

Pepperdine University
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

THE PATH TO GRADUATION: A MODEL INTERACTIVE WEB SITE DESIGN
SUPPORTING DOCTORAL STUDENTS

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

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within the same constructs as banking and narrative education. The pedagogical model is more of a passive way of obtaining knowledge, which Knowles et al. (2005) state is, “leaving the learner only a submissive role of following a teacher’s instruction” (p. 62). The learner has little input. Pedagogy is teacher centered and teacher directed.

Knowles et al. (2005) identified six assumptions about adult learning that are different from those of the pedagogical model: (a) the need to know, (b) learners’ self-concept, (c) the role of the learners’ experience, (d) readiness to learn, (e) orientation to learning, and (f) motivation. Andragogy seeks to include the adult learner’s experiences, interests, and motives in the learning process. The researcher implemented the Andragogical model in the development of the dissertation support Web site to satisfy doctoral students’ interests and to meet unmet social needs. Andragogy is student centered, student directed, and operates within the learning paradigm. The learning paradigm focuses on the learner and learning outcomes. It is imperative that doctoral students’ voices and opinions are sought after and implemented to develop a worthwhile, user-friendly support site that promotes social integration into the dominant culture.

The researcher sought input in designing the Web site prior to launching it. When working with adult learners, it is best to involve the learners in the process so their interests and needs are met. There are inherent differences between the pedagogical model of learning and the Andragogical model of learning. Knowles et al. (2005) offers an Andragogical process model for learning. Table 5 shows Knowles Process Elements of Andragogy juxtaposed to the pedagogical model of learning.

The early stages of the relationship are most important as the mentor actively considers the consequences of serving in a mentor role. During this phase, the mentor and protégés find common ground and dispel unrealistic expectations and ideals. It is during this early phase both mentor and protégés develop an informal relationship. Luecke (2004) states, “A good start is defined as an open-ended conversation in which mentor and protégé get to know each other, establish rapport, understand each other’s expectations, and identify a set of mutually agreed goals” (p. 106). Peddy (2001) states, “Create ground rules to support a productive relationship” (p. 208). Johnson and Ridley (2008) argue, “An excellent mentor sets clear and measurable expectations for protégés” (p. 35). In addition, timelines and personal and professional boundaries are set. Last, measures to protect confidentiality and privacy are put in place to insure the integrity of the relationship. Johnson and Ridley claim the mentor-protégé relationship hinges on this assumption: “What is disclosed in the relationship stays in the relationship” (p. 57). Any violation of confidentiality will cause damage to the relationship. Protégés in turn must be aware and understand the limits to confidentiality. Johnson and Ridley argue, “Wise mentors should discuss the limits of confidentiality early in their mentorship and make certain there is mutual understanding about the factors that might trigger a disclosure” (p. 57). Johnson and Ridley strongly encourage prospective mentors and protégés to hold themselves accountable for their action and impact on others. Johnson and Ridley claim, “Because no legislative or monitoring body serves to hold those who mentor accountable, good mentors must be constantly self-governing” (p. 104).

Matters of skills, matters of style and personality, and matters of beginning reiterate the importance of personal leadership, ethics, and displaying emotional

intelligence. Robbins and Judge (2007) define emotional intelligence as, “the ability to detect and manage emotional cues and information” (p. 116). In addition, exhibiting internal locus of control, using self as instrument, being self-reflective, and conflict resolution skills are highly necessary when cultivating the new professional and personal relationship. Furthermore, practicing effective communication skills such as four-dimensional listening and active listening are essential when building and sustaining relationships. Caesar and Caesar (2006) describe four-dimensional listening as active listening; it involves feeling, thinking, and understanding. Four-dimensional listening requires one to “do our best to really hear what the person is saying and to give some kind of tangible feedback that we understood what he or she was saying or trying to say” (p. 97). The listener is challenged to listen for what is said, what is not said, for what was said in the past, and anticipate what might be said. Caesar and Caesar affirm four-dimensional listening is the formula for empathy. According to Caesar and Caesar, “When a person is speaking, we first give tangible evidence that we are listening by looking at him or her. It does mean being attentive to the person’s words and feelings” (p. 97). Johnson and Ridley (2008) claim listening is more than hearing. As with four-dimensional listening, Johnson and Ridley state listening is active attention on two levels of communication: (a) the overt message—concrete meaning of the words spoken, and (b) the covert message—the subtle cues or implied meanings. Both the overt and covert messages are equally important. Johnson and Ridley claim, “It is essential that you deliberately work at “hearing” your protégés on both levels” (p. 52). By listening actively, mentors can discern incongruence between the protégés overt and covert message. Oftentimes, protégés will send mixed messages unintentionally when trying to

convey their real experiences. Active listening is complex and demanding, consisting of numerous microskills. Johnson and Ridley offer mentors useful tips when communicating with protégés:

- Use nonverbal responses such as smiling, nodding, and maintaining eye contact;
- Use verbal prompts to stimulate dialog and probe for understanding;
- Do not interrupt by using problem-based listening, narrative listening, or autobiographical listening;
- Ask for clarity; and
- Accurately reflect what protégés communicate (p. 53).

Johnson and Ridley (2008) define mentoring and mentorship as developmental relationships. The authors claim, “Mentoring relationships are dynamic, reciprocal personal relationships in which a more experienced person (mentor) acts as a guide, role model, teacher, and sponsor of a less experienced person (protégés)” (p. xi). According to Luecke (2004), “Mentoring, then, is the offering of advice, information, or guidance by a person with useful experience, skills, or expertise for another individual’s personal and professional development” (p. 76). A mentoring relationship is interdependent. Caesar and Caesar (2006) declare, “Interdependence is the foundation for relationships without resentment, where both ‘get’ more than they give” (p. 93). Johnson and Ridley claim, “Implicit attitudes and explicit behavior communicate more to the protégé than any lecture the mentor might offer” (p. 45). A mentor publicly advocates for protégés and provides protection. Strong mentors help protégés avoid social isolation (Tinto, 1985, 1993). Simmons (2008) states, “Before you start any new project, you should consult a

professional who has successfully achieved that for which you are striving. Never work alone! Isolation is harmful” (p. 21). Successful mentors exchange trade secrets and insider knowledge about the unwritten rules of the culture (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Robbins & Judge, 2007; Schein, 2004). It is important for mentors to have informal and formal periods of socialization with their protégés. It is during this shared time critical implicit and explicit information is shared. According to Johnson and Ridley, “When mentors socialize with their protégés, they provide crucial insider information about the organization or the profession, convey the implicit values and subtle skills that cumulatively make one a professional” (p. 35). Luecke declares, “Mentoring aims to support individual development through both career and psychosocial functions” (p. 76). Peddy (2001) states, “Mentors teach you the unspoken rules of an organization: how to dress, what to say, how to get projects approved, insider information that can make or break a career” (p. 30). Simmons (2008) claims:

I believe that one of the essential keys to your success has everything to do with the mentor that you choose. You will never move beyond the people with whom you are connected. If you really want to grow in all areas of your life, find a worthy mentor. (p. 82)

Successful mentors are adept at transferring knowledge about the culture of the workplace through storytelling. Johnson and Ridley (2008) claim, “To narrate effectively, mentors must be intentional, observant, and caring” (p. 37).

