Issues and Challenges When Teaching Online

I think online education has opened up opportunities that some of our learners wouldn't have had. . . . It has allowed them so much flexibility.

Ellen

Online learning in higher education is growing at a rapid pace, and online learners have surpassed the total higher education learner population. In fall 2007, over 3.9 million learners were enrolled in at least one online course in the United States. This was a 12% increase over the number from the previous year (Allen & Seaman, 2008). This growth in market demands can provide both benefits and limitations for the fields of online and higher education.

Some of the benefits of rapid growth are the greater impact on the economy, the increased geographical reach of institutions across states and countries, better access for nontraditional learners to educational opportunities, more convenience and flexibility for learners and instructors, new opportunities for interactive and collaborative experiences, and increased knowledge and skills relevant to the use of technology on the part of all participants (Allen & Seaman, 2008; Conceição, 2006; Thompson, 2004).

Some of the limitations are that educational organizations are increasingly offering online courses as "cash cows," top-down demands are escalating the responsibilities of instructors unprepared to teach online, instructors' perceptions are leading them to believe that online teaching takes more time and effort than face-to-face instruction, some view online education as a "second-class" learning experience, and teaching online has lower credibility for tenure and promotion (Allen & Seaman, 2008; Maguire, 2005; Mupinga & Maughan, 2008; Wilson, 1998).

Due to the market demands, a large number of institutions of higher education are now providing online programs, pressuring instructors to move their existing traditional courses to the online environment or create new online courses. As a result, it is necessary for instructors to take a fresh look at their teaching, adapt their course design, modify their teaching strategies, and rethink how they prioritize and manage their workload.

Effective online teaching calls for intentional design and creating a sense of presence and connection between instructor and learners. Creating a sense of presence involves an awareness and understanding of how to "be there" for the online learner (Lehman & Conceição, 2010). Designing, delivering, and evaluating online instruction, in comparison to face-to-face instruction, require a distinctive type of management, which depends on the components of the design process (such as content type, course format, strategies, instructor role, technology, and support) and factors that influence workload (such as number of courses taught, learner enrollment, position held, and instructor responsibilities).

Managing the online teaching workload has become a concern for both new and experienced instructors. This concern is frequently the result of demands from the administration; a perception that the online environment is omnipresent and operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; a lack of understanding of the elements that make up the distance learning environment; inexperience in designing online instruction; and a lack of awareness of the importance of being present with learners online. With the increasing growth of online offerings and institutional pressures, instructors are at a loss and feel overwhelmed by not understanding how to deal with workload.

Until now it has been difficult for instructors to find the information and assistance they need to address workload management when teaching online, because most of the information found in publications is based on opinions,

reviews, and anecdotes (Bower, 2001; Carnevale, 2004; DiSalvio, 2007; Dunlap, 2005; Dykman & Davis, 2008; Lorenzetti, 2007; Scheuermann, 2005; Sheridan, 2006), and a small number of empirical studies (Andersen & Avery, 2008; Betts, 1998; DiBiase, 2004; Thompson, 2004; Wilson, 1998; Zuckweiler, Schniederjans, & Ball, 2004). Therefore, this book will address institutional and instructional issues and challenges of workload management in higher education, stories from instructors in different teaching positions on how they balance their workload, the reality of managing workload when teaching online from a design perspective, the different ways instructors can manage tasks and prioritize time for online courses, and workload strategies for maintaining quality of life.

INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

When we refer to institutional issues, we mean important questions, situations, or events that need to be resolved and can affect online instructor workload. These institutional issues are static, and through awareness they become visible and capable of being moved forward through action. Institutional issues present challenges that higher education organizations deal with when considering the new online teaching and learning environment. These challenges can be acted upon to resolve the institutional issues. Table 1.1 addresses four of the institutional issues and challenges most common to online teaching in higher education.

