Krista M. Rundiks
Program Synthesis

A New Journey

Before I started the University of New Mexico (UNM) OILS graduate program for "Instructional Design and Technology", I didn't know how the skills and knowledge I would build over the next couple of years would be applicable to my career and life. My first introduction to the title of "Instructional Designer" was when I was applying for jobs in the digital design field (around 2016-2017). Many of the better paying positions ($70k+) required a master's degree, which at the time I wasn't qualified for.

During a life transition in 2018, as my son was graduating high school in Denver, CO, he obtained a partial college golf scholarship at Western New Mexico University. This propelled me to embark on a new journey myself. I sold my house, moved to Albuquerque, and enrolled as a student in the online program at UNM. Luckily, I was able to work remotely full-time throughout this new adventure while attending online classes. Little did I know during the entire process of moving from my hometown (for 38 years) of Denver, CO to a different place where I knew no one nor any of the surrounding area, I was already applying adult and self-directed learning.

Krista at the Beautiful Los Poblanos Inn and Farm

A Southwest Garden Looking Towards the Sandia Mountains

Kailer at the UNM Championship Golf Course

Important Questions to Consider

What is instructional design? What is adult learning? What is cultural inclusivity? What is online learning? How do they work together? How can these ideas be applied in different sectors of society? These are some of the questions I hope to answer through my program synthesis reflection regarding my accumulated knowledge gained from the OILS program over the past couple of years.

What is Instructional Design?

I've been asked by family, friends, and co-workers what is instructional design and what can you do with it? A simple answer is, it's a design that seeks to solve a learning problem by using a model such as ADDIE (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, Evaluation) or SAM (Successive Approximation Model). Instructional designers produce a justification for an intended design by analyzing stakeholder and organizational needs, selecting the most appropriate learning theories and strategies to apply, producing information in an intended sequence and format, and creating an evaluation that will determine the success of the design and future improvements.

What is Adult Learning?

What is adult learning… or you could think of it as "Andragogy" a way of differentiating adult learners from children (Merriam and Bierema, 2014). Adults prefer different ways of learning, they need to be motivated (extrinsically and/or intrinsically), they have accumulated life experience, may have prior knowledge, they can be self-directed, and they can be goal, objective, and activity oriented. The five traditional learning theories that address adult learning are behaviorism, humanism, cognitivism, social cognitivism, and constructivism. (Merriam and Bierema, 2014) There are of course branches of learning theories that fall underneath the primary ones mentioned, such as social constructivism and transformational learning. Throughout the OILS program I've learned various strategies, applications, and principles to apply within each learning theory.

What is Cultural Inclusivity?

Adult learners are diverse on many levels as well as online and distance learning covers a global landscape, therefore as an instructional designer it's extremely important to take in mind cultural inclusivity. The definition of culture varies and has been defined by many great social scientists over time. "*We define culture as a collection of shared perceptions of the world and our place in it.*" (Gunawardena, p. 3) Culture with respect to learning not only considers language, religion, geography, time zones, customs, beliefs, and norms, but it also looks at technology adoption, access to technology, communication, and so much more.

The WISCOM framework developed by Charlotte Gunawardena looks at how to provide a transformational learning experience through building a wisdom community by using the collaborative inquiry cycle (CIC). *"The Collaborative Inquiry Cycle is a process for designing structured collaborative learning experiences in which learners work together to explore a well-defined problem, an ill-structured problem, an issue, or a case."* (Gunawardena, p. 130). The WISCOM framework strives to find a commonality within a community of practice (CoP) by defining shared beliefs on wisdom and community. It brings forth important aspects such as, communication, technology, distributed co-mentoring, and learner support (Gunawardena, 2018).

What Is Online Learning?

"Online learning is the newest and most popular form of distance education today. Within the past decade it has had a major impact on postsecondary education and the trend is only increasing (Stern, n.d.)." Online learning can meet the needs of many adult learners and can be conducted asynchronously or at the preferred time an individual chooses to learn or synchronously being at the same time. Online learning can be conducted through a variety of tools and applications. In the OILS program I've

experienced first-hand what a successful online program includes. Principles and strategies that provide learner support, scaffolding or building up the degree of difficulty overtime, peer and mentor collaboration, self-directed learning, socio-cultural constructs such as peer discussions, use of situated or real-world learning examples, a way to express and gain feedback, timely feedback, ease of access, and user-friendly technology have been some of the most profound keys to UNM's program success.

How Do These Concepts Work Together?

