is estimated it was more than anticipated. There were a number of in-kind hours donated by graduate students and instructors.

**Table 3:** BYU Thrive Online Current Budget

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Thrive Online Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Table 4: Budget for Harold B. Lee Library Experiential Learning Grant for BYU Online

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget Item</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Media Development</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incentives for participants</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$10,845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated In-kind IDA hours</td>
<td>$540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated In-Kind Media Development</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Budget for Harold B. Lee Library Experiential Learning Grant for BYU Online

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thrive Budget</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Media Development</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Outcome</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference Travel/Training</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Participant Outcome Study</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$7,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants Group 1.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amazon Ecards (1.1)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cougar Cash (1.1)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incentives (1.2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Annotated Bibliography

The findings from my bibliography helped guide the design of the course in three general ways. First, the result gave foundational knowledge about online college success. Second, it shed light
on learning to learn online research that provided helpful insight into what to focus on (e.g., student wellness, technology, student-to-student online interactions, student support). Finally, it was fundamental to understand the learning theories, instructional design strategies, and design approaches to meet the course goals and objectives.

Design Knowledge and Critique

The BYU Thrive Online course has five major strengths. First, the organization of the course. The course is easy to navigate, and the content is chunked into manageable pieces. Second, the course has strong student-to-content, student-to-instructor, and student-to-student interactions. Third, the course meets accessibility standards. Fourth, the course is culturally sensitive. Fifth, the course continues to be evaluated for course improvement, and improvements are made in real-time.

The future of BYU Thrive Online is promising. Collection and analysis of future data will be utilized to create multiple versions that are specifically designed to support the unique needs of marginalized student learners. By increasing the student completion rate, I hope to understand if participation in this course continues to improve student knowledge, skills, confidence, and ability to succeed in an online learning environment.

The major takeaways from this project are

1. Knowing your audience is essential
2. Get started, then implement and evaluate
3. Use design models and learning theories as part of the process
4. Organization and communication are key

First, creating personas and interviewing BYU Online administrators and TAs helped me get a sense of the learning audience's needs and was influential in informing the course goals, objectives, and outcomes. Knowing the audience early played a role in how I structured the course—knowing that some students had little to no experience learning online caused me to include course navigation and orientation information. In addition, I provided detailed instructions on how to complete assignments, assessments, and other course activities. Second, I learned I just had to get started. At first, I just didn't want to miss any detail in the initial iteration. Later, I learned it could be even more valuable to simply get a product out there and then start implementing, evaluating, and then improving the course as opposed to spending too much time getting the first iteration just right. In short, you don't have to produce the perfect project in the beginning. It is better to do your best to get something done, then user test it, evaluate it, accept feedback, improve the course and continue the process again. Third, design models and learning theories play a valuable role in developing quality instructional design but can be followed loosely at times. They can look messy, combining theories, models, and frameworks all in one design. Yet, I found it essential to be intentional about using theories, models, and frameworks. Fourth, in practice, the design process moves quickly. It's easy to take shortcuts to get things done. I found, in the long run, establishing an intentional organization and a clear line of communication with your stakeholder and team create a more effective and efficient workflow, saving time and energy in the end.
Conclusion

BYU Thrive Online is a resource that could be implemented to foster a successful transition to online learning among various students. Collection and analysis of future data will be utilized to create multiple versions specifically designed to support the unique needs of learners. The current data suggest that the BYU Thrive Online course is helping to improve students' attitudes, knowledge, and confidence in online learning.

Appendix

Personas

Edna Silva

**DEMographics**

Age: 18
Gender: Female
Grade: Incoming Freshman
Location: Brazil

**PERSONAL DETAILS**

Edna is from Rio, Brazil. She joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints when she was a sophomore in high school. She and her mother are the only members of the church.

**INTERESTS**

Interested in studying psychology and business. She does not know exactly what she wants to study.

**LEARNER INFORMATION**

Edna is a first-generation student. She has never used Canvas or Learning Suite. She has used a different learning management system used for an independent study course.

**EDUCATION**

Attended a public school in Rio Brazil. In addition, she did some independent study courses for course credit.

**OTHER DETAILS**

After a year at BYU, Edna found it challenging to get up, go to class, and be in large group settings. Months later, she was diagnosed with anxiety and ADHD.

**ONLINE LEARNING SUCCESS**

Edna learns online by using YouTube videos for extra explanation.

**END GOALS**

Attended BYU for four years. Graduated with a Bachelor's Degree. Work for a few years. Then return to Brazil and start a business or a non-governmental organization (NGO).
William Keita

**DEMOGRAPHICS**
Age: 19  
Gender: Male  
Marital status: Single  
Location: North Carolina

**PERSONAL DETAILS**
He lived in California for two years as a missionary for the Church of Jesus Christ. He enjoys being with others and is looking forward to meeting new people this year at BYU.

