Empowering Balance

Submitted to Dr. David Taylor

By

Katie Kears

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Master of Science in Educational and Instructional Technology

National University

San Diego

April 20XX

The Capstone Project entitled Empowering Balance is approved by:


Signature_____ Date_____
David Taylor, Associate Professor
Capstone Faculty Advisor, Sanford College of Education

I certify that this Capstone Project by Katie Kears entitled Empowering Balance, in our opinion, is satisfactory in the scope and quality as Masters of Science project for the degree of Master of Science in Educational and Instructional Technology in the Sanford College of Education.

Signature_____ Date_____
         George Beckwith, Ed. D., MSEIT Program Lead Faculty

Table of Contents

**ABSTRACT**

College-level students often experience challenges within their academic endeavors and in balancing other life priorities, and this can contribute to poor academic progress, lower retention rates, and overall student dissatisfaction. "Empowering Balance" is a four-week course delivered via Google Sites aimed to support students in achieving a more effective balance between school and other elements of their lives. Throughout the course, students will work individually with a Success Coach from National University's Student Success Center to further enhance the learning content, enable the opportunity for perspective shifts, and meet the goals of success coaching. Research was conducted to evaluate current resources and services on the topic of school-life balance from higher education institutions. The research demonstrated that the design of the "Empowering Balance" course fits the need of the target learner and aligns with the goals of the Student Success Center at National University. The project used instructional design principles suited for the target audience and for the process of combining individual coaching sessions with asynchronous web learning. The project also included evaluations conducted for usability and subject matter; evaluators with subject matter knowledge and with experience as National University students were chosen to participate. The design and research process illustrated the importance of maintaining a personalized human element when implementing technology in a course, the effectiveness of student-centered learning principles, and the need for continued research on success coaching and its impact upon college learner populations of today.

**CHAPTER 1**

**Introduction**

The purpose of the "Empowering Balance" instructional course is to support undergraduate and graduate students in achieving an improved balance between their school responsibilities and other life commitments. The course will be delivered through Google Sites and will include strategies, videos, articles, exercises, and other media within each unit. The course is broken into four units involving school-life balance: Realistic Expectations, Maximizing Productivity, White Space, and Wellness. Students will complete the course asynchronously to complement the topics covered in synchronous coaching sessions with an assigned Success Coach from National University's Student Success Center.

Most college-level students will experience challenges stemming from an ineffective balance between their academic priorities and life priorities such as career, family, and social activities. In conjunction with coaching sessions from National University's Student Success Center, the "Empowering Balance" course is voluntary for students to complete; the course content will supplement the one-on-one success coaching sessions. Since each college student has unique circumstances impacting their level of balance, the goal of this course is to empower students to approach balance in a way that fits their life. Throughout the course, students will formulate new approaches to more effectively balance their academic, career, and other life commitments.

**Background of the Study**

National University does not currently house web-based institutional resources for time management, prioritization, wellness, and other areas that affect a student's school-life balance. When students encounter roadblocks in these areas, their academic progress is often impacted as

well; students may find themselves on academic probation, or they may feel overwhelmed and

stressed while maintaining good academic standing. This situational stress impacts students'

overall satisfaction and National University's student retention data. According to Van Rhijn and

Lero (2014), how students perceive their ability to manage multiple responsibilities influences

their view of personal goals and how they feel about their institution. In turn, a student's

perception of their institution is connected to persistence in their degree program or how they

academically perform. Because the college experience requires students to self-adjust and

continually shift between areas that require more attention at certain times, some students seek

more personalized support for these skills.

Many other higher education institutions and organizations display web-based articles or

create lists of tips regarding school-balance; however; the "Empowering Balance" course

provides features omitted from current resources in college institutions. Below are some

examples of existing online resources and information as to how they differ from the

"Empowering Balance" course:

- o Alliant International University's (2015) blog post "How to Create Work-School-
  Life Balance: This list identifies seven tips for students; however, the content isn't
  customized to students in an accelerated monthly course format similar to
  National University's structure. Also, this blog post doesn't include an interactive
  element such as a comments section or a way for students to connect with experts,
  coaches, or peers for further support and discussion. This web page mainly
  presented as an informational reading.

- o Lynda.com's (2014) online "Balancing Work and Life" course (for subscribers):
  While this course covers the balance between one's life and career, the target

audience is corporate workers or entrepreneurs. Consequently, the course content

is limited to a career-life balance perspective and doesn't include the process of

earning a degree. Furthermore, the Lynda.com course does not incorporate

exercises or assessments for the learner to demonstrate their understanding.

- o Youtube.com: YouTube offers thousands of videos on sub-topics impacting life

     balance, and the "Empowering Balance" course includes some of them that were

     carefully chosen for each unit. As a standalone resource, YouTube can cause

     users to get lost in their search results, so learners will have to devote time to filter

     through content and view videos that don't apply to their circumstances. In

     addition, standalone YouTube videos don't typically instill further discussion or

     guide learners in how to apply the information to their roles and challenges

Below are key features of the "Empowering Balance" course that support its effectiveness

for students' needs:

- *Combines E-Learning with E-Coaching:* Since the "Empowering Balance" course is to be

   completed in conjunction with success coaching, it establishes a unique platform for the

   coaching and learning content to complement one another. The one-on-one synchronous

   weekly coaching sessions use technology to help create perspective shifts for students.

   Students will asynchronously access the e-learning content via Google Sites.

- *Individualized Interaction with a Coach:* In each unit of the course, students will complete

   some activities on a Google Doc shared with their assigned Success Coach, and students

   will meet with their coach (via Zoom) at the end of each unit. The Success Coach will use

   the Google Doc to assess student learning and drive the coaching conversation. The

   Google Doc provides flexibility for the student to work through the course at their own

pace, and the student can collaborate with their Coach on any section of the Google and

receive feedback.

- *Learning Activities:* Horton (2012) describes three types of learning activities that learners

    need: Absorb, Do, and Connect. In Absorb activities, learners take in knowledge through

    reading or viewing; in Do activities, learners practice and apply what they've absorbed to

    enable deeper learning; in Connect activities, learners bridge the gap between what

    they've learned and how it ties into their own lives. The "Empowering Balance" course

    will incorporate all three types of learning activities in each unit.

- *Peer-to-Peer Connection:* The course contains an Additional Resources section that

    includes monthly online workshops facilitated by the Student Success Center and a

    discussion forum for students expand their knowledge and gain insight from peers on the

    main course topics. These social learning technologies allow students to interact with

    others who have completed the same learning activities due to a desire for a more

    effective school-life balance. Horton (2012) points out that social learning "makes all

    activities Connect activities by linking learning together to the larger world outside the

    individual" (p. 404). Chapter 2 will further address how this Additional Resources section

    of the course promotes social learning and connection.

**Statement of the Instructional/Training Problem**

Since the popularity of online programs has grown in higher education, institutions have

found that remote technologies are needed to deliver support services for students outside of a

traditional on-campus environment.  Yet, many of these remote support services have lost the

personalized, human element of a staff member connecting with a student. Instead, some

organizations have restructured their student support into information, tips, and videos on a web

page. The problem is that this enables a one-size-fits-all approach when it comes to students effectively balancing their life, and this approach counteracts the goal of coaching.

This doesn't mean that coaching must occur face-to-face in order to achieve the goal of a behavior change. According to Gregory, Pascal, and Sass (2015), experts stress that a coaching process "comprised of over-the-phone coaching sessions along with access to online resource including assessments, coaching notes, and assignment and meeting reminders" allows a participant to visualize their progress and experience deeper learning (p. 101). This coaching process is relevant to National University's Student Success Center and the need for expanding the "e-coaching" support offered to students. E-coaching is defined as "the use of computing technology to help shift an individual's behavior" to achieve identifiable goals (Banos & Nugent, 2018, p. 13). It's important to note that e-coaching still maintains the element of a human coach utilizing technology with their client. With e-coaching, information, tips, and videos are supplemental to the human element, not replacements.

Many existing resources on the topic of school-life balance direct students with lists and "how-to" formats. These resources don't promote students to act as the experts in their own lives, and they don't empower students to make personalized changes based on their challenges and other life commitments.  Furthermore, most resources on this topic do not foster self-reflection, provide the opportunity to apply strategies to the real world, or include the human element of customized meetings with a coach. The process of coaching is what creates a customized experience with relevant discussions, guidance, and activities.  Kamphorst (2017) advocates that e-coaching systems must incorporate essential features, including:

1.  Social ability: The system allows for ongoing conversation between the coach and coachee to foster a collaborative relationship.

2. Tailored and personalized: The system enables customized questions and feedback relevant to users; this also contributes to building trust and collaboration between the coach and coachee.