As a graphic / web designer and web marketing professional with 15 years of experience, instructional design has helped to open my eyes and see other design aspects beyond the look and feel, creativity, usability, and ROI. The skillsets of a successful instructional designer are built through experience and rely on research and analysis by creating SMART goals and objectives (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-based) with the intention to solve a learning problem. Effective instructional design relies on collaboration, good communication, and effective project management. To better serve an organization's needs it's relevant to understand the "Adult Learner", consider and design for "Cultural Inclusivity", understand the guiding principles of "Online Learning".

How Can These Ideas Be Applied in Different Sectors of Society?

Throughout my learning as a graduate student I've had the opportunity to work through many real-world learning examples. I feel that the group projects combined with situated learning, discussion, and reflection opportunities, alongside peer review and feedback has contributed most to my learning and long-term memory retention.

The Adult Learner

In remembering "The Adult Learner" in my first semester I was confronted with an APA style research paper every week for 8 consecutive weeks, that was centered around a different learning theory and concluded with my own personal learning plan and justification on a subject of choice. A large take-away from this class was the use of concept mapping. "*Concept mapping is a technique that helps people represent their knowledge organizations visually*." (Ambrose et al, p.59) Please see Figure 1 below of a concept map I created that represents ideas and relationships on creating a short documentary or training video using a DSLR camera.
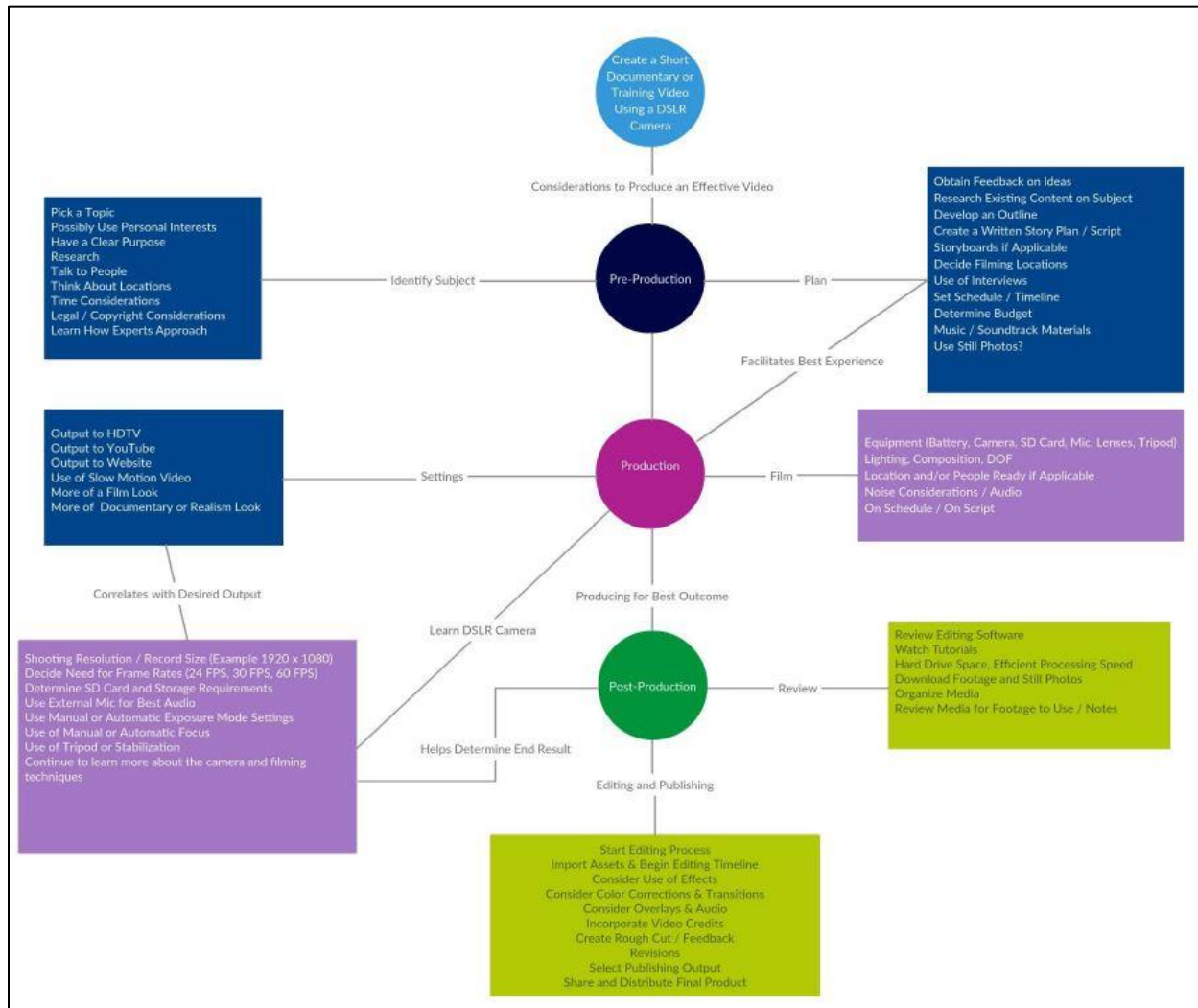
Figure 1: Concept Map for Creating a Short Documentary or Training Video Using a DSLR Camera