Intentional mentors provide high-visibility exposure and access to diverse assignments with a high level of responsibility and a sophisticated network of leaders to build a mentoring constellation. Johnson and Ridley (2008) define a mentoring

constellation as a, “collection of supportive people who take an interest in their development” (p. 94). It is necessary for mentors to expose their protégés to a wide array of other potential advocates and supporters. Luecke (2004) claims, “As a mentor, you are one of those ‘other people,’ but your support alone is insufficient” (p. 105). “A single mentor does not have all the answers, nor access to all learning opportunities” (p. 105). In order to broaden the protégés experiences and further advance their career options they must be encouraged to build relationships with others, outside of their mentor. Luecke adds, “a single relationship will not expand a protégés career” (p. 128). Furthermore, a larger selection of mentors will include new ideas that challenge the status quo. An intentional mentor provides access to formal and informal domains to allow protégés to meet and be exposed to a wide range of people on various levels within the organization. A mentoring constellation or mentoring network can also help protégés create alliances and build relationships in different units of an organization and at different levels. Luecke purports, “Your protégés need support from many people. Part of your job as a wise and resourceful guide is to establish a broad foundation of support for the protégés within the organization and with key external stakeholders” (p. 105). Last, Luecke claims, “A network of mentors provides continual support and learning” (p. 128). Caesar and Caesar (2006) claim, “Happy High Achievers have key relationships that give them energy, especially with stakeholders” (p. 93). According to Caesar and Caesar, “Stakeholders are those people who have interest in and influence over your success or failure to be a Happy High Achiever” (p. 93). Peddy (2001) argues, “Over-dependence on one mentor can be deadly” (p. 56). There are ways to lessen dependency: (a) ensure protégés takes responsibility for their learning plans and goals; review plan and make suggestions; (b)

instead of offering answers, ask probing questions; (c) listen actively; and (d) avoid narrative-based, problem-based, and autobiographical listening (Luecke, 2004). This constellation of supportive career helpers enriches the protégés' experiences and widens their networking scope. These relationships can take the form of peer-to-peer mentoring, group mentoring, or e-mentoring (Johnson & Ridley, 2008).

Intentional and mindful mentors primarily welcome growth and change. Johnson and Ridley (2008) claim, "By their nature, mentorships are developmental relationships, focused on the transition of the protégé from a neophyte to full member of a profession" (p. 147). This relationship is best formed informally where both the mentor and protégé self-select each other. The key to a successful mentoring relationship is to find a right match—a good fit. Mentors should seek out attributes and look for like qualities. Peddy (2001) states, "Mentors carefully consider the match. Mentors must be selective in their choice of protégés" (p. 3). They must be careful only to embark on mentorships with those who match them well, as both brands and reputations will inherently become intertwined. Johnson and Ridley declare, "When a mentor fails at the task of selectivity and he or she is poorly matched, the mentor diminishes his or her own enjoyment of the mentoring experience" (p. 3). Johnson and Ridley suggest the following when selecting a prospective protégés:

1. Consider your workload and the maximum number of protégés you are willing to mentor successfully.
2. Observe the protégés; hold informal talks to discern career path, intentions, and motives.
3. Seek protégés who share similar interests and have similar career aspirations.

4. Consider your own motivation for mentoring. (p. 5)

Mindful mentors are also authentic, transparent, and congruent. How they see themselves is consistent with who they really are. Johnson and Ridley (2008) found congruent mentors articulate awareness of their limitations. The premise of the relationship is to cultivate, produce, groom, and support. Johnson and Ridley claim, “If the protégé does not change, mature, and ultimately require less formal mentoring, something is drastically wrong” (p. 96). Johnson and Ridley assert, “The goal is to develop protégés to maximize their potential” (p. 111).

Johnson and Ridley (2008) claim, “Mindfulness is a crucial ingredient for effective and ethical functioning as a mentor” (p. 103). Mindfulness requires a mentor to self-reflect constantly, and to be aware of his or her impact on self and others (Senge, 1991). Johnson and Ridley (2008) state, “Mindful mentors take time to become reacquainted with their own feelings, needs, wishes and fears” (p. 103). To be a mindful mentor requires a “high level of self-awareness and internal locus of control” (p. 103). According to Johnson and Ridley, self-awareness “is necessary to successfully navigate powerful yet delicate relationships with protégés” (p. 103). Robbins and Judge (2007) define locus of control as the degree to which people believe they are the masters of their own fate. According to Robbins and Judge, “Internals are individuals who believe that they control what happens to them” (p. 37). Caesar and Caesar (2006) claim people with internal locus of control speak the language of creators—for example, I, me, and mine. Internal loci of control individuals accept responsibility for their actions and outcomes and use their inner guide. High external loci of control individuals speak the language of victims and use pronouns to blame others for their actions and outcomes. Externals

believe fate, luck, magic, and other external forces control and dictate their life's choices. Robbins and Judge (2007) assert, "Externals are individuals who believe that what happens to them is controlled by outside forces, such as luck or chance" (p. 37). Robbins and Judge state, "Locus of control is an indicator of core self-evaluation" (p. 37) used to gauge whether people think they have control over their lives. Those who think otherwise lack confidence in self.

According to Johnson and Ridley (2008), "Mentors should be competent in two areas: (a) their profession, and (b) how to be competent as mentors" (p. 1). Not everyone can be a mentor. A suggestion for prospective mentors is to take an honest evaluation of their motives for considering mentoring. Oftentimes, holding a position or title is equated with being a good leader. This is not always true; being placed in a leadership role alone does not make one a leader. True leaders, as with intentional mentors, inspire, influence, and encourage followers and protégés to do more than they thought they could achieve. Johnson and Ridley claim, "Holding positional authority or supervisory status in an organization is often equated with competence to lead, supervise, and mentor" (p. 113). The ability to mentor "is not always true" (p. 113). Faculty and mindful mentors must be forthright and tell the truth when discussing a protégé's area of need and improvement even though it may be a difficult conversation. Tinto (1993) states, "We should also be willing to recognize that not every faculty and staff member should be involved with student retention" (p. 175) or mentoring. Tinto declares, "The most obvious fallacy in this regard is the notion that all faculty can and should serve as student advisors" (p. 175). Such is the case with mentoring. Johnson and Ridley argue, "Some people who try their hand at mentoring lack the technical or relational capabilities required for success" (p.

113). Although some faculty members may be more seasoned or hold a leadership role within the department, this alone does not make them great mentors. Tinto (1993) asserts, “The regrettable and unavoidable fact is that some faculty are much better than others in advising students and that faculty and students might both be better served by not asking all faculty to act as student advisors” (p. 175). Johnson and Ridley encourage mindful mentors to “engage in self-analysis regarding competence and preparedness to develop a substantial relationship” (p. 113).