3. Planning: The system needs to direct the user toward a planned, purposeful action in the future.

**Purpose**

This Capstone project enables students to incorporate school-life-career balance tools and techniques that best fit within their life's responsibilities. The course will enable students to explore potential barriers against their success and establish realistic expectations for achieving balance in their college experience. Students will collaborate with a Success Coach to articulate their aptitudes and goals. Students will discover productivity and prioritization strategies to implement in their home and work environments. Finally, students will reflect up on their current habits of self-care in order to apply positive changes and behaviors.

This project also enables students to utilize a variety of digital resources to connect the course content to what they experience along their degree path. The continuous meetings with a Success Coach throughout the course allow students to feel more connected to the university, especially when degrees are mainly completed in online environments. The workshops and discussion forum in the Additional Resources section of the course also positively impact students' sense of connection to the institution.

**Delimitations**

**Audience**: This course is designed for adult college-level students. Most of the content is also relevant to adults who are non-students and who are seeking an improved balance between

career roles and other life circumstances. The course requires users who can complete tasks independently while using technology.

**Technological:** Participants will need Internet access and a web browser. A general familiarity (but not expertise) with Google Docs is also needed.

**Human:** Users must self-reflect and identify areas involving their school-life balance that require changes. Users will need to be open to articulating their circumstances and identified changes with a Success Coach.

**Financial:** All content and tools implemented in this course have no cost for users.

**Definitions**

For purposes of this project, the following words are defined:

**Coaching:** A discovery process and professional relationship to help a person make changes aligned to their desired goals and to experience a perspective shift.

**Google Doc:** A free web-based application for creating and editing a document that can be shared with and editable by others; can be accessed with an Internet connection and a Web browser

**White Space:** Unscheduled moments between tasks that allow activities to complement one another.

**Summary**

Most undergraduate and graduate-level college students experience roadblocks in balancing their school life with their other responsibilities, and these roadblocks can likely impact a student's academic progress. "Empowering Balance" encourages an action-oriented approach to create an improved school-life balance while providing practical, yet personalized tips and strategies. In this ungraded course, students will evaluate the demands from their

academics, family roles, physical & emotional health, and career. In addition to completing self-

assessments and activities, students will apply strategies in the real world and utilize the course

content in ongoing interactions with their assigned Success Coach from National University's

Student Success Center.

## CHAPTER 2: Review of the Literature

**Introduction**

The goal of this course is to use web-based tools and resources to support college students in achieving an improved balance between their school commitments, career, and personal lives. The course also aims to develop a greater sense of connection for students and their institution through consistent success coaching. This chapter will address the background of success coaching in higher education, the evolving needs of today's college students, the value of web-based learning, and the tools that the "Empowering Balance" course incorporates which reflect these goals and generate positive student outcomes.

The research for this chapter was conducted through National University's Library databases; several articles were obtained through ProQuest and EBSCOhost, specifically. Phrases such as "success coaching + higher education" and "online student coaching" were used to search the National University Library database. Additional research was used from prior course textbooks and assigned papers in the MSEIT program.

**Background of Success Coaching**

In order to demonstrate how coaching applies to college students, it's important to first define and what coaching is. The International Coach Federation (ICF) presents coaching as a relationship where clients take "action toward the realization of their vision, goals, or desires" (Barkley, 2011, p. 79). The coaching process involves the client building awareness and accountability within an environment supported by structure and feedback from a coach. Although coaching has evolved into many forms, higher education institutions have found that success coaching directly connects to the institution's vision and priorities.

Success Coaching programs have been a rapidly growing feature in higher education institutions within the last decade. Student coaching is most often implemented in order to address retention issues and to meet a demand for more extensive student support services. Many university students lack the skills or knowledge needed to make self-adjustments in their college experience, and this ultimately impacts their academic success. Some institutions have adopted coaching as a service and enabled web-based resources to support challenges facing college students (Barkley, 2011).  One company who has impacted student success coaching in higher education is Inside Track, who partners with institutions to provide direct coaching support to their student population. Inside Track is centered upon the belief that multiple factors influence student achievement and that frequent feedback and support from coaches can impact a student's academic growth (Tripp, 2008). The coaching services offered through National University's Student Success Center mirror the Inside Track model. In fact, National University's coaches participated in structured coach training conducted by Inside Track.

In higher education, most successful coaching programs include "frequent, structured communications between students and coaches, at least two to four times per month" (Tripp, 2008). For students to experience a perspective or behavior shift, students and coaches work together on different areas impacting their college success such as balancing commitments, prioritization, study skills, and maintaining personal well-being and health. These topics are often covered in coaching conversations from National University's Student Success Center. National's Student Success Center also aims to maintain the consistent and structured communications mentioned by Tripp above. The "Empowering Balance" course incorporates structured communication between the student and the coach through a weekly Zoom meeting and through a shared Google Doc embedded for various unit activities.

As student retention continues to be a priority for National University, the "Empowering Balance" course can apply to targeted student populations (such as Academic Probation), to direct student referrals from faculty and staff, and even to students who are academically successful but experience other challenges from an ineffective school-life balance. Robinson & Gahagan (2010) affirm that in combination with "tangible planning documents," coaching sessions act as a way for students to self-reflect, assess study habits, and create clear plans for success (p. 28). This chapter will later address how the "Empowering Balance" course supports this purpose for coaching sessions

**The Evolving Learner Population**

Many U.S. institutions have experienced a shift in the characteristics that define their "traditional" student. Jenkins (2012) explains that *nontraditional* students used to be considered those who were older, had families, or worked full time outside of school. But now, these traits make up what Jenkins calls the "new traditional." This "new traditional" group is consistent with the student demographic at National University. With the average age of National University students at 32, as indicated by CollegeData.com (2019), many students enrolled at National University are returning to start or continue a degree after several years away from school. In addition, "new traditional" students at National University play vital roles in their families and juggle full-time employment. Jenkins (2012) also contends that compared to younger students transitioning out of high school, the "new traditional" college student experiences more complex "personal, family, and academic circumstances" (para. 12). The increase of student age and experience create a greater likelihood of balancing children, financial strain, and other stressors upon a student's life.

Beattie, Laliberte, and Oreopoulos (2016) assert that the number of students enrolling in college underprepared has increased; students practice poor study habits and hold unrealistic attitudes about success in a college environment (as cited in Oreopoulos & Petronijevic, 2018). Students experience challenges in time management and must balance family or work distractions. These elements all impact a student's ability to persist in earning their college degree (Tripp, 2008).

Characteristics of "new traditional" learners also include their chosen mode of degree completion. Students have more choices than ever and are likely to take online coursework at some point in their program, while some choose to complete their programs 100% online. The rise of Digital Natives combined with a growing need for flexible learning environments have boosted the popularity and demand of online programs. The growth of web-based, digital learning will be addressed in another section of this project. One important note is that while the flexibility of online learning benefits students as they can participate at any day in time, it also poses a greater challenge to students who haven't learned effective time management skills (Bettinger, Fox, Loeb, & Taylor, 2017).

No matter what life stage a student is in, the transition to college generates unique challenges for institutions to better engage students in their success. One 2010 article explores the role of success coaching in on-campus environments. In this article, Robinson & Gahagan describe these brick and mortar challenges: the shock of an unfamiliar campus, interactions with new people, and overwhelming options of clubs and activities. But now, the "new traditional" student in an online program can experience shocks due to unfamiliar technologies, the lack of peer interaction, and more limited opportunities for clubs or activities. For example, Tripp (2008) emphasizes that many students who choose online programs instead of face-to-face have been

out of an educational environment for many years and must familiarize themselves with the skills needed to academically succeed. Furthermore, not only do online environments require solid study habits, they also require "a level of discipline and motivation that be difficult for students to achieve even under the best of circumstances" (Tripp, 2008, p. 39). This is where students may benefit from the additional support of success coaching.

Why should higher education institutions pay attention to the impact of online learning? Studies have shown that although online course enrollment continues to expand, online courses have higher attrition rates than face-to-face courses (Shelton, Hung, & Lowenthal, 2017). These attrition rates are influential in the programs and practices implemented by National University's Student Success Center. The "Empowering Balance" course considers the skills students must familiarize themselves with as well as the need for greater self-discipline for managing time and balancing commitments.

**A Need for Web-Based Learning**

Currently, National's Student Success Center does not have any standardized content to direct students toward to explore school-life balance. Students build relationships with their Success Coach primarily over the phone, so the web-based "Empowering Balance" course is a way for students to stay connected to their goals and action steps in-between coaching sessions. The course will structure activities and web-based media as talking points that students can apply in conversations with their Coach. As explained previously in Chapter 1's Statement of the Instructional/Training Problem, combining coaching sessions with online resources creates a more meaningful outcome for participants (Gregory et al., 2015).