Culture and Global e-Learning

Culture and Global e-Learning not only covered Gunawardena's WISCOM framework but included several practical and authentic applications where teamwork was a necessity. Projects included a water rights case on the use of the Rio Grande River seen through multiple social roles such as US and Mexican farmer and US and Mexican environmentalist and concluded in a memorandum on understating (MOU) between all assigned parties. Another situated learning experience and final project resulted in our group producing a mock grant proposal for the US Department of State, titled "Empowering Women Through Entrepreneurship" and focused on empowering women in Morocco through mobile technology. Figure 2 below is a "mind map" I created to represent the components of the WISCOM framework and how they work together. Figure 3 is a word cloud graphic I created depicting central

themes that occurred within one of our class's weekly discussions.
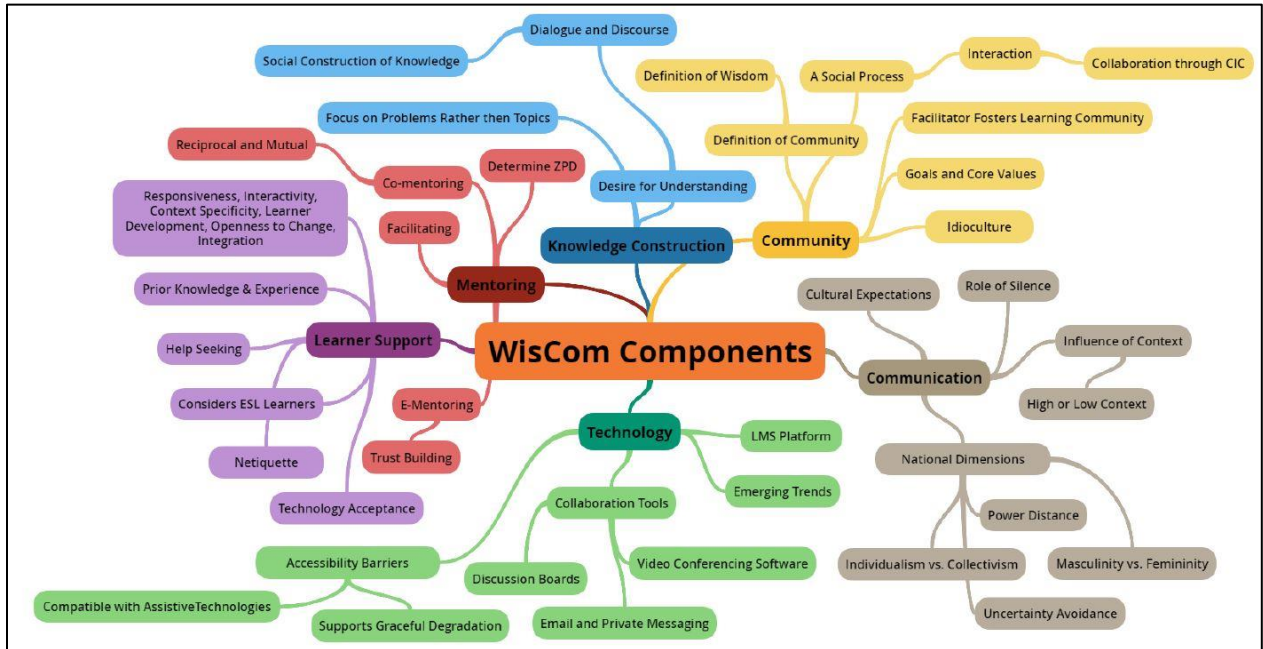
Figure 2: WISCOM Components Mind Map