Johnson and Ridley’s (2008) text, *The Elements of Mentoring*, answers the question: What do excellent mentors do? Peddy (2001) asserts, “A mentor is a teacher, coach, sponsor, counselor, advisor—to a group of one” (p. 30). Johnson and Ridley contest, “Effective mentors are engaged in the professional landscape they claim as their own. Mindful mentors assume leadership roles in their field and are frequently in contact with colleagues and collaborators” (p. 109). Peddy (2001) claims a mentor’s “interest is in you as an individual” (p. 30). Excellent mentors play to their strengths (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001). Buckingham and Clifton (2001), authors of *Now, Discover Your Strengths*, describe strength as, “a near perfect performance—performance that is both excellent and fulfilling” (p. 131). Buckingham and Clifton make a clear distinction, as do Johnson and Ridley, between knowledge and skills, “Knowledge consists of facts and lessons learned and skills are the steps of an activity” (p. 29). Mentors improve knowledge, skills, and attitudes of their protégés (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001; Johnson & Ridley, 2008; Knowles et al., 2005; Robbins & Judge, 2007). Johnson and Ridley assert, “Mentoring entails the development of protégés to maximize their potential” (p. 111).

Johnson and Ridley (2008) also shared characteristics of what mentors don't do? First, mentorship is not meant for cloning. Johnson and Ridley argue, "Cloning entails the creation of protégés to be replicas of the mentors" (p. 111). Mentors accept protégés as they are; mindful mentors hone in on their personal strengths, help protégés to maximize their talents and strengths daily, and manage their weaknesses (Caesar & Caesar, 2006; Johnson & Ridley, 2008). Mentors are accessible, open, warm, and inviting (Peddy, 2001). Mentors do not manipulate or treat their protégés as objects. Protégés are treated with integrity and respect; they are not used for self-gain or benefit. Mentors do not exploit protégés. Outstanding mentors simply do not compete with or try to outshine their protégés. Mindful mentors make new information privy to protégés and refrain from withholding critical insider information. Last, when mindful mentors experience pushback or conflict, they do not punish their protégés. Mentors engage in matters of restoration to rebuild relationships and establish a positive rapport with their protégés. Common conflicts mentors encounter are: (a) dealing with irrational thinking, (b) dispute, (c) self-correct, (d) positive talk, (e) separate worth from performance, and (f) display fallibility and failure. Texts such as Benjamin's (2008) *Perfect Phrases for Dealing With Difficult People* and Ury's (1991) *Getting to Yes* are two tools mentors can use to resolve conflict.

The main idea in a healthy mentoring relationship is to plan for change, growth, and endings. Bridges' (1978) text, *Managing Transitions*, deals with transitions and argues for not only acknowledging endings, but also being aware of each phase of the transition: the ending, the middle, and the new beginning. Transitions within the relationship will occur—acknowledge them as such and establish a working plan for

handling difficult conversations, growth spurts, and creative tension (Senge, 1991). Management professor Kathy Kram's work (as cited in Johnson & Ridley, 2008) identified four common phases of mentorship: (a) initiation, (b) cultivation, (c) separation, and (d) redefinition.

Initiation

Initiation is marked by excitement, possibility, and new beginnings. The initiation phase usually lasts anywhere from 6 to 12 months. During this time, the protégés and mentor get to know each other, set boundaries, clearly articulate expectations and shared goals, and co-create a timeline for reaching those goals. Before, during, and toward the end of the mentorship, mentor and protégés evaluate the relationship, mentoring outcomes, and personal and professional goals. In addition, Peddy (2001) asserts, "Mentoring relationships need to be mutually satisfying" (p. 196).

Cultivation

Cultivation lasts from 2 to 5 years. It is during this phase that intensive teaching, coaching, supporting, and advocating takes place. During the cultivation phase, Johnson and Ridley (2008) state, the mentor also "provides psychosocial functions such as support, encouragement, and friendship" (p. 96). Cultivation, according to Kram (as cited in Johnson & Ridley, 2008), "is where the protégés demonstrate competence and confidence, they begin to establish their own personal professional identity, and increase autonomy and responsibility" (p. 138).

Separation

Johnson and Ridley (2008) argue, "Mindful mentors understand the importance of preparing for meaningful closure of the mentorship" (p. 146). Johnson and Ridley state,

“Separation is the phase of the mentorship characterized by leave taking and distancing” (p. 148). Separation can occur both mentally and physically. Mental separation occurs when either the protégés or mentor begins to pull away or there is a strain in the relationship. This type of separation is often felt before it is verbally addressed. It is common for both the mentor and protégés to experience turmoil, anxiety, loss, and general disruption during the transitions and separation phase. Mentors can passively engage in self-defeating behaviors such as paralysis, distancing, and appeasement when the pangs of separation are felt. Separation may take numerous forms such as a promotion within the same organization, a transfer, or a new position with another organization. The separation phase requires both parties to accept endings and celebrate the new arrival of a new relationship, perhaps one as colleagues. Johnson and Ridley contend, “The most important thing is for the mentor to welcome change” (p. 148).

Redefinition

According to Johnson and Ridley (2008), “Redefinition is the final phase of the mentorship development” (p. 149). Redefinition entails both welcoming change and saying goodbye. In this phase of the mentorship, both mentor and protégés formally acknowledge the end of the mentorship to gain closure and to begin to redefine their new relationship. Johnson and Ridley claim, “They come to celebrate protégés transition and leave-taking” (p. 146). Last, “Redefinition is marked by less intense interactions and the parties tend to experience more collegiality” (p. 97). Although the structure and dynamics of the relationships change, typically at the end of the mentorship there remains generative concern for the welfare of the protégés. Johnson and Ridley state, “Mentoring is an act of generativity—a process of brining into existence and passing on a

professional legacy” (p. xi).

Peddy’s (2001) *The Art of Mentoring* is yet another text that deals with effective mentoring. According to Peddy, “Mentoring is more than a workshop, more than a program, more than this year’s initiative. It’s an ongoing commitment for every business, large or small, that hopes to survive” (p. 255). Peddy argues, “Organizations need to embrace the policies and practices that encourage and reward mentoring” (p. 256).

Peddy (2001) first makes a clear distinction between formal and informal mentoring. A formal mentoring relationship is marked by a clear process of accountability which includes: sharing of learning goals; checking in from time to time; updating the mentor on the protégés’ progress; and/or seeking advice. According to Peddy, these sorts of “relationships come from a connection that develops naturally between two people” (p. 200). In an informal relationship, there are no clear learning goals or regular scheduled times to meet. In an informal relationship, the expectations are not clear and the outcomes are ambiguous. Peddy asserts, “There’s no cookbook for mentoring, but there is a process that works” (p. 26). Great mentors plan for growth, change, and endings. In essence, mentors lead, follow, and get out of the way.