Market Demands

Institutions of higher education must embrace the idea that online teaching is a reality they must act upon if they want to compete in the world economy. With the decrease in financial support, public institutions are suffering and in need of new markets. For many institutions, public or private, online education has become a new form of revenue that does not require them to build additional physical facilities, and that has proven to be a solid source of income with increasing enrollments (Allen & Seaman, 2008; Maguire, 2005). In addition to bringing in revenue, online education provides better access, convenience, and flexibility for adult learners who would not otherwise be able to further their education, and it has become a major focus for higher education institutions (Miller & Husmann, 1999). This calls for a shift in the institutional paradigm (O'Quinn & Corry, 2002).

Table 1.1

Institutional Issues and Challenges in Online Teaching

Issue	Challenge
1. How do market demands affect online instructor workload?	1. An increased online learner population requires systems thinking for instructor empowerment, support, incentives, and rewards in order to offer efficient and effective online education.
2. How does the institutional perspective affect online instructor workload?	2. Online education requires innovative institutional perspectives to determine appropriate online instructor workload in the changing higher education landscape.
3. How do the institutional definition and recognition of workload affect the online instructor?	3. Institutions must determine equitable workload policies and procedures for online teaching.
4. How does program quality affect online instructor workload?	4. Institutions must provide online instructor support for developing quality online programs that show meaningful outcomes based on competencies through assessments.

The new institutional paradigm requires systems thinking, the process of understanding and guiding change in a higher education institution. This change spans from simple to complex and involves all parts of the organization as they influence one another within a whole. When traditional higher education institutions consider including online education in their offerings, they must integrate it into their institutional system. The same type of services that are provided for traditional face-to-face programs should be adapted for the online environment. For example, student services, technology support, and instructor support are some of the provisions that should be carefully examined and developed before offering the online program.

Systems thinking addresses how this paradigm shift affects both the role of the instructor and instructor workload. O'Quinn and Corry (2002, p. 1) describe this impact on instructor workload by stating that not only does online

education demand that instructors "learn how to use new technologies, it also requires a paradigm shift in how educators orchestrate the act of learning." The starting point of this paradigm shift is the intrinsic motivation and openness to change on the part of the instructor—and a feeling of empowerment. The institution must be aware of what is needed to appeal to instructors who are new to online education. Instructors are more likely to be motivated to change paradigms if they are provided with extrinsic motivators, including instructor support, incentives, and rewards (Maguire, 2005).

An institution can provide instructor support that is administrative, monetary, and technical. Administrative support involves policy changes that will enable instructors to gain promotion and tenure as a result of teaching online. Monetary support, in the form of stipends, professional development, overload pay, merit pay, or increased salary, is also an incentive for instructors to be motivated to teach online. Institutional rewards include release time, recognition, and technology acquisition (Maguire, 2005).

As a result of an increased online learner population and market demands for higher education institutions, the challenge is how to shift from a traditional paradigm to systems thinking, while taking into consideration how these demands affect instructors and their workload. Another challenge is to motivate instructors through empowerment, support, incentives, and rewards in order to offer efficient and effective online education.

Institutional Perspective on Instructor Workload

The old brick-and-mortar concept of higher education is being transformed. In the old mode, learners live on campus, walk to classes, attend regular courses during normal working hours, participate in campus activities, and socialize with other learners within the confines of the campus area. This mode still exists; however, the landscape is changing. Even though learners still live within the university boundaries, they are adapting their campus lifestyle to the changing times. Today the use of mobile technology has revolutionized the way learners live, communicate, and interact. Campus living now offers easy access to networks and wireless technology. Learners are no longer tied to physical locations for communicating, instead carrying mobile devices. Interactions happen anywhere, anytime, any pace through social networking sites.

A typical first-year learner in the United States today lives in a dorm; has a laptop; carries a cell phone or handheld device; is constantly interacting with

friends, other learners, and family members through texting or social networking sites; and participates in a mix of face-to-face, hybrid, and online courses. Some of the campus behaviors in the traditional mode remain; however, emerging technologies have added another dimension for learning, communicating, and interacting. Carroll-Barefield, Smith, Prince, and Campbell (2005) call this change the "brick and click": learners enjoy traditional campus living with the advantages of the innovative use of technology, creating a new landscape for higher education.