One advantage of web-based media identified by Lee and Owens (2004) is "the sharing of files and data" (p. 63). As mentioned earlier, a Google Doc is used within each unit of

"Empowering Balance" for coaches to view and comment on their student's individual responses and activity progress. Lee and Owens (2004) also list the ability to combine graphics, audio, and video as an advantage of web-based delivery.  Within each unit of "Empowering Balance," coaching concepts are presented in a variety of methods such as videos and self-assessment charts.  This variety creates a more engaging process for learners.

Finally, web-based learning gives students greater flexibility to access the content at times that work with their schedule.  Many students in the target audience of "Empowering Balance" are primarily taking online courses, so web delivery is more desirable and familiar. Students can work through content at their own pace and in a comfortable setting.  "Empowering Balance" will have a weekly scheduled meeting at the end of each unit's completion, so students have the freedom to complete tasks before the meeting on their own time.

**A Need for Student Connection**

Research suggests that feelings of isolation and loneliness are major factors as to why students drop out of online courses (Shelton et al., 2017). In addition to academic success and retention, structured coaching can also positively impact a student's sense of belonging to their institution. Tripp (2008) stresses that coaching encourages a student's connection to their school, especially as this connection becomes more fragile with students taking online courses. Online learning environments can lack the feeling of valuable human interaction that students seek from their faculty, peers, and other support teams within an institution. Shelton et al. (2017) argue that two parties using communication mediums positively impact students' persistence in online courses.  This communicative relationship between student and coach is the foundation of the "Empowering Balance" course.

Bettinger et al. (2017) also acknowledge the issue of student disconnection in online education. For example, since online courses incorporate heavy asynchronous communication, students find that this lack of face-to-face interaction creates an impersonal experience where they aren't getting the attention from faculty that they seek. In order to create an increased sense of personalized education (and to result in a greater student connection), implementing coaching is more desirable for schools since coaching depends upon human interaction. The individual attention supported through coaching proactively identifies problems that can impact a student's success later on in their degree program (Tripp, 2008).

Since National University is not a traditional brick and mortar institution, students are susceptible to the disconnect mentioned in the above research. The synchronous meetings with a Success Coach in "Empowering Balance" allow students to feel that their experience is more personalized. Hrastinski (2008) explains that synchronous learning components enable students to feel they are a part of something rather than a single learner behind a computer screen. Embedding social learning technologies also address student disconnect and isolation. Shelton et al. (2017) indicate that researchers have found a correlation between social presence and student retention as well as between social presence and student satisfaction.

While it would be ideal to have groups of students take the "Empowering Balance" course at the same time, in a realistic scenario, the student populations from National University's Student Success Center would all be navigating through the course content at different points. Thus, social learning technologies such as discussion forums would not make sense to embed within regular unit tasks when students won't be participating in the discussion in the same week as their peers. The course designer considered this factor in order to incorporate social learning activities that would be realistic and appropriate for the course's structure. Instead, social

learning activities such as monthly Zoom workshops and a department discussion forum were

added to the Additional Resources section. In this section, students can view and join the

available workshops related to the course topics and post responses to the Discussion of the

Month or create their own discussion thread.  These social learning platforms establish pathways

for students to connect with other peers within National University so that they gain a greater

sense of connection to their educational community. Horton (2012) observes that "social learning

helps learners build a network of professional contacts who can support them in the future" (p.

406). This network can continue long after the completion of a course and act as a support tool

throughout a student's degree path.

**The Value of Combining Coaching & E-Learning**

Robinson & Gahagan (2010) discuss three main steps to academic coaching: self-

assessment, reflection, and goal setting. The "Empowering Balance" course includes these steps

in multiple forms. The course incorporates a weekly one-on-one Zoom coaching session for

students, so these steps will serve as the foundation for discussion and perspective shifts within

the coaching sessions.  Self-assessments will also provide the coach with a better understanding

of the student's current habits and strengths regarding their academic journey (Robinson &

Gahagan, 2010). For example, in the first activity of the course, students will complete a self-

assessment on their levels of satisfaction in different focus areas of their life. The course also

incorporates the reflection step as students are posed with open-ended questions in the

asynchronous activities and in the synchronous coaching sessions. Lastly, the course includes

goal-setting in more direct forms (in a specific task of Unit 2) and in concrete steps outlined at

the end of a weekly coaching session.

Due to continued enrollment competition between higher education institutions, especially those with a focus on online programs, schools must re-design their student services to effectively influence student academic progress and retention rates. According to Oreopoulous and Petronijevic (2018), combining technology with student coaching interventions appeals to institutions since these interventions are "relatively inexpensive and scalable, and can be implemented across a wide range of settings." This appeal is also reinforced in the e-coaching research from Chapter 1's Statement of the Instructional/Training Problem; technology is intended to combine with human coaching to create perspective and behavior shifts.

**Summary**

The literature review demonstrates that while web-based technology is an effective component in student learning, the human element of coaching is essential for a student's ability to experience behavior change. It's easy and cost-effective for institutions to present web-based content and readings about issues impacting their student population; however, students must be individually supported in their unique circumstances. Student learner populations have changed, and the existing services in an on-campus environment will not likely fit the needs of fast-paced, online learning. The "Empowering Balance" course considers the needs of today's learner and maintains the human relationship of effective coaching.

**CHAPTER 3: Project Design**

**Learning Theory**

The "Empowering Balance" courses aims to engage college students in self-reflection and create the opportunity for perspective shifts involving how students manage their academic, home, and career commitments. Most activities in the course will be completed independently and asynchronously, with each unit including a synchronous meeting between a student and their Success Coach. The course is designed to combine different learning theories including cognitivism and constructivism.

**Cognitivism.** Harasim (2017) explains that in cognitivist theory, knowledge "is transmitted to the learner, either by the instructor or by the instructional software" (p. 60). Since the "Empowering Balance" course is delivered online, Google Sites is considered the instructional software noted by Harasim. In the course, students absorb knowledge through videos, online articles, and other content embedded in Google Sites.

Januszewski and Molenda (2008) also remark that cognitivism focuses on how content is organized; the organization needs to be logical so that learners can remember the content. Cognitivism's "goal is to activate the learner's thought processes so that new material can be processed in a way that it expands the learner's mental schemata" (Januszewski & Molenda, 2008, p. 27). The units and activities of the "Empowering Balance" course are structured to build upon one another so that learners are introduced to the main topics, then move to exploration and self-reflection, and ultimately utilize critical thinking to apply the concepts to their real lives. According to Januszewski and Molenda (2008), online distance education (ODE) is a part of cognitivism and uses "course delivery, self-study, and individual communication with a tutor" (p. 117). Students taking the "Empowering Balance" course will self-study some of the concepts

while maintain communication with their Success Coach who acts as the "tutor" in this example. Communication will occur via Google Docs and through weekly Zoom meetings.

  **Constructivism.** In constructivist theory, students learn through "constructing their own understanding and knowledge of the world through experience and reflecting upon that experience" (Januszewski & Molenda, 2008, p. 12). Part of constructivism is active learning, where a student's role is to engage in an activity such as implementing a strategy or constructing a theory; after this, students reflect and discuss on how this changes their understanding (Harasim, 2017). In the "Empowering Balance" course, this element of active learning is presented through the combination of real-world application and synchronous coaching. Several course activities ask the student to test or apply concepts and strategies to their daily lives. Students then reflect on how their perspective has shifted through discussions with their Coach.

  Januzewski and Modenda (2008) further emphasize the importance of real-world activities in constructivism. For example, assessing learning in constructivism must "be based upon construction of knowledge rather than repetition of facts" (p. 36). This is accomplished through using real-world activities as assessments. As stated above, the "Empowering Balance" course incorporates real-world application. The course does not include a traditional quiz format and does not assess students on recalling information from the tasks.

  Harasim (2017) remarks that in constructivism, the "teacher must understand the students' pre-existing conceptions and guide the activity to address, build on and refine pre-existing conceptions" (p. 71). Although the "Empowering Balance" course isn't guided by a formal instructor, this theory applies to the role of the Success Coach in the course. The Coach uses students' completed self-assessments and tasks to understand their pre-existing conceptions

about unit topics; in turn, this helps guide the weekly coaching conversations in order to create a perspective shift, which is the main goal of coaching.

**Project Design**

The ADDIE design model was used as the primary methodology for this project. In the Analysis phase, Januszewski and Molenda (2008) identify key steps such as determining the instructional needs and goals and analyzing learners' skills and characteristics. This phase was crucial in designing the "Empowering Balance" course to ensure that it was relevant to the student populations served by National University's Student Success Center. In the Design phase, the unit topics were created and sequenced to meet the major objectives. Specific learning activities were outlined to fit the needs of college students. In the Development phase, the content for learning activities was selected through YouTube, online searches, and through utilizing projects from past MSEIT courses. Januszewski and Molenda (2008) note that the Development phase also includes revising and refining the course activities; this was accomplished through feedback from peers and SMEs. The Implementation and Evaluation phases will be conducted following the completion of the Capstone project.