In leading, mentors focus on providing wisdom, judgment, and offering their learned experiences and perspectives. Johnson and Ridley (2008) state mentors lead by example “the life to which the young person aspires” (p. 170). Peddy (2001) provides a strategy for building trust: (a) look for common ground; (b) reveal something about yourself; tell your story first; and (c) ask broad open-ended nonloaded questions.

Peddy’s (2001) second phase in mentoring encompasses following. Following entails a gradual shifting in which the protégé begins using the mentor as a sounding

board and reliable support system. The mentor begins to lead from the inside out (Cashman, 1998) and becomes transparent through storytelling. Gradually, as the relationship grows the mentor shares helpful advice, insights, and life lessons. The mentor reveals himself or herself as vulnerable through stories of courage, choice, challenges, and change (Peddy, 2001).

Peddy's (2001) final phase of mentoring is getting out of the way. Getting out of the way, much as with Johnson and Ridley's redefinition phase, "represents a challenge for both mentor and [protégé]" (p. 176). Getting out of the way involves the mentor's acknowledgment and acceptance of each protégé's unique gifts and strengths and their "right not to take advice" (p. 27). This phase marks a distinct change in the relationship. Getting out of the way means being able to see the protégé as whole, capable, and complete. Last, according to Peddy, "Getting out of the way also means preparing for endings and understanding that all mentoring relationships end at some point" (p. 27). Getting out of the way entails planning for and celebrating transitions, change, and separation. Peddy challenges mentors not to become passive and acknowledge the shift or ending of the relationship. This can occur by simply saying, "You are my colleague now."

Summary

As a whole, this chapter reviewed the literature related to AI, Andragogy, education versus learning, curriculum planning, and Web site development. Chapter 2 concluded with an overview of Web 2.0 technologies, a clear, simple, and easy to use web design followed by the importance of mentoring. Knowledge of these points is critical when designing a program for adult learners. These elements combined formed

the basis for developing an interactive hi-tech Web site.

Chapter 3 begins with the nature and history of mixed methods and selection of the sequential explanatory design, including a plan for implementation, priority, and integration of data as well as drawbacks and limitations to the design. Chapter 3 continues with the purpose statement, determination of the study, and restatement of the research questions. Chapter 3 outlines a series of request and approvals followed by the development of the survey, and multiple content and instrument validation including: (a) criteria for selecting a panel of experts to review the instrument, (b) validity rating questionnaire, (c) criteria for changing questions and amending the instrument, and (d) an alignment instrument to ensure content validity. Chapter 3 continues with the population, sample procedures, survey development, and personalization of the study. Last, chapter 3 outlines the data collection plan, an overview of emotional intelligence and an ethical decision-making model to use in conjunction with IRB policies, procedures, and protocol. Chapter 3 concludes with an overview of the design plan, data analyses, and summary of the chapter.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Procedures

“To be practical in the largest sense of that term is to so live that we can touch the sublime on the one hand and turn every ideal into a living reality on the other.”

—Christian Larson (1911)

Nature of Mixed-Methods Research

The researcher selected mixed methods because it is the best model for this study. A mixed-methods approach is a process by which a researcher mixes two different methods. It involves collecting and analyzing both forms of data in a single study. Mixed methods have applications in many fields of research such as psychology, the behavioral sciences, and Creswell (2003) states, “human sciences as a distinct research approach” (p. 209). Although it is the least known research method, it has gained in popularity and led writers from around the world to develop procedures for mixed-methods strategies of inquiry and to shape procedures for research.

Creswell (2003) notes that three factors should be considered when selecting a design for a study: (a) the research problem, (b) the personal experiences of the researcher, and (c) the audience(s) for whom the report will be written. The study begins with a broad survey in order to generalize results to a population and then focuses, in the second phase, on qualitative, open-ended questions to collect detailed views from participants.

Creswell (2003) contends, “Qualitative findings will help to elaborate on or extend the quantitative results” (p. 222). Table 6 is a visual model outlining mixed-methods philosophical assumptions, methods, and practices as a researcher.

Table 6

Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed-Methods Approaches

Tend to or Typically	Mixed-Methods Approaches
Use these philosophical assumptions and employ these strategies	Pragmatic knowledge claims, sequential, concurrent, and transformative
Employ these methods	Both open-ended and closed-ended questions, both emerging and predetermined approaches, and both qualitative and quantitative data and analysis
Use these practices of research, as the researcher	Collects both quantitative and qualitative data Develops a rationale for mixing Integrates the data at different stages of inquiry Presents visual pictures of the procedures in the study Employs the practices of both qualitative and quantitative research

Note. From *Research Design Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (p. 19), J.W. Creswell, 2003, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Copyright 2003 by Sage. Reprinted with permission.

When determining which mixed methods to employ, the researcher will refer to Creswell's (2003) Decision Choices for Determining a Mixed Methods Strategy of Inquiry. Table 7 provides the researcher with a framework in which to operate when employing Mixed-Methods Strategies and a built-in data collection plan.

Table 7

Decision Choices for Determining a Mixed-Methods Strategy of Inquiry

Implementation	Priority	Integration	Theoretical Perspective
No Sequence Concurrent	Equal	At Data Collection	Explicit
Sequential-Qualitative First	Qualitative	At Data Analysis	Explicit
Sequential-Quantitative First	Quantitative	At Data interpretation; with some combination	Implicit

Note. From *Research Design Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (p. 211), by J.W. Creswell, 2003, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Copyright 2003 by Sage. Reprinted with permission.

When determining which appropriate mixed-methods strategy to use, the researcher considered one of the six proposed strategies as discussed by Creswell (2003). Each strategy has its strengths, weaknesses, and limitations. Furthermore, each mixed-method strategy details and discusses the four criteria—implementation, priority, integration, and theoretical perspective—for selecting an appropriate strategy of inquiry.

Sequential Explanatory Strategy

This approach is the most straightforward of the mixed-methods approaches (Creswell, 2003). It is characterized by collection and analysis of quantitative data followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data. The purpose of the sequential explanatory design is to use qualitative methods and results to explain and interpret the findings of the primarily quantitative study. One drawback for researchers is the amount of time involved for data collection. Figure 2 shows the movement from left to right from quantitative data collection and analysis to qualitative data collection and analysis and, last, interpretation of the entire analysis.

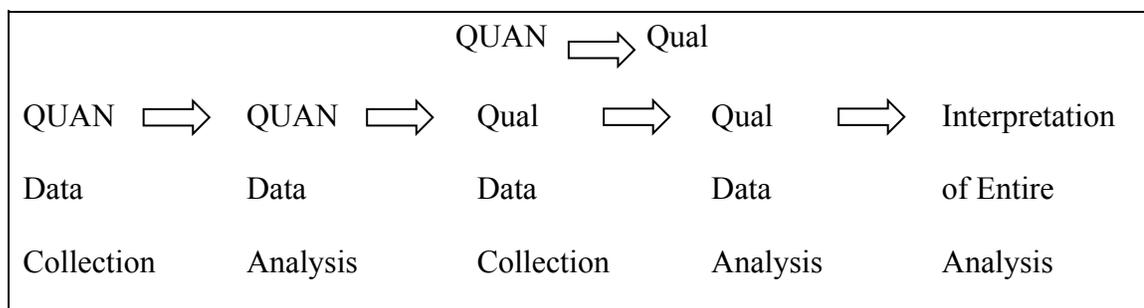


Figure 2. Sequential explanatory design. Qualitative and Quantitative are abbreviated as Quan and Qual in the above figure. From *Research Design Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, (p. 213), J.W. Creswell, 2003, Thousands Oaks, CA: Sage. Copyright 2003 by Sage. Reprinted with permission.