In this new landscape, instructors must also adapt to keep pace with the changes. An instructor's role is less that of a lecturer and more that of a facilitator. Often learners expect that the instructor is available all the time, that course materials will be accessible in the learning management system ahead of course time, that the instructor will immediately respond to e-mail messages, and that the course materials will be delivered in a variety of technology formats. These expectations are challenges for instructors as well as administrators when addressing issues of workload.

For instructors, because of these expectations, the concept of workload is being redefined. Learner demand for Web-based, hybrid, or online courses is altering the way instruction is delivered. To keep up with this challenge, instructors must be open to change, have technology skills, become familiar with the online environment, and consider innovative ways to meet learners' needs. For administrators, the issue is how institutional perspectives can address instructor workload.

The challenge is how to deal with these expectations and view teaching and learning from a new perspective that involves reexamining the concept of workload. Should workload be based on credit hours, class size, or lab work? Should workload be measured differently for various disciplines? Should course preparation time be included in the workload? Should the workload be distinctive when teaching undergraduate versus graduate classes? These are some of the many questions administrators must address.

Institutional Definition and Recognition of Workload

There are varying definitions of workload in the literature. Definitions often account for time and task and depend on a variety of factors that influence each other. From an institutional viewpoint, these factors include the type of

institution (public or private, two-year or four-year, technical or community); policies and procedures that guide institutional practices (number of courses taught, learner enrollment, level of instruction [undergraduate or graduate], type of class [Web-based, hybrid, or online]); the instructor's position ranking within an institution (faculty member, teaching academic staff member, part-time or adjunct instructor); infrastructure support (technology acquisition, technical assistance, professional development); and instructor union affiliation.

Institutions of higher education tend to account for workload using metric systems that vary from classroom credit hours to weighted teaching units. Classroom credit hours are learner-instructor classroom contact hours. Weighted teaching units are equivalent to the amount of workload credit an instructor earns for teaching (Ehrlich, 2003). Research-based institutions divide the workload among teaching, research, and service obligations. Other institutions, such as community colleges, technical schools, and two-year colleges, place more value on the teaching and service responsibilities of the academic workload and less or none on research.

The metric systems used by higher education institutions may be a good fit for brick-and-mortar settings in which, for example, an instructor who is teaching a three-credit undergraduate lecture course has contact with learners for three 50-minute periods per week. When the same class is taught online, however, contact hours become difficult to determine; and time spent in an online class per week does not adequately represent instructional responsibilities (Mupinga & Maughan, 2008).

A recurring theme in the online education literature is that online teaching demands more work and effort than traditional face-to-face teaching (Conceição, 2006; DiBiase & Rademacher, 2005; DiSalvio, 2007; Euben, 2003). Yet there are different ways of looking at this. One way is to consider the level of instructor experience. Inexperienced instructors are more likely to spend more time and be less efficient when they first start teaching online. Another way is to compare the design components and strategies instructors use. Most frequently, online instructors' perception of having more work than they would with face-to-face teaching stems from their inability to prioritize and manage workload. Thus the issue is how institutional definition and recognition of workload affect the online instructor. The challenge for institutions is to foster equitable workload practices through their policies and procedures.

Program Quality and Instructor Workload

From an institutional standpoint, program quality is essential in order to stay competitive in our uncertain economic times. Due to this uncertainty, institutions are converting many traditional programs to the online environment or are creating new ones. But the conversion or development of a new program is not a simple task; it requires time, effort, and innovation. It involves determining the appropriate conversion or new program procedures, revising or developing program competencies, creating a plan for designing or redesigning the course, developing online course materials, and implementing the curriculum (Carroll-Barefield, Smith, Prince, & Campbell, 2005). Although these tasks appear to be strictly administrative, they require instructor involvement and additional workload responsibilities, particularly at the planning and implementation phases. This extra involvement and work can increase instructor workload, but also help ensure program quality.

Some of the reasons for instructors' being involved in the process of converting a program for online education include their connection to the existing program, the necessity of curriculum adjustments, the need for instructors to establish a sense of presence, and the institution's use of a systems approach to transition the program to the new environment. Instructor involvement is key. The institution should provide instructors with administrative, monetary, and technical assistance as the starting point for embarking on this online venture.