Krug's (2014) principles of usability were also considered for this project's design. These principles included ensuring that the website was self-explanatory for users to navigate, designing pages so users could scan them and visually define items, and concisely presenting the text. These usability principles were influential in editing and modifying "Empowering Balance" site content. Finally, principles of Alignment, Proximity, Repetition, and Contrast were considered. According to Williams and Tollett (2006), these four principles allow web pages to look neat and professional. The rule of Alignment was followed on Googles Sites by choosing one alignment (left) on every page. Proximity refers to how items on a page are grouped together

to indicate a relationship, such as headlines, spacing, and paragraph breaks (Williams & Tollett, 2006). Although Google Sites had limitations regarding proximity, edits were made to create as clean of an appearance as possible on each unit's page. The principle of Repetition involves certain elements being repeated to tie the whole website together; this can involve navigation features, styles, colors, and texts. In the "Empowering Balance" course, the layout of each page was repeated with sequential, labeled tasks. Images within the site were also chosen to fit within the thematic color scheme of the Google Sites template used. Lastly, Contrast includes how eyes are guided around the page by carefully using various font styles, color, graphics, and focal points. Contrast was used through embedding videos within pages and bolding key words and phrases.

**Procedure**

The need for the "Empowering Balance" course was assessed by several different factors, including peer, faculty, and staff feedback. After examining role of Success Coaches in National University's Student Success Center, it was determined that some students would benefit from tailored online resources in addition to success coaching sessions.  After conducting further research of existing online resources, results showed that web-based resources for college students regarding school-life balance were not customized to their challenges and also lacked a supportive human element. "Empowering Balance" was created to combine coaching sessions with supplemental online learning that fostered self-reflection and perspective shifts for students. It was important that the course be developed to address diverse student academic scenarios, including students on official academic probation and students in good academic standing who experience stress from ineffectively balancing studies with their personal and work lives. It was also determined that the course was developed as a voluntary, ungraded resource. The foundation

of coaching is centered upon a learner choosing to engage in self-development, so students must

decide if they'd like to utilize supplemental resources to impact their school-life balance (rather

than a punitive course for students who are academically struggling).

Since most of the coaching in National University's Student Success Center is conducted

via phone or Zoom, online platforms were evaluated for course delivery. Learning Management

Systems were first considered such as Moodle and Blackboard; however, it was determined that

a formal LMS wasn't needed as some of the distinctive features like Discussion Boards and

graded quizzes would not be used. Since the students will enroll in and complete the course at

different times, a Discussion Board component wouldn't have value within units since students

wouldn't actively participate at similar times.  Google Sites delivers a modern aesthetic with the

ability to embed content and guide students through learning using media such as videos,

articles, and links. Google Sites was also considered and tested for ease of user navigation.

After course learning outcomes were created, a site map was developed to outline four

distinct units and tasks to be completed in order within the units (see Appendix A). Then, dates

for key project milestones were planned out using the table below:

| Milestone | Target Completion Date | Status/Comments |
|---|---|---|
| Planning document report | January 20, 2019 | |
| Completed Literature Review | January 27, 2019 | |
| Working prototype of project | February 3, 2019 | |
| Aesthetic, usability, and content testing | February 10, 2019 | Incorporate testing of whole site |
| Final draft and review of written report | February 17, 2019 | |

| Milestone | Target Completion Date | Status/Comments |
|---|---|---|
| Competed project and report | February 24, 2019 | Allow additional time if needed for changes to website and written report |

**Ethical Considerations**

All participants for the Alpha Test were given clear explanations of their roles and how their feedback would be utilized. Subjects could choose to remove themselves as a participant at any point, and no undue pressure to participate or not participate was put upon them. Test participants were volunteers and were not financially compensated for their roles or feedback.

Test participants were chosen to cover a range of experiences, including a background in student coaching and in attending National University as college students. One volunteer was chosen as a primary SME and a usability evaluator. Another volunteer was chosen as a primary usability evaluator and to provide a student perspective on the course.

**Summary**

Cognitivism and constructivism were the main learning theories used to design content. The ADDIE model was followed as a process to ensure that user needs were being met and that content was aligned with the course goals.  Krug's usability principles created a seamless navigation experience for users, and William and Tollett's design principles of Alignment, Proximity, Repetition, and Contrast guided a finished, professional appearance. Procedurally, learners' needs and characteristics were at the forefront of the course design, and Google Sites was chosen as a course delivery system. Key milestones of the project were mapped out in addition to outlining the course activities within each unit.

**CHAPTER 4: Project Evaluation and Discussion**

Evaluations were used to ensure that the "Empowering Balance" course followed web usability and design principles, met instructional goals, and demonstrated relevance to various circumstances among college students. The evaluations took place toward the end of the Development phase of the ADDIE model. The following sections explain the evaluation tools that were used and their justification. Also included is some of the key data that was collected as part of the evaluation process for the course.

**Project Evaluation**

The two types of evaluation used were Usability and Instructional evaluation. For both the Usability and Instructional evaluations, the same two test participants conducted evaluations since they both have experience as students in the National University format and possess knowledge in web usability as well as effective instruction. Below are the evaluators' profiles and roles:

- Ryan Bodine: Success Coach at National University, Credentialed Coach by the International Coaching Federation, Graduate student at National University (2 courses completed)
    - Ryan acted as a Subject Matter Expert for the course content and an intermediate evaluator for usability and web design principles.
- Joe Islas: Graduate student at National University in the Educational and Instructional Technology program (9 courses completed)
    - Joe acted as a Subject Matter Expert for the course content and an advanced evaluator for usability and web design principles.

**Usability Evaluation**

Krug (2014) explains that "usability tests are about watching one person at a time try to use something to do typical tasks so you can detect and fix the things that confuse or frustrate them" (p. 110-111). Usability can be tested at many points in a project's cycle and helps address mistakes early, preventing other headaches further along in the process (Krug, 2014). In addition to a product with a more user-friendly structure, Saxena (2018) asserts that other benefits of usability testing include comparing other design alternatives, assessing if a product's goals were met, and gaining support from stakeholders. Specifically, heuristic testing uses experts trained in user experience to uncover problems in the user interface (Oracle, 2012). Oracle (2012) identifies two main advantages of heuristic testing: 1) The process is quick; and 2) It's efficient since it requires fewer resources than other testing. Furthermore, heuristic testing is cost-effective and allows the product to be compared to a competitor's product (Usability Testing, n.d.).

The usability testing for the "Empowering Balance" course was conducted during the latter half of the Development phase. Participants were asked to complete a series of steps that follow the steps for actual users of the "Empowering Balance" course (see Appendices B-D). Oracle (2012) indicates that in heuristic testing, evaluators work independently through selected tasks and "take the point of view of the intended users of the product" (p. 3). The forms provided valuable feedback since usability problems impact users differently (Oracle, 2012). For example, some usability issues can impact a participant's ability to complete a task altogether, and some issues may impact the time it takes to complete.

**Instructional Evaluation**

Next, the instructional evaluation measured the effectiveness of the learning. Incorporating effective formative and summative assessments in evaluation supplies meaningful feedback for

an instructional designer. Canvas Network (2017) explains that the formative evaluation process occurs as the instruction is being developed and assesses its strengths and weaknesses; in contrast, summative evaluation assesses how well instructional outcomes are achieved at the end of the course. Confirmative evaluation is a third type that assesses the instruction's effectiveness over time as it is continually used (Albright, 2018).

Instructional evaluation "uncovers evidence to prove" the value of the instruction (Albright, 2018). For businesses, this evaluation can reveal the potential Return on Investment (ROI). This equates to student retention when connecting this idea to National University. If the evaluation is viewed from an educational standpoint, it reveals the potential impact on student learning based on standards. Albright (2018) asserts that the Kirkpatrick model of evaluation is one of the most useful types of evaluation due to its simple format. The first level of this model (Reactions) was used for evaluating "Empowering Balance" (see Appendices E & F). The Reactions level involves perceptions on usefulness and efficiency. Piskurich (2015) notes several reasons for doing Reactions such as identifying what should be revised in a course and discovering how learners think about course activities and exercises. For evaluating "Empowering Balance," test participants completed one reaction survey from the perspective of a course designer and the other reaction survey from the perspective of a National University student.

**Data Presentation**

**Usability Evaluation Data**: Participants completed the usability testing after all four units of the course were inputted in Google Sites. The usability forms consisted of the following:

- **Usability Test Session Script** (Appendix B): Participants received instructions on their role and expectations prior to completing the test forms.

- **Usability Instructions + Survey** (Appendix C): Participants received step-by-step

  guidance to go through and test each unit of the course just as an actual user would,

  including the Home Page. This form also allowed test users to document written

  comments and feedback. In addition to opening each task of the course, participants were

  asked to focus on the overall look and feel of the course, the clarity of content, and

  navigation elements.