Figure 3: Word Cloud of Central Themes on the Topic of Globalization and E-Learning

Framing Designs of Learning and Prototyping Designs of Learning
The next series of classes "Framing Designs of Learning" and "Prototyping Designs of Learning" provided a couple of profound learning opportunities. Initially we had to produce a case study summary on a topic of choosing from a peer reviewed library and explain the rationale behind the design. I presented a case titled "Establishing a Virtual Makerspace for an Online Graduate Course", see Figure 4 for an example of the presentation title slide. The second profound project in this class was a prototype our group built in Blackboard Learn for the Center of Digital Learning at UNM to onboard instructor reviewers of online classes at the university and norm them to the latest rubric and quality matters standards.
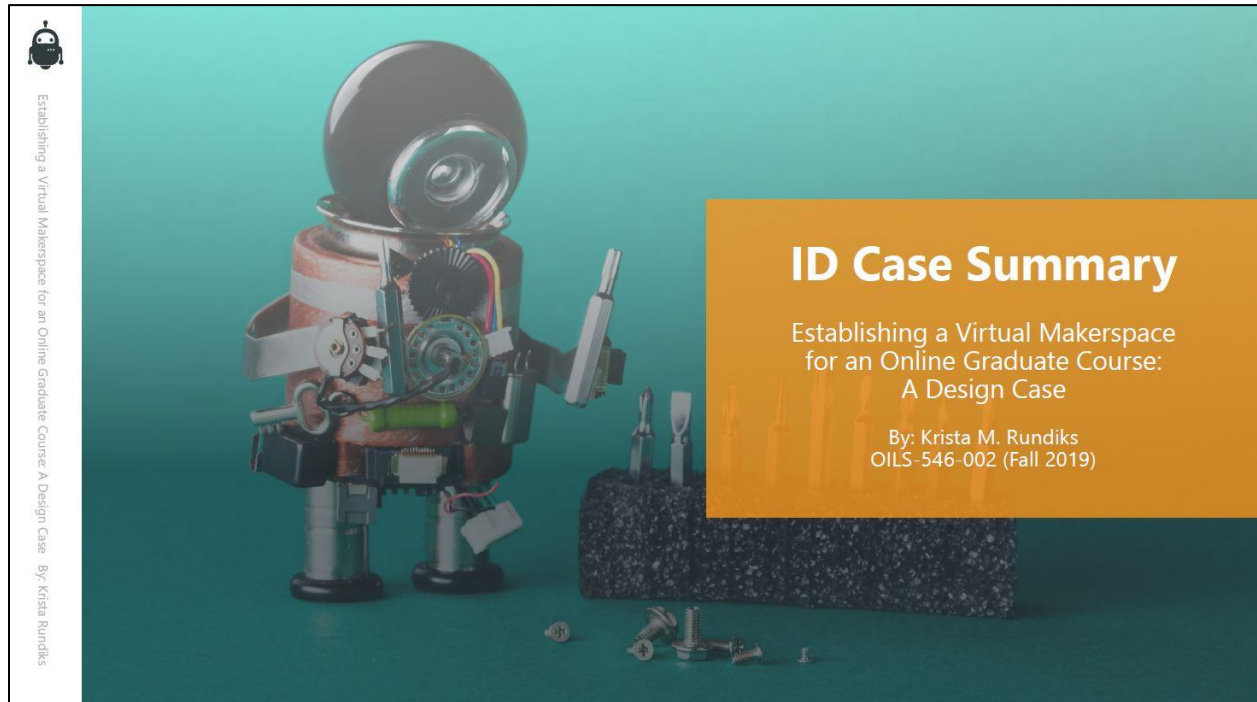
Figure 4: ID Case Summary Presentation Slide

Presentation Technologies
This class aligned well with my current background of skills as a graphic/web designer. I was able to learn more about what a "performance graphic" is and what makes it effective. Another key take-away was learning about the "ACE Model" of design and the "Assertion Evidence Model" when creating a presentation for a technical or scientific audience. See Figure 5 below for an example screen shot of the ACE Model presentation overview I created or visit this link for the complete slide show: https://slides.com/kristamrundiks/ace. Alongside researching the history and uses of different fonts, I had the opportunity to create a web page in the latest version of Adobe CC Dreamweaver that would instruct someone on the basics of planting a seed by taking original photos from my front yard. During this class, I also had time to create a short instructional video and brush up on the importance of storyboarding. Finally, I produced and delivered a 30-minute presentation training with different types of visual references for the audience. See Figure 7 for a handout provided to the audience.