Phase 1 collected statistical data using a 5-point Likert Scale on the: (a) helpfulness of the current dissertation support Web site, and (b) perception of the current

dissertation support Web site services. In addition, the research offers (c) recommendations, and (d) implications for future enhancements that may point to the design of a model doctoral support Web site. The survey also includes open-ended questions.

Phase 2 looks at specific individual's recommendations for enhancements to the current Web site and their suggestions for a future Web 2.0 site. The researcher employed the interview protocol to conduct audiotaped semistructured Skype interviews. The projected dates, timeline, and activity schedule is displayed in Appendix A.

Implementation

The implementation moves from quantitative to qualitative in this two-phase study. The quantitative results are displayed using descriptive analyses and statistical narratives. Creswell (2003) states the qualitative data "results will be presented in terms of themes and sub-themes supported by student testimonials, audio, and quotations" (p. 223). The researcher collected the quantitative and qualitative data sequentially in two separate phases.

Priority

In this two-phase design, the quantitative data were collected and analyzed first. More weight was given to the quantitative aspect of the study.

Integration

Integration of the approaches occurred during data collection and interpretation of the entire analysis, which included both statistical analysis of Likert scale data and thematic analysis of qualitative data.

Drawbacks and Limitations to Design

Creswell (2003) claims, “The straightforward nature of the design is one of its main strengths. It is easy to implement because the steps fall into clear, separate stages” (p. 215). In addition, the sequential explanatory strategy is easy to describe and report findings. However, a weakness to the design includes the length of time required to collect data for the two phases.

Purpose Statement

This study seeks to assess 2nd-year doctoral students’ and dissertation students’ perceptions of the current GSEP dissertation support Web site, with implications for designing a model dissertation support Web site to help students (a) manage the process, (b) build connectedness, and (c) better support doctoral students through the entire doctoral process from orientation, through course work, development of their topic, and finalization of the complete practice study. The broader purpose of this two-phased, mixed-methods study is to assess the need for developing a model interactive Web site at Pepperdine University GSEP or other universities throughout the nation, which would support doctoral students through the dissertation phase at the departmental, individual, institutional, and relational level.

Restatement of Research Questions

1. What are 2nd-year doctoral students’ and dissertation students’, at Pepperdine University GSEP in the EDOL doctoral program, perceptions of the existing dissertation support Web site?
2. What do 2nd-year doctoral students and dissertation students, at Pepperdine University GSEP in the EDOL doctoral program, recommend as future enhancements to a dissertation support Web site?

3. What do 2nd-year doctoral students and dissertation students, at Pepperdine University GSEP in the EDOL doctoral program, recommend as a future model for a state-of-the-art dissertation support Web site?

Request Site Approval

The researcher engaged in a series of requests and approvals from the academic chairpersons of each program, the dean, and professors. A letter requesting site approval, permission to conduct the study at Pepperdine University GSEP, recruit participants using GSEP intranet, and permission to survey students in EDOL were sent to Dean Weber. The letter informed the dean of pertinent information such as the researcher's dissertation chairperson, committee members, purpose of the study, research questions, and data-collection plan. See Appendix B Site Approval.

Request Permission From Academic Chairpersons

Pending site approval from the dean, the researcher wrote a letter to the academic chairperson Dr. June Schmieder-Ramirez, director of EDOL. The letter requested permission and the best time to survey students, during the spring and summer term of 2011, in the respective program. Furthermore, a separate letter was written to the doctoral committee inquiring the best time for the survey to take place. See Appendix C Letter to Academic Chairpersons.

Pending approval from the dean and written permission from the academic chairperson, Christie Dailo, assistant director Leadership and Technology, sent an electronic e-mail invitation with the link to take the voluntary survey to all 2nd-year doctoral students and dissertation students in EDOL at the Irvine and West Los Angeles campuses. Students then had the opportunity to open the link and participate or simply

decline to participate in the study.

Survey Instrument Development

Phase 1 of the data collection collected both quantitative and qualitative data using an electronic online survey, created on SurveyMonkey.com. Survey Monkey is a Web site that allows researchers to collect, disseminate, and store compiled data. See Appendix D Online Survey Instrument.

The study begins with IRB approval and written approval from Dean Margaret Weber for Dailo to access students' e-mail addresses using GSEP intranet. The researcher provided Dailo, via e-mail, with the electronic link to Survey Monkey to forward to 2nd-year doctoral students. See Appendix E E-Mail Invitation to Participate in Study.

Content and Instrument Validity

The researcher took multiple steps to ensure content validity. First, the researcher replicated an alignment table used in Ghandi's (2009) study, which matches research questions with appropriate survey items and analytical techniques. See Appendix F Alignment Table. Second, the researcher asked a panel of judges to review the survey. Rosensitto (1999), who authored *Faculty Perceptions of the Need to Prepare Graduate Students to Teach*, replicated and extended Barnes's (1984) study, which set out to determine whether professors perceived a need to introduce, prepare, and teach graduate students how to teach at the college level. Rosensitto argued for more support for graduate students in their programs to prepare them for the realities of teaching at the college level, once the degree is conferred. Rosensitto (1999) stated, "The majority of graduate students, who are preparing for a life in academe, currently are not required to study instructional theory and methodology appropriate for use in higher education

settings” (p. xxvi).

In her study, *Faculty Perceptions of the Need to Prepare Graduate Students to Teach*, Rosensitto (1999) asked a panel of five independent judges to review items on her survey, to ensure content validity. According to Rosensitto, “This panel of judges verified the content validity of this portion of the survey” (p. 104). Rosensitto then developed criteria for selecting a panel of experts to review the survey instrument. The researcher’s panel of experts was selected according to Rosensitto’s criteria for selecting a panel of experts. See Appendix G Criteria for selecting a panel of experts:

1. All validating judges who were employed by universities possessed an earned academic doctoral degree, and those who were employed by community or junior colleges possessed an earned academic master’s degree.
2. At least one of the judges held a degree in each of the four academic discipline groups: Education, Psychology and Social Sciences Humanities, and the Arts and Sciences.
3. At least half of the validating judges on this panel were not known personally by the researcher. (p. 104)

With this in mind, the researcher sent a cover letter, see Appendix H Validity Questionnaire Cover Letter, asking each academic chairperson: Dr. Linda Purrington, Director of EDEL, and Dr. June Schmieder-Ramirez, Director of EDOL, to serve as validity judges. The letter explained the purpose of the task, and outlined expectations of expert panel members and the timeline in which to complete the instrument. In addition, the researcher enlisted the support of Jean Kang, IRB manager and manager of Dissertation Support Services and Web site, John Kim, director of Technology, and Dr.