- **Observation Form for Usability Test** (Appendix D): The instructional designer observed

  test participants as they went through the series of steps. This observation included

  comments from the participants, user errors, and any notes about course development.

Key data from the Usability Survey and the Observation Form is summarized and presented

in the table below:

| DATA: Observation Form for Usability Test (Recorded by the Instructional Designer/Observer) | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Step** | **Observations/User Comments (Participant 1)** | **Observations/User Comments (Participant 2)** |
| 1 | • "Shift in tone between the course outline/syllabus: from formal 3$^{rd}$ person in learning outcomes to casual second person ("your success coach") in outline…seemed odd."<br>• "It took me a moment to see that I navigate the progression of the course on the top bar. Perhaps a slightly more eye-catching color (yellow?) when hovering over the menu with my mouse would fix that?" | • "Graphic/wheel on Google Doc has 10 categories; graphic on website has 9 categories"<br>• User suggested to change placement of descriptors on graphic/wheel on the Google Doc |
| 2 | • "The Zoom meetings should open in a new window so the student can easily keep the course open while talking with the coach." | *No comments-all links working properly at time of testing.* |
| 3 | • "Tasks that ask to break down a process like in this unit seem to require the least amount of time." | *No comments-all links working properly at time of testing.* |
| 4 | • "White Space concept seems the most difficult for me." | *No comments-all links working properly at time of testing.* |
| 5 | • **User unable to open slide show or PDF; need to make Google drive documents | *No comments-all links working properly at time of testing.* |

| | public | |
|---|---|---|
| | | |

**Instructional Evaluation Data:** Participants completed the instructional evaluation after all four units of the course were inputted in Google Sites. The instructional evaluation forms consisted of the following:

- **Reaction Survey, Course Design & User Experience** (Appendix E): This survey form focuses on the course design and user experience. The course design and user experience components were rated as (5) Strongly Agree, (4) Agree, (3) Middle, (2) Disagree, and (1) Strongly Disagree. The form included opportunities for more detailed feedback at the end.

- **Reaction Survey, Student Perspective and Learning Outcomes** (Appendix F): Evaluators were asked to complete this survey from the National University student perspective, and it has a greater focus on the relevance of course content. The student perspective components were rated as (5) Strongly Agree, (4) Agree, (3) Middle, (2) Disagree, and (1) Strongly Disagree. The form included opportunities for more detailed feedback at the end.

Key data from each reaction survey is presented in the tables below:

| DATA:<br><br>**Reaction Survey: Course Design and User Experience** | **Reaction Scale:**<br>- 5-Strongly Agree<br>- 4-Agree<br>- 3-Middle (Somewhat agree & somewhat disagree)<br>- 2-Disagree<br>- 1-Strongly Agree | |
|---|---|---|
| **Component** | **Participant 1** | **Participant 2** |
| The goals of each unit were clear | 5-Strongly Agree | 5-Strongly Agree |
| Task directions were clear. | 5-Strongly Agree | 5-Strongly Agree |
| The site was organized and easy to navigate between units. | 5-Strongly Agree | 5-Strongly Agree |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| The page layout of the site was clear. | 5-Strongly Agree | 5-Strongly Agree |
| The site effectively integrated technology, videos, and other media. | 5-Strongly Agree | 5-Strongly Agree |
| Each unit of the course was balanced with a mixture of reading, graphics, media, and other activities. | 5-Strongly Agree | 5-Strongly Agree |
| Each unit of the course was balanced with a mixture of reading, graphics, media, and other activities. | 5-Strongly Agree | 5-Strongly Agree |
| The appearance of the site is clean without being too simple or too cluttered. | 5-Strongly Agree | 5-Strongly Agree |
| The site had an overall pleasing look and feel for the target audience. | 5-Strongly Agree | 5-Strongly Agree |
| The site images were relevant to the content. | 5-Strongly Agree | 5-Strongly Agree |
| The course content was sequenced appropriately and logically. | 5-Strongly Agree | 5-Strongly Agree |
| The course content could apply to various student circumstances and scenarios | 4-Agree | 5-Strongly Agree |
| The course units are distinct but tie in to one another effectively. | 5-Strongly Agree | 5-Strongly Agree |
| The course content is sequenced to help students learn the material. | 5-Strongly Agree | 5-Strongly Agree |
| Labeling and naming of links were clear and worked when clicked. | 4-Agree | 5-Strongly Agree |
| The site used proper spelling and grammar. | 5-Strongly Agree | 5-Strongly Agree |
| Overall, I am satisfied with the use of the site. | 5-Strongly Agree | 5-Strongly Agree |

| DATA:<br><br>**Reaction Survey: Student Perspective & Learning Outcomes** | **Reaction Scale:**<br>• 5-Strongly Agree<br>• 4-Agree<br>• 3-Middle (Somewhat agree & somewhat disagree)<br>• 2-Disagree<br>• 1-Strongly Agree | |
|---|---|---|
| **Component** | **Participant 1** | **Participant 2** |
| The course changed my perspective on achieving balance. | 5-Strongly Agree | 5-Strongly Agree |
| I gained new knowledge and strategies that I did not previously have. | 5-Strongly Agree | 5-Strongly Agree |
| Learning activities were relevant to the student experience. | 5-Strongly Agree | 5-Strongly Agree |
| The course increased my self-awareness about areas impacting my school-life balance. | 5-Strongly Agree | 5-Strongly Agree |
| The course was engaging and interesting. | 5-Strongly Agree | 5-Strongly Agree |
| The course challenged my thinking. | 5-Strongly Agree | 5-Strongly Agree |
| Task directions were easy to understand. | 5-Strongly Agree | 5-Strongly Agree |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Task difficulty was appropriate for various learning levels. | 3-Middle | 5-Strongly Agree |
| The time commitment for each week was appropriate. | 4-Agree | 5-Strongly Agree |
| I would recommend this course to other students. | 5-Strongly Agree | 5-Strongly Agree |

The following qualitative feedback was also submitted during the instructional evaluation reaction surveys:

- **Item to change about course** (Participant 1): "Since this course is focused on creating a fundamental shift in the student's approach to daily life, and each piece will require time, focus, and personal observation/awareness from the student, I wonder if there should be something like speed bumps between each activity. Possibly reminders to stop, let the material sink in, reflect on it, after implementing it in real life, come back and reflect more, or something like that. I imagine that the coach will lead the student through this process, however between coaching sessions I could imagine a conscious 'slowing down' may help the student really ingest each bit of material."

- **Item to change about course** (Participant 1): "I realize that during the coaching sessions, my coach will acknowledge my achievements and progress throughout the course. However, a little badge or achievement icon may be nice after each completed coaching session."

- **Item to change about course** (Participant 2): "I would love to see the options for a follow-up course that continues to help me in the various responsibilities in my life."

- **Positive Feedback** (Participant 1): "It communicates weighty, profound points in a fun way (the Animated Video, the Ethan Hawke Video, etc.). This material could easily be presented with gravitas, or as expert advice, but instead it's fun, light, and unpretentious.

All of the pieces work together to maintain this fun tone while presenting sometimes difficult self-reflective activities, and in my view create an overall welcoming, kind, appreciative, and balanced tone."

- **Positive Feedback** (Participant 1): "Simple, clear instructions that make sense based on the material. There's no preachiness, or "shoulds," or advice: just clear facts, presented in a fun way, and how to implement them step by step."

- **Positive Feedback** (Participant 2): "I loved a course that actually helped me become a better student (and teacher and dad)!"

- **Positive Feedback** (Participant 2): "I was glad to see you were able to use a version of your very own video created in a previous class and incorporate it into your online course. It was most professional and a highly effective part of your course."

**Discussion**

The evaluators' feedback was critical in assessing the effectiveness of the student content, the learner content, and the overall course design. Both evaluators had subject matter expertise and provided feedback from a target learner's point of view since they're also currently enrolled as National University students. At the time of evaluations, the Additional Resources section of the course was not completed, so evaluators focused on the Home Page and four units.

The Usability Evaluation identified errors with links, allowed for comments regarding graphics and appearance, and recorded first impressions of the content and sequence of the course. One evaluator suggested that some areas of usability could be improved, such as the color of the navigation features and highlighting differently when a cursor hovers; however, due to limitations in Google Sites, the author was not able to modify these elements despite user feedback.

One evaluator's suggestion for improvement was to put stopping points in-between each activity so that students could have time to reflect after implementing the content in real life. The author of this project assessed that this would significantly add to the completion time of the course so that it couldn't be finished in a four-week time frame; however, the author did add an area at the end of each task on the Google Doc for the learner to stop and set an objective for their weekly meeting based on how they completed the unit tasks. Additionally, the author added verbiage within some unit tasks on the Google Doc to remind the learner that the material would be addressed more in-depth in the weekly discussion with a Success Coach. Finally, the author added a Frequently Asked Questions section to the course Home Page which included a clear explanation of the student's role and guidance that the navigation should not be rushed.