The analyze, create, and evaluate (ACE) model explains the design process for an instructional visual.
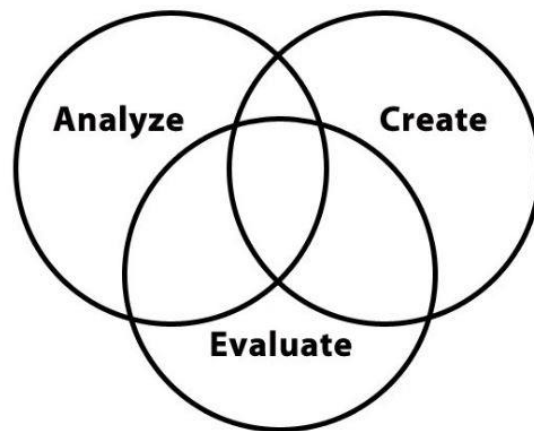
Analyze   Create

Evaluate

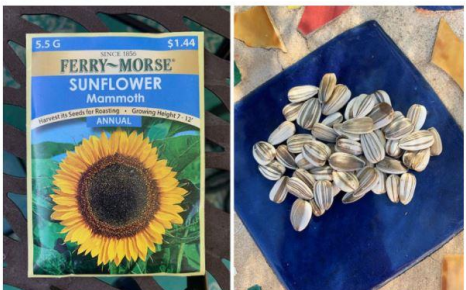Figure 5: ACE Model Graphic from My Slideshow Presentation

Planting Sunflowers in New Mexico

How to Plant Sunflowers in New Mexico

Sunflowers are great to plant in New Mexico as they are hardy plants that can thrive in many types of soil and terrain and they love to be in full sun. They will require watering at least once a week, but rest assured within a couple weeks of planting, you will see your seeds growing quickly. **Follow the steps below to get started and happy planting!**

Step:1	Step:2
Visit your local store and purchase a pack of sunflower seeds. For this example, I used the Mammoth Sunflower variety.	Use a shovel or garden tool and clear a row for your seeds. The depth should be around 1 inch deep.

Figure 6: How to Plant a Seed, Screen Shot of HTML Web Page Instructions

Figure 7: Handout Summary of 30-Minute Presentation

Exploring Virtual Worlds and Virtual Reality in Online Learning Environments

Exploring virtual worlds (VW) was one of my favorite classes throughout my UNM graduate experience. Before embarking on this adventure, I'd never participated in a virtual learning experience. The class met in Second Life (SL) every week at the UNM virtual campus. I learned about the nuances of exploring the educational possibilities within a VW through peer collaboration, creating interactive THiNC Books, and meeting experts from other Universities, who teach in SL. The final learning artifact produced was a group project that focused on the many enchanting experiences one can find in New Mexico. Follow this link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6V7Ja6mxDT8 to take a tour of our virtual adobe house that showcases the land of enchantment or see Figure 8 of a static screen shot for the "Art Experiences" room I created.

Figure 8: Personal Art Experiences Room Built in Second Life

E-Learning Course Design

This course allowed me to learn more about learning management systems such as Moodle Cloud and Canvas. It gave me a second opportunity to produce a comprehensive design document that outlines the rationale for an online course and build out the structure of the course and two complete modules. The course I built was software instruction for my current employer titled "An Introduction to Yukon".