Stephen Berra, senior Instructional Technology analyst, at Pepperdine University to serve as content experts. Furthermore, the researcher sought one recent graduate from one the EDOL doctoral programs to take the survey to ensure the accuracy of the information, ensure that it was free from bias, eliminate weaknesses, ensure the questions were well understood, and that participants could respond to each question without difficulty.

The purpose of allowing the content experts to evaluate the instrument allows the directors of each program, dissertation support manager, technology experts, former student, and the researcher an opportunity to add, delete, or modify the instrument. In addition, the external evaluation affords the researcher an opportunity to reconsider wording, questioning construction, and format of the instrument. Furthermore, content experts ensured the use of appropriate jargon and/or technical terms for each program to improve the effectiveness of the instrument.

Furthermore, Rosensitto (1999) wrote:

Members of the panel will be encouraged to make suggestions for improvement of format and wording. A packet of materials will be sent to the experts, including a cover letter, a copy of the research questions and related survey items, and a copy of the survey instrument. (p. 106)

A packet containing a cover letter and a request for additional information was sent to the expert panel. See Appendix I Expert Panel Résumé.

The third measure taken to ensure content validity was to model a validity-rating questionnaire after Little's (2010) study. Little's study, *A Comparative Study of the Effectiveness of Three Organizations That Help African American Women Get Elected Into Office at the Local, State, and Federal Levels*, examined how African American

women can ascend the political ladder. Little claims political leadership training programs are needed in order to get women elected in office. Three political leadership organizations were defined through six dimensions. Little found in order for political leadership training programs to work, the recruitment process must be expanded.

In her study, Little (2010) created a Validity Rating Questionnaire to organize better validity ratings and comments from the expert panel of judges to enhance the instrument. The researcher used Little's Validity Rating Questionnaire. The validity-rating questionnaire was included in the packet. See Appendix J Validity Rating Questionnaire.

Rosensitto (1999) also suggests using a criterion for changing the survey instrument. Rosensitto suggests if two or more of the validating judges suggest a change, then that change should be made. The researcher adhered to this criterion when receiving feedback from directors and the expert panel using the validity-rating questionnaire. The researcher made necessary changes and amendments to the instrument based on the recommendations and suggestions of the program directors as well as the experts before it was fully deployed.

Population

The population for this study includes all 2nd-year doctoral students and dissertation students enrolled at Pepperdine University GSEP in the EDOL doctoral program. Second-year doctoral students are defined as doctoral students who have completed at least 1 year of course work. Dissertation students are defined as students who have successfully completed all course work, met all program requirements, and passed their comprehensive examination. The size of the population includes numbers

from EDOL and was determined based on spring 2011 enrollment. Presently, there are 243 registered students in EDOL, 96 1st-year doctoral students, 54 2nd-year doctoral students, and 93 dissertation students. The total population size is 243 students.

Sample

In Phase 1, of the two-phase study, the researcher sampled 2nd-year doctoral students and dissertation students in the EDOL doctoral program at the Irvine and West Los Angeles campuses, during the spring and summer 2011 term, at Pepperdine University GSEP. The total sample size includes 2nd-year students who registered in EDOL 753.20 at the West Los Angeles campus, EDOL 753.25 GAP, and EDOL 753.40 Irvine cohort. These groups total 54 registered 2nd-year EDOL students. Dissertation students are enrolled in EDOL 791.22 to EDOL 791.72. The total of enrolled dissertation students was 93 in the EDOL program. The size of the target population was 147. The maximal number of respondents was 147. The sample size was the final number of people who agree to participate in the study and is reported in Chapter 4.

For Phase 2, the interview portion of this mixed-method study, 100% of all individuals who provided contact information at the end of the survey were contacted to set up Skype interviews. All contacts were interviewed if they agree to schedule an interview time and sign a separate letter of consent for interview. The maximal number for the interview portion of the study was 147. The total number of interviewees for Phase 2 of the study is reported in the results and findings of the study.

Sampling Procedures

The data from respondents were collected from the 2nd-year cohort and dissertation students in Irvine and West Los Angeles in the form of an online survey and

the interview protocol. The principal investigator recruited all eligible participants for this two-phase study. Phase 1 of the study consisted of an online survey that collected both quantitative and qualitative data. Phase 1 of the study was an open invitation to all eligible participants. The researcher employed convenience sampling of 2nd-year doctoral students and dissertation students in EDOL. Creswell (2007) states convenience sampling is a process in which those invited to participate in the study are simply those who are available to the researcher.

Phase 2, the interview portion of the study, consisted of a 20-minute audiotaped semistructured Skype interviews. The principal investigator contacted 100% of all participants who provided their contact information for a follow-up interview. When contacting participants, the researcher employed the use of a follow-up script. The researcher e-mailed a confirmation of the date and time of the scheduled Skype interview, semistructured interview questions, and a letter of consent for interview, within 24 hours of the follow-up contact. Participants were to read, sign, and return the signed letter of consent to be audiotaped via e-mail or a secure fax at least 24 hours prior to scheduled Skype interview. The total number of interviewees is reported in Chapter 4.

Phase 1 Data Collection

The data-collection plan consisted of two distinct phases, and moves from quantitative to qualitative. Phase 1 consisted of collecting quantitative data collected through SurveyMonkey.com and then analyzed using SPSS. This data are shown in the form of various charts and tables.

With IRB approval and written approval from Dean Weber, the researcher sent Dailo, assistant program director, Leadership and Tech Programs, the survey link to

forward to doctoral students. The researcher did not have access to students' e-mail addresses. Dailo then sent a mass e-mailing, with the link to take the voluntary survey on Survey Monkey, to all 2nd-year doctoral students and dissertation students who enrolled during the spring and summer 2011 term at Pepperdine University GSEP in EDOL at the Irvine and West Los Angeles campuses.

Participants were made aware that there were two phases to the study and even though they may have given their consent to participate in the online portion of the study, see Appendix K Electronic Letter of Consent, they were not obligated to participate in Phase 2, the interview portion of the study. Confidentiality and anonymity measures are outlined in the electronic letter of consent. Once participants provided their contact information on the survey, their responses became confidential not anonymous. Finally, the electronic letter of consent explains how risk(s) to participants in the study were minimized. The principal risk to the subject is the potential harm resulting from a breach of confidentiality.

Participants were first directed to the current dissertation support Web site and asked to peruse the site for 3 to 5 minutes. Participants followed the link provided to complete the electronic online survey hosted by Survey Monkey. If students agreed to participate in the study, they read and clicked "agree" on the electronic informed consent. If students did not click the appropriate box, for example "disagree," they were not be able to proceed with the survey and a disclaimer "Thank you very much" appeared as they exited the survey. After an electronic signature was accepted, participants were given the opportunity to complete the 20-minute electronic survey administered online through Survey Monkey.