As for designing new programs, instructor involvement begins with curriculum development at the departmental level. It then continues with the creation of the online education system (including such components as registration, design, learner support, and so on) and with forging connections with other units in the institution.

Once the converted or new programs are ready to launch, measures to control for program quality should be in place. To achieve quality control, all involved (from administrators to instructors) should be part of the evaluation process. Ongoing assessment strategies might include preprogram surveys, midprogram evaluations, seeking continuous learner feedback, postprogram surveys, and alumni impact evaluation (conducted one or two years following learners' completion of the program).

INSTRUCTIONAL ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

When we refer to instructional issues, we refer to instructional questions, situations, or events relating to institutional infrastructure, design, time allocation, and successful teaching that can affect instructor workload. These instructional issues are always present, although we may not be aware of them. Through awareness, these issues become visible. Instructional issues present challenges that can be resolved through the use of institutional policies or instructional strategies. Table 1.2 shows four examples of instructional issues and challenges related to online teaching workload in higher education.

Table 1.2

Instructional Issues and Challenges in Online Teaching

Issue	Challenge
1. What kind of institutional infrastructure do online instructors need to function in the online environment?	1. Effective online instruction requires institutional support and reasonable policies concerning instructor workload.
2. What makes the online environment different, and how can instructors understand this difference?	2. Online teaching is different from face-to-face teaching and requires a new way of thinking for designing and delivering instruction. Instructors must be able to make the online environment feel real by creating a sense of presence through strategies, while at the same time being mindful of workload.
3. How can instructors allocate their time effectively when teaching online?	3. Teaching online demands organization, task management, and prioritization to effectively balance the workload.
4. How do instructors manage online teaching, balance their workload, and maintain quality of life?	4. With a sound institutional infrastructure, effective design approaches, efficient time allocation, and useful strategies, instructors can successfully balance their workload.

Institutional Infrastructure

There are many instructors who are intimidated by online teaching, and studies of instructor workload have found a number of factors that limit instructor participation in online teaching. These factors can be grouped into five categories: lack of monetary support, lack of rewards, lack of infrastructure support, bias against teaching online, and concerns about quality (O'Quinn & Corry, 2002; Thompson, 2004; Zuckweiler, Schniederjans, & Ball, 2004).

Lack of monetary support is evident in an institution's reluctance to provide stipends, salary increases, merit pay, royalties for copyright materials, and reimbursement for expenses. Deficiencies in promotion and tenure, release time, recognition, and professional prestige indicate the lack of rewards. Weak infrastructure support is demonstrated by inadequate technology and technical assistance, clerical staff, and professional development training, and by minimal encouragement from departmental colleagues (O'Quinn & Corry, 2002).

For some instructors, teaching online is like having a new persona; they think they will lose control over their classroom, that they will have to teach in an uncomfortable setting, and that their instructor role will change considerably. In addition, they think that working in a collaborative team environment will be an unpleasant experience. Course quality and the quality of learners who are participating in the courses are also concerns of instructors who are reluctant to teach online (O'Quinn & Corry, 2002).

In addition to the five categories of factors, for some instructors adding online teaching to their workload can be a threat because of the perceived time commitment to new tasks (such as communicating over e-mail, responding to discussion boards, keeping electronic office hours, and so on), which would increase their workload and reduce productivity for research. Instructors are also reluctant to teach online because of the time they think it will take them to develop and deliver online courses. Class size is one more factor that inhibits instructors from participating in the online environment. As class size increases, class management can expand instructor workload (Zuckweiler, Schniederjans, & Ball, 2004).

Some of the concerns that inhibit instructors from teaching online are based on misperceptions of and inexperience with the online environment. It is not a matter of more or less work to teach online; rather, it is different work (Moore, 2000). As mentioned before, workload depends on a variety of factors that influence each other. Concerns about workload tend to lessen over time as instructors become more familiar with the online environment, become more experienced,

and work more efficiently. However, without a strong institutional infrastructure in place, these concerns are less likely to be resolved.