I was also provided the opportunity to problem solve with a group on how to design an online learning activity that utilizes the Collaborative Inquiry Cycle (CIC) for a complex subject such as, what's involved in creating a CBRN (chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear defense) plan. See Figure 9 for an example screen shot or follow this link 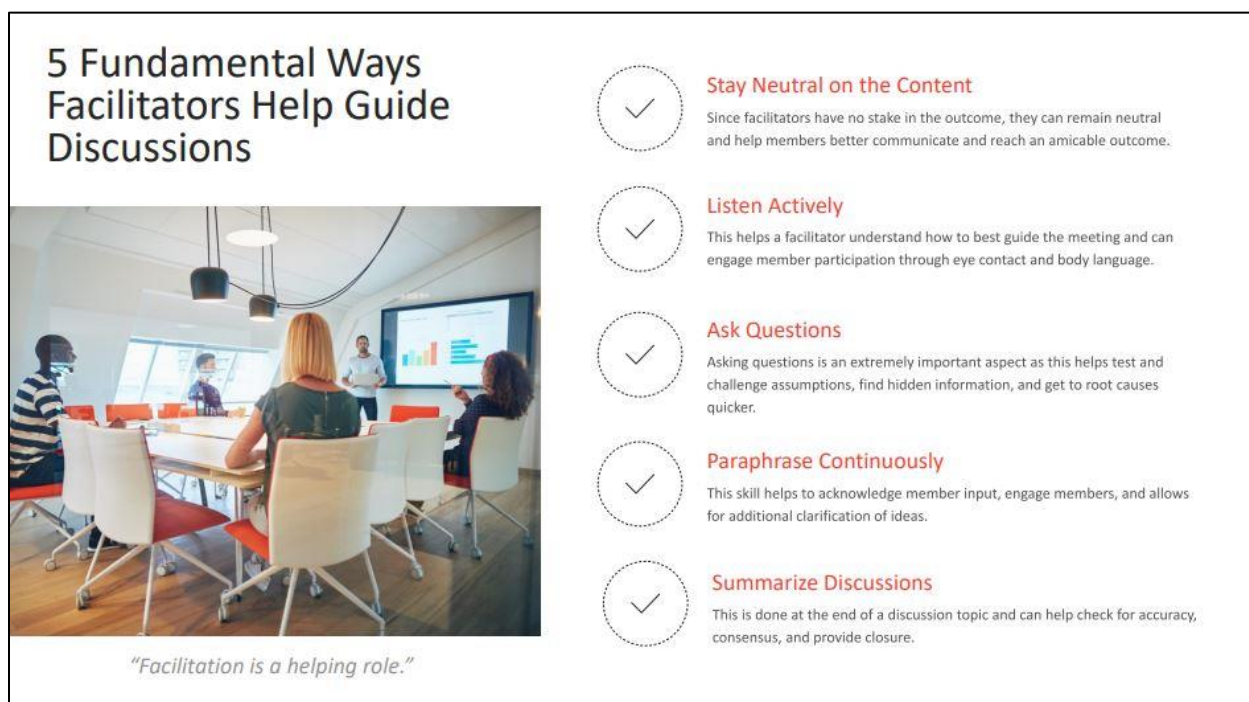to download the CBRN presentation: https://www.kmrdes.com/Inquiry-Based-Learning-Activity-OILS-532-Team-C.pdf and Figure 10 for a Word Cloud graphic I created representing the class discussion that followed.

Figure 9: Collaborative Inquiry Cycle Group Presentation on a CBRN Plan

Figure 10: Word Cloud Graphic Generated from the CIC CBRN Class Discussion

Program Evaluation

Program Evaluation is a required course and allowed me to learn the many variances of evaluation and

it's importance throughout the ID process. Although I've not talked about this subject a lot it's truly one of great value when designing and assessing for learning problems. The kinds of evaluation I've been informed of include developmental, formative, summative, monitoring and auditing, outcome, impact, and performance measurement (Russ-Eft & Preskill, 2009). Another huge take-away are the key questions an instructional designer develops that help focus and guide the entire evaluation.

Team Development and Facilitation

This course was an important steppingstone in my learning at UNM and will allow me to bring newfound skills and insights into the professional realm. Starting off I learned the importance of creating a team charter and establishing early healthy norms to help increase team productivity and success. I learned not only about practices and strategies to help with effective teamwork, but also about the significance a facilitator can play in helping to bring forth productive outcomes within team communication. Our team's cumulative project can be watched on YouTube by following this link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JzA-ag0XPfw&t=5s and is about how to manage dysfunction as a facilitator.

Figure 11: Slide Excerpt from "A Glimpse into Being a Facilitator for Group and Team Meetings"

Capstone

Capstone was a culmination of all the acquired knowledge and learning to date. I embarked on an authentic project producing an instructional design for a high-end interior design firm located in Denver, Colorado called Recherche Interior Design. Originally, the client didn't know how instructional design would help her newly formed business. Through a detailed needs analysis conducted on current and former clients and an interview with the owner, we agreed upon the best learning gaps to produce content around. The final version 1 product is a responsive WordPress website and a pdf brochure, designed as a secondary content piece. The product addresses summarizing what to expect throughout the Recherche interior design process, the services offered, and the different types of billing found