Another evaluator commented that they'd like to see options for a "follow-up course" to continue to support the student in balancing various aspects of their life. As stated above, the Additional Resources section was not completed when evaluators tested the site. The author added content to the Additional Resources available to enrich course concepts and allow students to continue exploring the main topics. Although this additional content was not presented as a formal course or structured follow-up, a variety or resources were provided such as workshops, a discussion forum, articles, videos, and websites.

**Limitations**

- **Technological:** Participants needed Internet access and a web browser. A general familiarity (but not expertise) with Google Docs was also needed.

- **Human:** Due to participant availability, testing occurred at different times, including evenings and weekends. Participants needed the ability to self-reflect and provide honest feedback about the course's relevance to their own school-life balance; however, testers

needed to maintain a mentality of putting themselves in other learner circumstances since

the leaner populations experience unique challenges. Testers needed to assess how the

course content could fit these different learners. Input from these participants was

essential in evaluating the effectiveness of the media, readings, and activities within the

course.

- **Financial:** Participants were volunteers and were not financially compensated.

- **Time:** In order to respect the time of participants and to meet the deadlines of the

  evaluation, the testing time for each user was one hour.

**CHAPTER 5: Summary and Conclusion**

The coaches from National University's Student Success Center work individually with students to create an improved school-life balance in order to be successful in their academic programs. As most of student coaching is conducted over the phone, the "Empowering Balance" course is aimed to supplement and enrich the coaching content that students work through with their Success Coach. The online course through Google Sites is needed because most college students experience a shift in their academic, personal, or career responsibilities and various points in their degree program. This shift requires students to self-adjust their habits and mindset, and they'll need to self-reflect upon the areas that require more or less attention at times. This final chapter will address conclusions about the Capstone project and the instructional design process, the implications for teaching and learning within higher education student populations, and the implications for further research in this field.

**Conclusions**

First, technology cannot replace the human element of coaching. The foundation of effective coaching requires human interaction, which is why the weekly Zoom meetings between a Coach and student are essential to the "Empowering Balance" course. However, it can be concluded that technology tools beyond web conferencing have a significant impact in enhancing the coaching process. Brooks (2018) argues that e-coaching, or "Coaching 3.0," increases accessibility to individual support and is a new model for collaboration. According to Brooks (2018), Coaching 3.0 provides an "interactive platform" where a coach collaborates with a client while keeping the client's objectives at the forefront of their development. In this coaching space, clients can access content from any space at any time. These Coaching 3.0 characteristics are reflected in the "Empowering Balance" course through the structured unit tasks, embedded

content, and the collaborative Google Doc. Not only do the tasks on the Google Doc personalize the coaching sessions, but students also purposefully identify objectives for their weekly meetings. Brooks (2018) also describes that the Coaching 3.0 space can supply links to other relevant articles, videos, and e-learning resources.

Next, the MSEIT program and Capstone project have also revealed how constructivist learning principles are effective when utilizing technology in a course. In every-day classroom activities, behaviorist and cognitivist principles are no longer the dominating ideals. Consequently, the needs of online learners require a more constructivist style, where learning is student-centered, is influenced by personal experiences, and involves a more collaborative process. Since technology continues to be more accessible, customizable, and often includes social elements, constructivist learning naturally fits with today's students. Sousa (2017) establishes that technology has promoted students to be active learners. This shift to active learning now reveals new and diverse instructional options for teachers. The next implications section will address how this shift impacts teaching and instruction

Finally, the design process and implementation of the "Empowering Balance" course has proven the importance of evaluation. Albright (2018) explains that strictly following the ADDIE model can sometimes lead to leaving all evaluation until the end of the design process. Albright asserts that "continuous evaluation allows for continuous improvement" (para. 9). When resources are available, conducting all three assessment types (formative, summative, and confirmative) is ideal. As confirmative evaluation considers how successful the course is over time, it will be important to continue to evaluate the overall effectiveness of "Empowering Balance" as well as its specific content within units after students have completed it. Videos and

articles in the course will need to be continually assessed and updated to fit the goals of the course.

**Implications for Teaching/Training**

The brain of today's students is wired differently compared to students only a couple of decades ago. In turn, this has created a need for educators to more carefully consider learning models to best fit an evolving student. Evidence from research shows that one's individual environments and experiences are physically rewiring the brain. Author John Medina addresses this idea in his twelve Brain Rules. According to Medina (2018), neurons respond differently to certain stimuli based on one's individual experience, and as a result, the physical mapping of the brain changes. For example, if someone is familiar with a popular film, they have a specific brain neuron associated with that film; someone who has not heard of that film will not have the same neuron. Sousa (2017), emphasizes technology's role in this rewiring. Sousa explains that the brain's networks are rearranged through a process called neuroplasticity. In neuroplasticity, environmental inputs such as the continuous exposure and use of technology is reconfiguring the brain's neural networks. This physical mapping of the brain should be considered when instructional designers and Subject Matter Experts are developing online resources for higher education support services. Since the brain responds based on one's individual experience, resources must show relevance to a student's experience and give students the opportunity to reflect upon their individual circumstances.

Freeman & Wash (2013) discuss that brain-based learning theory shifts the learning focus from memorization to learning that is student-centered and dictated by brain function. Students in prior decades may have experienced classroom learning based more on behaviorism and cognitivism, and now, constructivism and connectivism are more heavily present. Freeman and

Wash (2013) assert that educators today should be aware of neuroplasticity and consider research in neuroscience, biology, and developmental psychology to more effectively understand how brain-based teaching can be implemented. One of the significant ways teachers are applying brain-based learning is through incorporating strategies to maintain student attention; however, technology has posed some unique challenges for this. Students today grow up with technology "shaping their childhood and adolescence in ways" that no one predicted (Sousa, 2017, p. 1), so now teachers must compete for their students' attention against elements of social media, games, and music. Teachers have had to find new methods to maximize learner engagement and enable students to retain that they've learned. For example, Sousa (2017) comments that the brains of today's learners are more accustomed to a continuous change in activity in shorter bursts of time. In online instruction, this might be addressed through chunking or incorporating brief video content. Chunking is utilized in the "Empowering Balance" course so that students remain engaged and experience different activities in smaller time frames. Furthermore, to enable retention of the learning content, regular support in the form of synchronous coaching meetings maximizes learner engagement along with the asynchronous, chunked units.

**Implications for Further Research**

As the student profile and learning environment within higher education continues to evolve, ongoing research is critical to effectively supporting students, and in turn, crucial to increasing retention rates in a competitive industry. As stated in Chapter 1, institutions are developing online resources (or making existing resources more accessible) on the topic of school-life balance, but much of the content is presented in a "how-to" approach. Because students don't experience true perspective shifts from mere tips on how to balance their lives, institutions must consider students' specific challenges and experiences when developing

resources. Schools must also find ways to engage students in the support process. The essential questions are: How can institutions seamlessly integrate technology and online learning while providing personalized support? And furthermore, how can institutions positively impact their student retention rates when online courses can cause students to feel drastically disconnected from their education?

Oreopoulos & Petronijevic (2018) argue that many different factors contribute to low college completion rates and student dissatisfaction. One important factor they identify relevant to National University is that "resource constraints among less-selective public universities…where there are fewer resources per student" (p. 300) reinforce these lower completion rates and student dissatisfaction toward their college experience. Oreopoulous and Petronijevic also acknowledge that much of recent literature "demonstrates the benefits of helping students foster motivation, effort, good study habits, and time-management skills" through structured support programs like coaching (p. 300). In order to meet the continued demand for higher education enrollment, as well as the needs of the "new traditional" college student described in Chapter 2's Review of Literature, institutions must provide innovative solutions within their support services. Schools must evaluate their current support tools (whether presented in online or on-site formats) and begin to build services through selecting engaging multimedia combined with structured opportunities for self-reflection.

In their study, Oreopoulos & Petronijevic (2018) found that personal coaching increased students' grades by 35%. They do acknowledge that coaching programs are more costly to offer than one-time online interventions and other support resources. The challenge faced by higher education institutions is to make programs trackable with data. Further research is needed to

evaluate how institutions can justify budgeting for student coaching programs and document

increased retention rates due to coaching.

**REFERENCES**

Albright, D. (2018, July 6). How to conduct an instructional design evaluation [Blog]. Retrieved

      from https://blog.continu.co/instructional-design-evaluation/

Alliant International University. (2015, December 10). How to create work-school-life balance.

      [Blog]. Retrieved from https://www.alliant.edu/blog/how-to-create-work-school-life-

      balance/

Banos, O., & Nugent, C. (2018). E-Coaching for health. *Computer, 51*(3), 12-15.

      https://doi.org/10.1109/MC.2018.1731070

Barkley, A. (2011). Academic coaching for enhanced learning. *NACTA Journal, 55*(1), 76-81.