The issue is to have an institutional infrastructure that encompasses, for example, the administrative, monetary, and technical assistance instructors need to function in the online environment as well as reasonable policies on instructor workload. Depending on the institution (private or public), faculty governance, or union affiliations, the challenge is to create institutional policies that will specify the course of action for online instructor workload.

What Makes the Online Environment Different

When we enter new territory, we tend to use known approaches to accomplish tasks and familiarize ourselves with the new setting. It is human nature to use the same process when converting courses to the online environment. For example, instructors' first reaction is to take their existing course materials and transfer them to the Web-based environment. Simply transferring courses to the Web, however, is not the answer (Carroll-Barefield, Smith, Prince, & Campbell, 2005). This type of change requires a new frame of mind and way of thinking, feeling, and behaving. From an instructional standpoint, it involves planning, intention, and design in order to ensure effective learning outcomes and meet quality standards (Lehman & Conceição, 2010).

There is a decided difference between the face-to-face and online environments. In the face-to-face environment, we can clearly see our learners, hear their voices, and touch concrete objects within the walls of the classroom. Because of this closeness, we are able to use our senses to have eye contact, hear voice nuance, read body language, move around the room, and pick up objects to demonstrate course concepts. Conversely, the online environment is elusive. We are unable to see or hear our learners, unless we incorporate specific technologies. We have to think carefully about how we can relate to the learners, create a sense of closeness, and explicitly describe our actions.

For instructors to recognize these differences, they need to understand the "big picture" of online education. Imagine an online course as part of a subsystem (program) within a large system (university). The large system includes many components, such as registration, learner services, technical assistance, and instructional design support. The subsystem includes the curriculum, instructors, and learners. Then there is the online course, with a syllabus, readings, course materials, assessments, and so on. All of these elements are tangible.

We can see, hear, or touch them . . . but in the online environment they are virtual. For learners to feel the virtual as real, the instructor must create a sense of presence.

The concept of presence in the online environment is not easy to understand. It involves perceptual presence, "the sensory experience of 'being there' and 'being together' [with others] in the online environment. It involves the recognition of the online environment and actions in response to this environment. Through the perceptual process, which involves thought, emotion, and behavior, individuals interact with information and others and feel as though they are together in this learning experience" (Lehman & Conceição, 2010, p. 130).

Integrating presence in online courses is a gradual process. It begins with planning. For new and existing online courses, planning starts well ahead of the delivery of the course. Presence should be intentionally incorporated into the design process by identifying the types of experience and ways in which we experience presence through activities and interactions. Planning, intention, and design require time, energy, and creativity and can influence instructor workload; however, workload is contingent upon the discipline, the course format, interactive strategies, the instructor role, technologies, and support.

The issue for instructors is to understand what makes the online environment different. The challenge is to think in a new way when designing and delivering instruction by developing instructional strategies that make the online environment feel real through the creation of a sense of presence—while at the same time being mindful of their workload.

Allocation of Time for Online Design and Delivery

For online instructors, time for designing and delivering their courses is a major concern (Conceição, 2006; Dunlap, 2005; Wilson, 1998). This concern is related to the intense work that spans from the design to the delivery of the course. This length of engagement can even start before instruction, continue during the delivery of the course, and be complete when the course ends. This engagement requires depth during the delivery of the course; the process "involves the full use of one's ability, energy, or resources" (Conceição, 2006, p. 35).

If instructors are new to online teaching, this process may be even lengthier because they will need training in the use of technology and pedagogical approaches for online teaching. Time invested in the design of a course varies from situation to situation, but researchers nevertheless have tried to calculate

the time spent on the design and delivery portions of a given online course. For example, Wilson (1998) reports a mean of 152 hours spent per course. Her study included 35 participants from the disciplines of social science, the humanities, scientific or technical studies, and business. Participants were from large and regional universities, community colleges or technical schools, and correspondence programs.