An automated follow-up e-mail reminder and web link to complete the survey were sent to students who completed at least 1 year of course work, 1 week after Christie Dailo's initial e-mail. See Appendix L Follow-Up Recruitment E-Mail. The researcher followed up and provided the participants' further opportunities to participate in the study to clarify, explain, or expound on their responses to the open-ended question using various means of communication such as an audiotaped semistructured Skype interview, within 2 weeks. Once the data were collected and stored on Survey Monkey's hard drive, the results were stored on a portable flash drive.

The researcher gained additional data by collecting the enhancements, recommendations, and suggestions of doctoral students, which led to a design of a model dissertation support Web site. Approximate time to complete the online survey was 20 minutes. Participants may have chosen to complete the survey at any convenient time during a 2-week window.

Phase 2 Data Collection

Because of scheduling, close proximity of the end of the spring term, different program format such as the GAP, and programmatic traveling for example, EDOL national and international policy trip, the researcher took into account participants' availability. Therefore, the researcher conducted Skype interviews only. Phase 2 started in the spring 2011 term, but continued into the summer 2011 term to complete Skype interviews for all respondents.

The use of Skype speaks to the very nature of the type of Web 2.0 technology that may be modeled and integrated on a dissertation support Web site. The researcher attempted to accommodate as many respondents as possible before the end of the spring

term. Skype interviews enabled the researcher to conduct multiple follow-up interviews at any mutually convenient time for participants. Skype was used as a key communication tool to accommodate the sample population.

Phase 2 included collection of additional data through scheduled 20-minute audiotaped semistructured Skype interviews. If the participant answered no to the last survey item, the survey ended with an automated “thank you very much” response. Students had an opportunity to participate further in the study via semistructured Skype interview to collect additional data if they checked yes to the last item on the survey. The next screen allowed respondents to provide their name, e-mail, and/or phone number. Respondents must have completed two of the three fields in order to complete the survey. Only those who answered yes to the last survey item were contacted. Online data collection using codes instead of names ensured confidentiality of respondent’s personal information. Participant’s personal information such as their name, e-mail address, IP address, or phone number will be kept confidential and were not be used in the study. This information is merely collected to follow up with participants. The researcher’s next step was to contact participants who were willing to participate further in the study.

The researcher used a follow-up script to arrange tentative dates and times with willing participants. See Appendix M Follow-up Script. If participants agreed, dates and time were arranged for the interview. The interview protocol allowed participants to provide specific in-depth analyses, examples, stories, and experiences in more detail. The use of semistructured interview questions were used to extrapolate the fundamental assumptions and perceptions of doctoral students. The researcher e-mailed the semistructured interview questions, confirmation of Skype interview, within 24 hours of

follow-up phone call or e-mail correspondence. See Appendix N Semistructured Interview Questions.

Permission to adapt, copy, and distribute questions from Kouzes and Posner (2003) *The Leadership Challenge Workbook* was obtained from the author or publisher to stimulate dialogue. See Appendix O Permission to adapt, copy, and distribute material.

Permission to audiotape participants was obtained using a separate letter of consent, prior to the Skype interview. See Appendix P Letter of Consent for Interview. The informed consent required the signature of both the participant and the researcher. For Skype interviews, the principal investigator e-mailed a copy of the letter of consent to participants within 24 hours of follow-up communication. Participants were to read, sign, and return the letter of consent for interview via e-mail or a secure fax at least 24 hours prior to the Skype interview. The Researcher did not conduct the Skype interview if the letter of consent was not received at least 24 hours prior to the scheduled time. This time frame afforded the researcher an opportunity to cancel and possibly reschedule the interview at a later date.

Once received, the principal investigator signed the document, made a copy, and placed a copy in the appendices. See Appendix Q Copy of Letter of Consent for Interview. Prior to beginning the scheduled Skype interview, the principal investigator pressed record and then read verbatim the letter of consent to interview to each participant. Last, the researcher e-mailed a signed copy to the participant 1-week after the scheduled Skype interview.

Every aspect of the interview process was the same, including audiotaping. The purpose of audiotaping was to capture the nuances from the interview and to transcribe

the data. Audiotaping afforded the researcher a chance to capture intonation and interpret the data differently. It aids in creating a richer story that does not solely depend on quantitative data. Audiotaping allows the participant's voice to be added to the literature. All interviews and testimonials were audiotaped and converted to MP3 files by the researcher and saved on a flash drive. The principal investigator transcribed all Skype interviews. The researcher removed all identifying data, rendering data anonymous.

Emotional Intelligence

Goleman (1998), author of *Emotional Intelligence: Working With Emotional Intelligence*, says as one advances in an organization, emotional intelligence becomes more important than IQ. Those with high emotional intelligence and self-monitors tend to pay closer attention to the behaviors of others and are capable of conforming to new environments. Self-monitoring is the ability to show considerable adaptability in adjusting behavior to external factors. Self-monitors are emotionally intelligent.

Goleman (1998) states emotional intelligence refers to the capacity for “recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships” (p. 317). Goleman identifies five components of emotional intelligence: (a) self-awareness is knowing what one is feeling in the moment and understanding preferences; (b) self-regulation is the ability to handle one's emotions such that they are leveraged positively rather than being disruptive; (c) motivation is the drive to take initiative, improve, and overcome frustration and setbacks; (d) empathy is the ability to sense the feelings of others and being able to tune in to their state of mind in that moment; and (e) social skills are the ability to read social cues and interact with others in a fluid manner (p. 24). The

researcher integrated Goleman's components into the dissertation process by: (a) managing personal emotions and impulsive feelings when making decisions, (b) bracketing personal experiences and biases, and (c) closely monitoring personal experiences, feelings, and reactions to the data collected. As the participants and researcher interact the researcher employed four-dimensional listening, which is an activity in highly effective communication and requires critical thinking and emotional intelligence. Listening four dimensionally allows the researcher to listen deeply and intently (a) for what the person is saying, (b) think about what they are not saying, (c) remember what they said in the past, and (d) predict what they might say in the future.

Goleman (1998) argues that leaders must be cue smart and emotionally intelligent. This concept of emotional intelligence, empathy, and social awareness lends itself well to mixed-methods and qualitative research. The probing questions will allow the researcher to dig deeper in search of meaning. Ultimately, the open-ended process also allows the participants an opportunity to build and frame the context from which they answered the questions. Data collection for both phases will occur from April 2011 through June 2011.

Phase 1 Data Analysis

Creswell (2003) states, "Data analysis in mixed-methods research relates to the type of research strategy chosen for the procedures" (p. 220). Analysis occurs both within the quantitative approach and the qualitative approach. Creswell provides the following procedures to conduct data analysis and validation procedures for mixed-methods research.