      Retrieved from https://nuls.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://search-proquest-

      com.nuls.idm.oclc.org/docview/864043341?accountid=25320

Bettinger, E., Fox, L., Loeb, S., & Taylor, E. (2017). Virtual classrooms: How online college

      courses affect student success. *American Economic Review,107*(9), 2855-2875. doi:

      10.1257/aer.20151193

Brooks, S.D. (2018).  Coaching 3.0 or e-coaching: An optimal response to the job market and

      professionals' needs. [Web log post]. Retrieved from https://mon-

      ecoaching.com/coaching-3-0-ore-coaching-an-optimal-response-to-the-job-market-and-

      professionals-needs/

Canvas Network. (2017). Evaluation: Our purpose and approach. Retrieved from

      https://learn.canvas.net/courses/1455/pages/evaluation-our-purpose-and-approach

CollegeData. (2019). National University. Retrieved from

      https://www.collegedata.com/en/college-profile/1119/

Freeman, G. G., & Wash, P. D. (2013). You can lead students to the classroom, and you can

     make them think: Ten brain-based strategies for college teaching and learning

     success. *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching, 24*(3), 99-120. Retrieved from

     https://nuls.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&d

     b=ehh&AN=90316252&site=ehost-live

Gregory, J. B., Pascal, A., & Sass, M. (2015). I'm only human: The role of technology in

     coaching. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, *67*(2), 100-109.

     http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/cpb0000025

Harasim, L. (2017). Learning theory and online technologies (2nd ed.). New York, NY:

     Routledge.

Horton, W. (2012). E-learning by design. San Francisco, CA: Pfeiffer.

Hrastinski, S. (2008). Asynchronous and synchronous e-learning. *Educause Quarterly*, *31*(4), 51-

     55. Retrieved from https://er.educause.edu/articles/2008/11/asynchronous-and-

     synchronous-elearning

Januszewski, A., & Molenda, M. (2008). *Educational technology: A definition with commentary.*

     New York, NY: Routledge.

Jenkins, R. (2012). The new "Traditional student". *Chronicle of Higher Education*, A31–A32.

     Retrieved from

     https://nuls.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&d

     b=aph&AN=82540156&site=ehost-live

Kamphorst, B. (2017). E-coaching systems. *Personal and Ubiquitous Computing, 21*(4), 625-

     632. doi:http://dx.doi.org.nuls.idm.oclc.org/10.1007/s00779-017-1020-6

Krug, S. (2014). *Don't make me think.* Berkeley, CA: New Riders.

Lee, W.W., & Owens, D. L. (2004). *Multimedia-based instructional design: Computer-based*

    *training, Web-based training, distance broadcast training, training performance-based*

    *solutions.* San Francisco: Pfeiffer.

Lynda.com. (2014). Balancing work and life. Retrieved from https://www.lynda.com/Business-

    Skills-tutorials/Balancing-Work-Life/145310-

    2.html?srchtrk=index%3a1%0alinktypeid%3a2%0aq%3awork+life+balance%0apage%3

    a1%0as%3arelevance%0asa%3atrue%0aproducttypeid%3a2

Oracle. (2012). FAQ: How to conduct heuristic evaluation. Retrieved from

    https://www.oracle.com/technetwork/topics/ux/applications/user-profile-template-

    1884987.pdf

Oreopoulos, P., & Petronijevic, U. (2018). Student coaching: How far can technology go?

    *Journal of Human Resources, 53*(2), 299-329. https://doi-

    org.nuls.idm.oclc.org/10.3368/jhr.53.2.1216-8439R

Robinson, C., & Gahagan, J. (2010). In practice: Coaching students to academic success and

    engagement on campus. *About Campus, 15*(4), 26-29. https://doi-

    org.nuls.idm.oclc.org/10.1002/abc.20032

Saxena, S. (2018). A beginner's guide to usability testing. Retrieved from

    https://generalassemb.ly/design/user-experience-design/usability-testing

Shelton, B.E., Hung, J.L., & Lowenthal, P.R. (2017). Predicting student success by modeling

    student interaction in asynchronous online courses. *Distance Education, 38*(1), 59-69.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/01587919.2017.1299562

Tripp, A. (2008). Closing the distance: Success coaching for online education goes mainstream.

    *Distance Learning, 5*(1), 37-42. Retrieved from

https://nuls.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://search-proquest-

com.nuls.idm.oclc.org/docview/230698642?accountid=25320

Usability Testing. (n.d). Conducting heuristic evaluation. Retrieved from

http://usabilitytesting.sg/lesson-8-conducting-heuristic-evaluation/

Van Rhijn, T.M., & Lero, D.S. (2014). The influence of self-efficacy beliefs for student parents

attending university. *International Journal of Lifelong Education, 33*(4), 541-555.

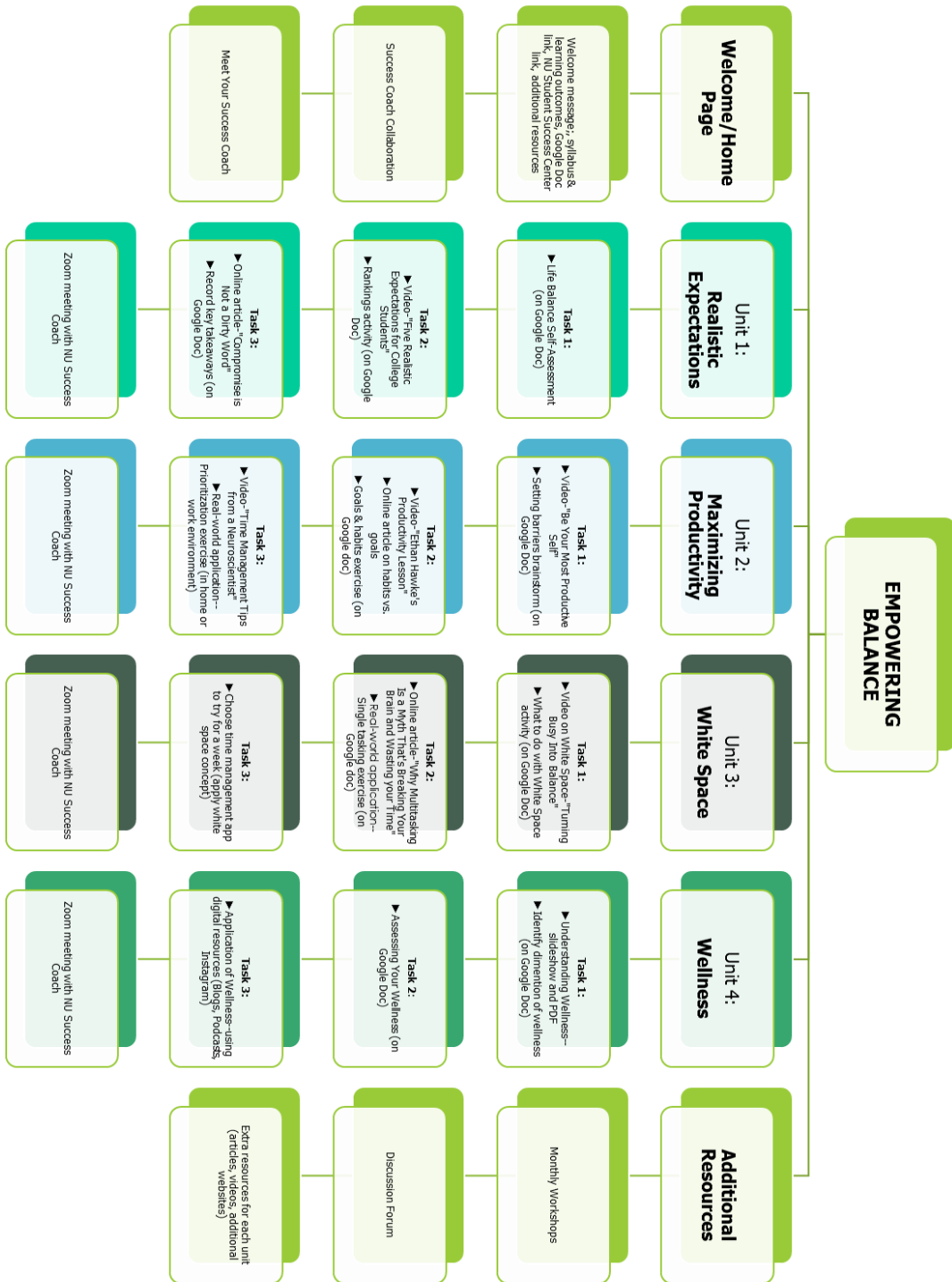https://doi-org.nuls.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/02601370.2014.884178

Williams, R., & Tollett, J. (2006). *The non-designer's web book: An easy guide to creating,

designing, and posting your own web site.* Berkeley, CA: Peachpit Press.