Andersen and Avery (2008) conducted a study of 11 Web-based graduate nursing courses to determine the time required to teach, and they compared that finding to the time necessary for teaching similar courses in the face-to-face environment. Their study did not include predesign time. Findings indicate that instructors spent an average of 46.1 hours per credit per course. Out of these hours, 12% were spent preparing during the semester, whereas 52% were spent interacting with learners. According to the results of this study, there was no significant difference in the teaching hours spent per credit in a Web-based course versus those spent in a face-to-face course.

Studies by Visser (2000) and DiBiase (2000), comparing face-to-face and online courses, were reported in the same issue of the *American Journal of Distance Education.* Their studies had some similarities, but different results. Visser says that nearly twice as much time is needed to teach online in comparison to face-to-face. DiBiase, on the other hand, says that less time is needed per hour per learner in the online class compared to a face-to-face course. It is important to note that the courses these researchers examined were very different in terms of content, learner characteristics, institutional support, and technology tools used.

Comparisons between face-to-face and online courses can be misleading and must be cautiously conducted. As a baseline, instructor experience and institutional infrastructure should be considered. There are different types of variables that have an impact on the dynamics of online courses and influence instructor workload: behavioral, cognitive, and affective. The behavioral variable is observable and can be acted upon, and includes certain types of tasks, interactions between the instructor and learners, course expectations, and the length and depth of engagement. For example, we can write a list of tasks to accomplish while teaching online. We can interact with learners through the discussion board. We can set course expectations by being explicit in the syllabus. We can track time spent and instances of engagement in the online environment.

The cognitive variable is the effort related to the thought process for delivering the course (Conceição, 2006). Components of this variable might include, for example, staying engaged with learners in a discussion board conversation on a specific topic; making a mental effort to keep the class focused; involving learners in team brainstorming; and creating an illusion of presence through realism (close match between the real and the virtual world), immersion (illusion through virtual reality), involvement (interactive engagement with the learner and others), and suspension of disbelief (psychological "letting go" of reality) (Conceição, 2006; Lehman & Conceição, 2010).

The affective variable is the effort related to feelings that result from emotional presence in the online environment due to the lack of physical presence (Conceição, 2006). Emotional presence is "the ability to genuinely show feelings through words, symbols, and interactions with others in the online environment. In this process, learners are emotionally present when they connect with others in an authentic way during the online learning experience" (Lehman & Conceição, 2010, p. 130).

How instructors deal with the behavioral, cognitive, and affective variables during the design and delivery of an online course will have an impact on their workload. Instructors tend to think and say that online teaching is work-intensive. Is this a perception or a reality? The issue is how instructors allocate their time effectively when teaching online. The challenge for them is to identify strategies that can help them organize their courses, manage tasks, and prioritize time.

Online Teaching and Quality of Life

Online education is now a part of the higher education landscape and cannot be overlooked. It has had an impact on institutions, learners, and instructors, and institutions of higher education have to think about innovative ways to offer programs. Online education has helped learners both gain more access to learning and enjoy the convenience and flexibility of anywhere, anytime, any pace instruction. For instructors, it has provided new opportunities to challenge their intellect, develop new ideas, learn about and use new technologies, and reach new audiences (Betts, 1998).

In spite of these positive attributes of online education, a significant number of instructors avoid online teaching. Many of the reasons for resisting participation include insufficient institutional support or incentives, having to change their teaching mind-set, intensive work for course design and delivery, large class size,

learner characteristics, difficult working hours and a feeling as if they are on call all the time, and the time taken away from research productivity. These reasons are understandable and in any combination can affect instructors' quality of life.

According to Palloff and Pratt (2011), providing sufficient training and incentives is critical. Inadequate support and a lack of incentives mean that instructors will increase their workload and will not earn equitable compensation. Instructors' need to change their mind-set can result in disturbing their usual ways of doing things and adding new tasks to their workload. Unfamiliarity with the online environment can entail intensive work for course design and delivery, particularly in the early stages, and large-size online classes without adequate support can double instructors' workload by requiring them to maintain ongoing communication with learners. The level of learners in regard to their undergraduate or graduate status, background experience, special needs, and so on can also increase workload, as instructors seek to provide the extra support learners need during the delivery of the course.