throughout the process. Figure 12 shows an example of the pdf brochure. The other poignant piece of the capstone experience entailed writing about our internship experience, planning the plan, writing an evaluation plan, conducting the evaluation, and finally peer review throughout each phase. See Figure 13 for an example of the projects Gantt Chart.
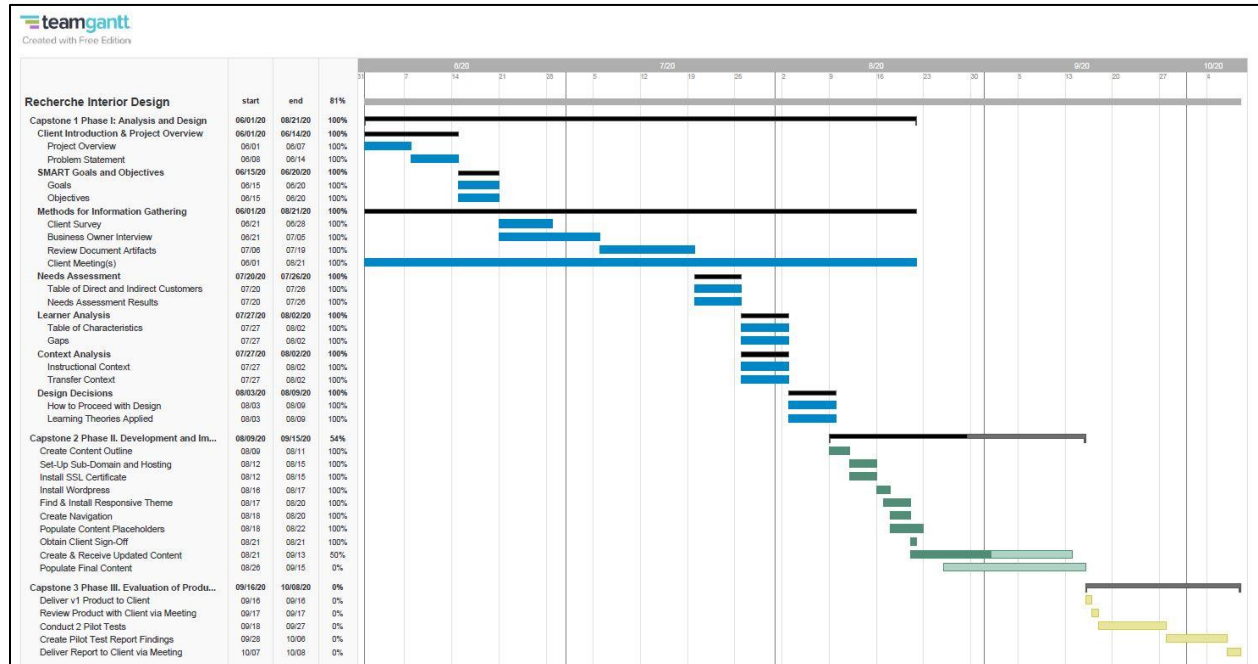

Figure 12: PDF Brochure Example

Figure 13: Recherche Interior Design Project Gantt Chart

Consulting and Project Management

This course focuses on teamwork through examining organizational case studies in the role of a