**APPENDICES**

**Appendix A**

**Site Map for "Empowering Balance" Course**



**EMPOWERING BALANCE**

**Welcome/Home Page**
- Welcome message;, syllabus & learning outcomes, Google Doc link, NU Student Success Center link, additional resources
- Success Coach Collaboration
- Meet Your Success Coach

**Unit 1: Realistic Expectations**
- **Task 1:**
  - ▼ Life Balance Self-Assessment (on Google Doc)
- **Task 2:**
  - ▼ Video-"Five Realistic Expectations for College Students"
  - ▼ Rankings activity (on Google Doc)
- **Task 3:**
  - ▼ Online article-"Compromise is Not a Dirty Word"
  - ▼ Record key takeaways (on Google Doc)
- Zoom meeting with NU Success Coach

**Unit 2: Maximizing Productivity**
- **Task 1:**
  - ▼ Video-"Be Your Most Productive Self"
  - ▼ Setting barriers brainstorm (on Google Doc)
- **Task 2:**
  - ▼ Video- "Ethan Hawke's Productivity Lesson"
  - ▼ Online article on habits vs. goals
  - ▼ Goals & habits exercise (on Google doc)
- **Task 3:**
  - ▼ Video-"Time Management Tips from a Neuroscientist"
  - ▼ Real-world application—Prioritization exercise (in home or work environment)
- Zoom meeting with NU Success Coach

**Unit 3: White Space**
- **Task 1:**
  - ▼ Video on White Space—"Turning Busy Into Balance"
  - ▼ What to do with White Space activity (on Google Doc)
- **Task 2:**
  - ▼ Online article-"Why Multitasking is a Myth That's Breaking Your Brain and Wasting your Time"
  - ▼ Real-world application—Single tasking exercise (on Google doc)
- **Task 3:**
  - ▼ Choose time management app to try for a week (apply white space concept)
- Zoom meeting with NU Success Coach

**Unit 4: Wellness**
- **Task 1:**
  - ▼ Understanding Wellness— slideshow and PDF
  - ▼ Identify dimention of wellness (on Google Doc)
- **Task 2:**
  - ▼ Assessing Your Wellness (on Google Doc)
- **Task 3:**
  - ▼ Application of Wellness—using digital resources (Blogs, Podcasts, Instagram)
- Zoom meeting with NU Success Coach

**Additional Resources**
- Monthly Workshops
- Discussion Forum
- Extra resources for each unit (articles, videos, additional websites)

**Appendix B**

**Usability Test Session Script**

Hello and thank you for volunteering to support the assessment testing for the "Empowering Balance" course. This course is designed for undergraduate and graduate level college students who desire to achieve an improved balance between their school responsibilities, their career roles, and other life commitments. I'm testing this course for user-friendliness and to see what's working well and what's not working well.

Keep in mind that we are only testing the site and not you. Don't worry about making mistakes. We want to improve the site, so we need to know your honest thoughts. I'll be asking you to think out loud to tell me what's going on in your mind. These thoughts will help my assessment so that I can improve the course.

If you have any questions, just ask. Since I want to know how users are doing when they don't have someone sitting next to them, I might not be able to answer your questions right away; however, I will try to answer any questions you still have when we're done.

Now, please open the file I sent you in your email titled "Usability Survey." Let's review what I want you to think about as you're performing the usability test. *(Review the bulleted items)*

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Let's start the testing. Please follow the instructions beginning with Step 1.

**Appendix C**

**Usability Instructions + Survey**

Go to https://sites.google.com/asu.edu/empoweringbalance/home to access the "Empowering Balance" Course.

*Things to think about when performing the usability test:*

- **Overall look and feel:**
    - Easy to read
    - Uncluttered and clean design
    - Consistent in design
    - Effective use of graphics
    - Correct spelling and grammar
- **Content**
    - Content is presented clearly
    - Content is relevant to the subject
- **Navigation**
    - Simple and easy to follow

**STEP 1: Home Page/Welcome Page**

- Read the text on the page.
- Review the course syllabus.
- Review all graphics.
- *Comments: Please provide verbal feedback as we go along. If you need to jot down your thoughts, you can use the space below:*

**STEP 2: Unit 1-Realistic Expectations**

- Navigate to Unit 1-Realistic Expectations
- Open and read Task 1, including the Google Doc.
- Open and view the video for Task 2. Review the task on the Google Doc.
- Open and read the article for Task 3. Reviews the task on the Google Doc.
- *Comments: Please provide verbal feedback as we go along. If you need to jot down your thoughts, you can use the space below:*

**STEP 3: Unit 2-Maximing Productivity**

- Navigate to Unit 2-Maximizig Productivity
- Open and read Task 1, including the video and the Google Doc.
- Open and read Task 2, including the video, article, and Google Doc.

- Open and read Task 3, including the video and exercise information.
- *Comments: Please provide verbal feedback as we go along. If you need to jot down your thoughts, you can use the space below:*


**STEP 4: Unit 3-White Space**

- Navigate to Unit 3-White Space
- Open and read Task 1, including the video and the Google Doc.
- Open and read Task 2, including the article and Google Doc.
- Open and read Task 3. Check links to ensure usability and relevance.
- *Comments: Please provide verbal feedback as we go along. If you need to jot down your thoughts, you can use the space below:*


**STEP 5: Unit 4-Wellness**

- Navigate to Unit 4-Wellness
- Open and read Task 1, including the slideshow, PDF, and Google Doc.
- Open and read Task 2, including the Google Doc.
- Open and read Task 3. Check links to ensure usability and relevance.
- *Comments: Please provide verbal feedback as we go along. If you need to jot down your thoughts, you can use the space below:*

**Appendix D**

**Observation Form for Usability Test**

*(To be completed by the Instructional Designer/Observer of Participants)*

| Time | Step | Observations & User Comments | Errors Found in Development |
|---|---|---|---|
| Start:<br>End:<br>TOTAL_____ | 1 | | |
| Start:<br>End:<br>TOTAL_____ | 2 | | |
| Start:<br>End:<br>TOTAL_____ | 3 | | |
| Start:<br>End:<br>TOTAL_____ | 4 | | |
| Start:<br>End:<br>TOTAL_____ | 5 | | |

## Appendix E

## Reaction Survey: Course Design & User Experience

*To be completed from a course design and user perspective*

*Rate the components below on the following scales:*
- *5-Strongly Agree*
- *4-Agreee*
- *3-Middle (Somewhat agree and somewhat disagree)*
- *2-Disagree*
- *1-Strongly Disagree*

| Component | 5-Strongly Agree | 4-Agree | 3-Middle | 2-Disagree | 1-Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The goals of each unit were clear | | | | | |
| Task directions were clear. | | | | | |
| The site was organized and easy to navigate between units. | | | | | |
| The page layout of the site was clear. | | | | | |
| The site effectively integrated technology, videos, and other media. | | | | | |
| Each unit of the course was balanced with a mixture of reading, graphics, media, and other activities. | | | | | |
| The appearance of the site is clean without being too simple or too cluttered. | | | | | |
| The site had an overall pleasing look and feel for the target audience. | | | | | |
| The site images were relevant to the content. | | | | | |
| The course content was sequenced appropriately and logically. | | | | | |
| The course content could apply to various student circumstances and scenarios | | | | | |
| The course units are distinct but tie in to one another effectively. | | | | | |
| The course content is sequenced to help students learn the material. | | | | | |
| Labeling and naming of links were clear and worked when clicked. | | | | | |
| The site used proper spelling and grammar. | | | | | |
| Overall, I am satisfied with the use of the site. | | | | | |

Describe any problems you found in the course and suggestions to improve certain components.

State one thing you like best about the course.


State one thing you would most like to change about the course.

## Appendix F

### Reaction Survey: Student Perspective and Learning Outcomes

*\*To be completed from the perspective of the learner/target audience*

*Rate the components below on the following scales:*
- *5-Strongly Agree*
- *4-Agree*
- *3-Middle (Somewhat agree and somewhat disagree)*
- *2-Disagree*
- *1-Strongly Disagree*

| Component | 5-Strongly Agree | 4-Agree | 3-Middle | 2-Disagree | 1-Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The course changed my perspective on achieving balance. | | | | | |
| I gained new knowledge and strategies that I did not previously have. | | | | | |
| Learning activities were relevant to the student experience. | | | | | |
| The course increased my self-awareness about areas impacting my school-life balance. | | | | | |
| The course was engaging and interesting. | | | | | |
| The course challenged my thinking. | | | | | |
| Task directions were easy to understand. | | | | | |
| Task difficulty was appropriate for various learning levels. | | | | | |
| The time commitment for each week was appropriate. | | | | | |
| I would recommend this course to other students. | | | | | |

As a student, describe any problems you found in the course and suggestions to improve certain components.


As a student, state one thing you like best about the course.


As a student, state one thing you would most like to change about the course.