Often instructors feel that it is difficult to establish a set time to check on the status of a course and communicate with learners. As a result, they think they are always on call and constantly monitoring, making it challenging to find any free time for their personal life. Further, instructors in research-based universities are more likely to avoid teaching online because it takes time away from their research. If they assume online teaching responsibilities, they are at risk of reducing their research productivity (Zuckweiler, Schniederjans, & Ball, 2004).

The issue at hand is how instructors manage online teaching, balance their workload, and maintain their quality of life. With a sound institutional infrastructure, effective design approaches, efficient allocation of time, and useful strategies, instructors can successfully balance their workload.

OUR STUDY ON INSTRUCTOR WORKLOAD WHEN TEACHING ONLINE

As a preparation for writing this book, we felt that we needed to gain insights from instructors who teach in the online environment. We decided to conduct a study to investigate what strategies instructors in institutions of higher education use to balance their workload when teaching online. Using purposeful sampling we asked instructors working at two- and four-year institutions—and who had taught at least one course totally online—to participate in our study. We sent out

messages via instructor listservs and personal e-mail correspondence to instructors others had recommended. We then conducted an online survey of 38 participants and interviewed 14 instructors from a variety of roles and institutional settings. Our survey and interview protocols were based on our framework for designing instruction with a sense of presence, which we will discuss further in Chapter Three (Lehman & Conceição, 2010).

We looked at the survey responses and in-depth interviews to explore emerging themes related to strategies instructors use to balance their workload when teaching online. To ensure that the results of our study were trustworthy, we worked together to examine these themes and had extensive discussions of the findings through debriefing. In order to minimize the influence of our judgment over the study, we used a confirmability audit to verify the information with some of the participants we interviewed. We also peer-reviewed the interview transcripts to determine if the information supported our conclusions.

Our study findings provided us with practical insights from new and experienced instructors from the disciplines of education, health care, natural science, computer science, business, and the humanities. We asked survey participants to base their answers on one online course that they had taught. Out of 38 participants, 47% selected an undergraduate course, whereas 53% selected a graduate course. Courses varied in duration from 4 weeks (5%), 8 weeks (5%), 15 or 16 weeks (84%), and other (6%). Enrollment varied from 10 to 100 individuals in a course. Study participants' experiences teaching online ranged from teaching the course once (32%), twice (18%), three times (16%), to more than four times (34%). More comprehensive details about study findings can be found elsewhere (Conceição & Lehman, 2010).

Findings revealed four major types of strategies that instructors used to help balance workload when teaching online: design strategies, support strategies, teaching strategies, and time allocation strategies. *Design strategies* are tasks completed before the online course begins and during the delivery of the course. *Support strategies* are dependent on the instructor's level of experience in online teaching, the type of course taught, and learners' needs, and include one-on-one support, peer support, institutional support, and external support.

Teaching strategies encompass administrative, facilitative, and evaluative tasks carried out during the delivery of the course. *Time allocation strategies* are a major concern for instructors who teach online because they depend on the course discipline, the support received, course enrollment, and the technology

used. To manage their time, instructors need to be organized, disciplined, able to distinguish between work and personal life, and yet flexible.

SUMMARY

Online learning in higher education is growing at a rapid pace and brings both benefits and limitations. The benefits have an impact on institutional growth, whereas the limitations affect instructional workload. With this growth, higher education institutions experience issues and challenges related to shifting market demands, the institutional perspective on instructor workload, institutional definition and recognition of workload, and program quality and instructor workload. At the same time that institutions benefit from this growth, they must consider and address the instructional issues and challenges associated with such expansion, which can have an impact on institutional infrastructure, differences in the online environment, time allocation for online design and delivery, and online teaching and quality of life.

In Chapter Two we will share instructor stories for balancing workload from some of the participants in our study, who work in different teaching positions. In Chapter Three we will explain how to distinguish among the types of necessary course tasks and how they can be accomplished within a design framework. In Chapter Four we will provide three examples of how to manage tasks and prioritize time for online courses. In Chapter Five we will address workload strategies in detail, based on our study findings and our own experience. We will end the book with final thoughts and practical implications for balancing workload.