consultant. I watched and discussed interviews and videos from well-known consultants such as, Bob Riefstahl founder of 2WIN! Global, Dominic Barton former Managing Director of McKinsey & Company, and Jenny Raw an ex-Bain consultant regarding the attributes that led to their successes over time and effective consultant qualities. Our team created a team charter to establish our working norms as we met weekly to analyze multiple cases together. I learned about different types of process charts and their uses (see Figure 13), utilized rich pictures to illustrate what's working and not working within an organizational scenario (see Figure 14), and learned about the use of frameworks to help determine the scope of a project such as SWOT Analysis, Porter's Five Forces, and the McKinsey 7-S framework.
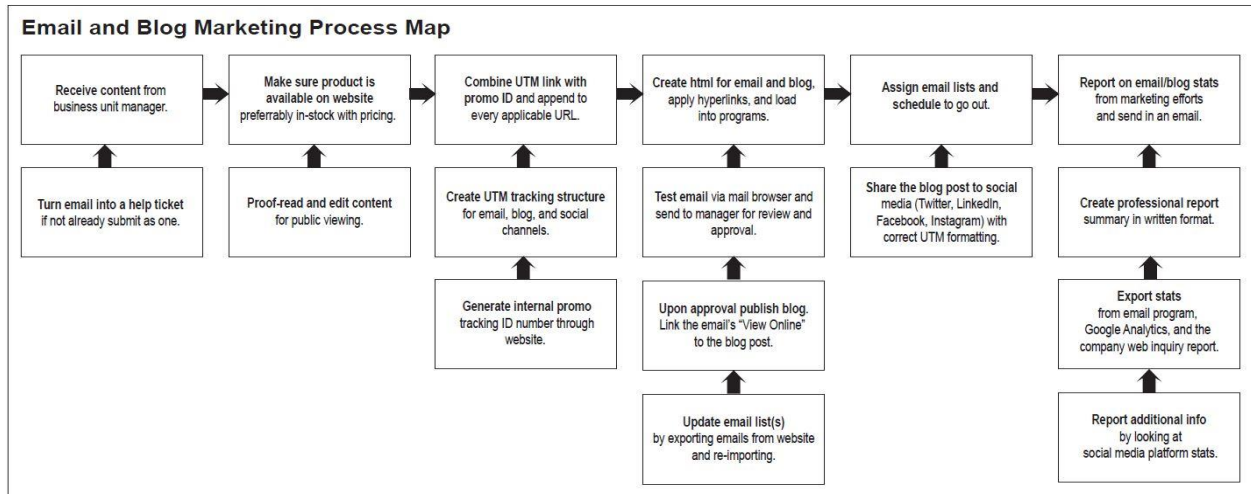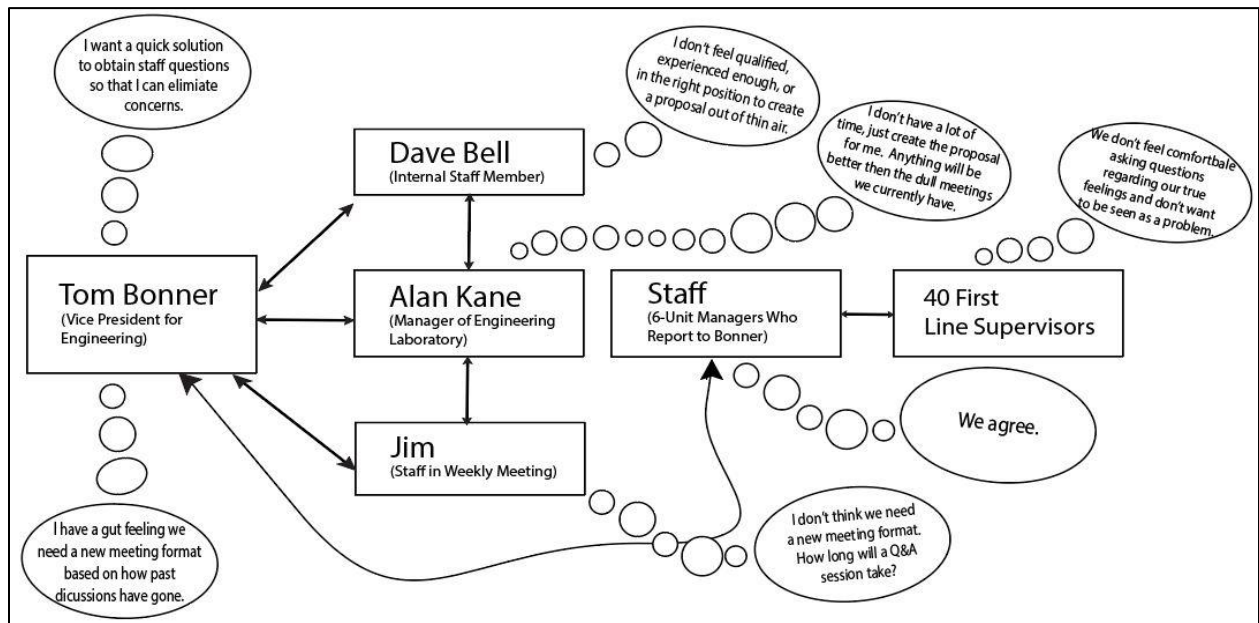

Figure 13: Process Chart Example

Figure 14: Rich Picture Expressing Problems within an Organizational Setting

Future Horizons

It's been a long, challenging, and rewarding two years embarking on obtaining my master's degree in instructional design while working full-time. I've spent constant 12 hour-days on the computer from Oct 2018-Dec 2020. I'm ready to spend more time on my personal interests. I would love to learn how to keep bees, continue to grow and create my southwest garden and eco-system, create new musical compositions, work on an idea and plan for a short art or documentary film, continue on my art work such as mosaics, get back into a daily workout routine, and continue to develop myself professionally for that next great adventure.

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