**INTERESTS**
Baking outdoors, fishing and biking. He loves eating and making Mac and Cheese.

**LEARNER INFORMATION**
He is a diligent student. He tries to keep up with the coursework. He experiences feelings of anxiety when he is about to take a test. He thinks of himself as a bad test-taker. He gets anxious when taking a test using Examity.

**EDUCATION**
Attended public school in North Carolina.

**ONLINE LEARNING**
Success: Engaged in online learning. He has taken a course in business and applies to the online learning platform more frequently.

**END GOALS**
Graduate from BYU in Business. Then apply to law school or Masters Business Administration.

Eliza Anderson

**DEMOGRAPHICS**
Age: 19  
Gender: Female  
Marital status: Single  
Location: Houston, TX

**PERSONAL DETAILS**
Eliza scoured the world on the ACT and has a 3.5 GPA. She is an academic scholarship recipient at BYU. She is thinking about taking a break from school and serving a mission for the Church of Jesus Christ.

**INTERESTS**
She loves working outside, spending time with family and putting together puzzles.

**LEARNER Wellness**
Eliza believes that she is struggling with the workload. She is not sleeping well. Getting good grades and excelling in college is important to Eliza.

**OTHER DETAILS**
Eliza feels productive when she is busy. She has an on campus part-time job, volunteers at a local center for people with various abilities. She lives in Heritage Hall with roommates. She is never out and occasionally has conflicts with one.

**ONLINE LEARNING EXPERIENCE**
Canvas, Youtube, Zoom, Quinet, G救治.

**END GOALS**
Graduate from BYU in Elementary Education. Find a job teaching special education. After teaching for a few years, she plans to apply to a Master's program in special education.

---

**Timeline**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK</th>
<th>TASK TITLE</th>
<th>TASK DETAILS</th>
<th>START DATE</th>
<th>END DATE</th>
<th>DURATION</th>
<th>PTG OF TASK COMPLETE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Phase 1</td>
<td>server setup</td>
<td>1/1/2022</td>
<td>1/10/2022</td>
<td>10 days</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Phase 2</td>
<td>database setup</td>
<td>1/11/2022</td>
<td>1/20/2022</td>
<td>10 days</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Phase 3</td>
<td>user interface design</td>
<td>1/21/2022</td>
<td>1/31/2022</td>
<td>10 days</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Phase 4</td>
<td>testing</td>
<td>2/1/2022</td>
<td>2/10/2022</td>
<td>10 days</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Phase 5</td>
<td>deployment</td>
<td>2/11/2022</td>
<td>2/20/2022</td>
<td>10 days</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**COMPANY NAME**
BYU Online

**PROJECT TITLE**
Moodle Test
Assessments and Evaluations

Image from Pre-test
Please rate your agreement with the following statements about your attitude related to taking online courses.

Being able to learn online is important to me.

Access to campus resources at BYU is important to me.

Connecting with other students in my online class is important to me.

Connecting with online instructors and teaching assistants is important to me.

Setting goals to help me learn online is important to me.

Achieving the academic goals that I have set for myself is important to me.

Improving how I learn online is important to me.

Knowing about a variety of online learning strategies is important to me.
Image from Post-test
Please rate your agreement with the following statements about your confidence related to taking online courses.

I am confident in my ability to learn online.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Undecided  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

I am confident in my ability to access online learning resources at BYU.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Undecided  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

I am confident in my ability to connect with other online learning students at BYU.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Undecided  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

I am confident in my ability to connect with online learning instructors and teaching assistants.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Undecided  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

I am confident that I will set goals to help me learn online.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Undecided  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

I am confident that I can achieve the academic goals that I have set for myself.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Undecided  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

I am confident that I can apply a variety of online learning strategies.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Undecided  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

I am confident that I can manage my mental well-being while learning online.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Undecided  Disagree  Strongly Disagree
Focus Group Questions

BYU Thrive Online focus group questions

Course Design

- Describe your experience navigating the course.
- Describe how the design and layout helped or hindered your experience. What was confusing? What was helpful?

Content

- Describe the topics and assignments in the course that you felt were most relevant for you.
- Discuss the extent to which the course helped you to connect with other students, TAs, and instructors.
- Did you experience any challenges navigating the course or relating to the content or examples that were provided?
- What are your thoughts on how inclusive the content was for all students. What suggestions do you have to create more inclusive content?

Application

- How confident are you in applying what you learned in this course?
- How have you applied what you learned in the course to your classes this semester?
- What changes have you made in how you approach an online or even in-person class because of what you learned in this course?
- What knowledge have you gained about being an online learner?

Follow up course
What is your interest in taking additional courses in online learning?

What areas of online learning still concern you?

Any additional information you would like to convey to us?

References

Arrowsmith, H. E. (2017). Design and implementation of an orientation to online learning mini-course with undergraduate and graduate students with varying levels of online course experience. *Theses and Dissertations--Curriculum and Instruction*. 20. https://uknowledge.uky.edu/edc_etds/20