The data collected from the quantitative portion of the mixed-methods research

was analyzed first and separately from the qualitative data. The following steps encompassed Phase 1 of the researcher's plan to analyze the data:

- Communicate with the dean and academic chairpersons, and obtain site approval and permission to survey students.
- Create instrument using SurveyMonkey.com; Create expert panel; Conduct validity test and modify instrument.
- Send electronic web link to Christie Dailo, assistant program director, Leadership and Technology Programs to forward e-mail invitation to participate in the study to all 2nd-year doctoral students and dissertation students in EDOL using GSEP intranet.
- One week after Dailo's initial e-mail resend electronic link to survey to all 2nd-year doctoral students and dissertation students in EDOL.
- Data were collected through SurveyMonkey.com main server downloaded into Excel and put in SPSS.
- Data were analyzed and presented using a variety of figure and tables.

Phase 2 Data Analysis

Phase 2 of the mixed-methods research incorporated Creswell's data analysis and validation procedures:

- Examine Multiple Levels: Conduct a survey at one level, survey 2nd-year doctoral students and dissertation students in EDOL to gather quantitative results about the sample. Sequentially collect qualitative data through Skype interviews with individuals; then explore the phenomenon with specific individuals within the program.

- Instrument Development: Obtain themes from open-ended text box and specific statements from participants in the initial quantitative data collection, which may lead to the development of a dissertation support web design that is grounded in the views and responses of the participants.
- Explore Outliers: Quantitative data may yield extreme or outlier cases. Follow-up with qualitative Skype interviews with these outlier cases can provide insight about why they diverged from the quantitative sample.
- Data Transformation: Researcher will quantify the qualitative data; this involves creating codes and themes qualitatively then counting the number of times they occur in the text data.

The qualitative data were transcribed and analyzed by the researcher. First, the researcher obtained themes from open-ended text box and specific statements from participants in the initial quantitative data collection. Second, the researcher quantified the qualitative data. This involves creating codes and themes qualitatively then counting the number of times they occur in the text data. Third, in transcribing the data, the audiotaped interviews were listened to several times. Transcripts were read a minimum of two times. Themes were identified and used to develop key components for a possible model Web site. All data were sorted by frequency and emerging themes were clustered. Key recommendations, suggestions, and additives to the program were identified in order to establish a thematic framework within which to work. The researcher utilized Creswell's (2007) coding system to keep track of the themes. The emerging themes were combined into a narrative description. The data were transcribed, reviewed, and analyzed and finally presented using narrative form and various figures and tables. Last, the

researcher gave an interpretation of the entire analysis for Phase 1 and Phase 2 and presented information in the form of figures, tables, and narratives.

IRB Process

The purpose of Pepperdine University Institutional Review Board (IRB) is for the protection of human subjects both minors and adults, while conducting research. The highest forms of ethical principals must be enacted and maintained. IRB is a process that graduate students go through in order to ensure the protection of individuals' rights, confidentiality, and anonymity as human subjects, in a research study. The main priority is to do no harm in conducting research. Pepperdine University IRB (2009) Web site explicitly states:

The primary goal of the [Graduate and Professional School] GPS IRB is to protect the rights and welfare of human subjects participating in research activities conducted under the auspices of Pepperdine University. Applications submitted to the GPS IRB generally encompass social, behavioral, and educational research and are usually considered medically non-invasive. (para. 3)

The primary objective of the Pepperdine University IRB (2009) is to protect the welfare and dignity of human subjects. However, the policies and procedures manual claims, "by addressing the human subjects concerns in an applicant's proposed research, the IRB also work to protect investigators from engaging in potentially unethical research practices" (p. 7). Furthermore, the IRB policy states, "In the review and conduct of research, Pepperdine University is guided by the ethical principles set forth in the Belmont Report (i.e., respect for persons, beneficence, and justice)" (p. 1). The researcher took additional safeguards to protect the rights and privacy of human participants by completing the

National Institutes of Health Office of Extramural Research Web-based training course “Protecting Human Research Participants.” See Appendix R Certificate of Completion of Training. In addition, the researcher read the manual pages 1 through 31 and viewed the PowerPoint presentation on the GPS IRB Web site. Furthermore, the researcher purchased HIPAA Compliance Training & Consulting Services Online Anytime Course. See Appendix S HIPAA Basic Certification.

The researcher filed an expedited application along with an application for waiver or alteration of informed consent procedures with GPS IRB manager, Jean Kang. See Appendix T IRB Expedited Application and Application for Waiver or Alteration of Informed Consent Procedures Appendix U. Once the expedited application and alteration of informed consent were approved and modifications were made, a copy of the IRB approval letter was placed in Appendix V Copy of IRB Approval Letter.

Security of Data

The principal investigator employed the assistance of statistician Tom Granoff, Ph.D for data analysis. Granoff holds a Ph.D in clinical psychology. He is a research and statistics consultant. Granoff assists Master’s and dissertation students with statistical analyses. He designs surveys and analyzes data. He assists dissertation students with writing statistical reports.

Granoff has more than 30 years of experience working with graduate students and providing research methodological and data analysis support. Granoff currently teaches research methods and statistics courses at Pepperdine University. He has also taught statistics at Loyola Marymount University and California State University Long Beach.

Granoff assisted the principal investigator with creating suitable SPSS files,

helping prepare the quantitative dataset for analysis, and assisting the principal investigator with transforming SPSS output into APA style tables and statistical narratives. Granoff, along with principal investigator, had access to Phase 1 quantitative and qualitative data stored and compiled on Survey Monkey. Granoff did not have access to confidential qualitative data collected during the interviews. His services were used to run statistics on Phase 1 of the study only. Being a faculty member of Pepperdine University GSEP, he is familiar with the culture, standards, and expectations of GSEP IRB process. Granoff is aware and adheres to ethical research standards and the protection of human subjects. Because of his extensive research training and psychology background, Granoff will keep all information confidential.

In compliance with IRB, the researcher transcribed content of the Skype interviews. Electronic statistical and qualitative data were stored on a flash drive and on researcher's personal computer, which is password protected. All information collected is backed up on an external hard drive, which is also password protected, at the principal investigator's residence. Sensitive material is stored according to IRB transcriptions coding sheets and files will be kept in a locked cabinet at the researcher's residence for 5 years. After the 5 years has expired, the researcher will shred information collected in the study.

Minimizing Risks

The principal risk to the subject is the potential harm resulting from a breach of confidentiality. Participation in this study was associated with no more than minimal risks and/or discomfort. GPS IRB manual describes minimal risk, as the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater in and of

themselves than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests. Risks were minimized in the following ways: (a) participants' identities are known only to the researcher and were not used in this study; (b) no specific identifying information was used or reported in any way or in any part of the study; and (c) if a participant experienced exhaustion, fatigue, or irritability while taking the survey or during the interview portion, a break was provided. Participants were made aware that their participation in this survey was completely voluntary. If they so desired, participants could choose to discontinue this survey at any time without penalty. Unless the participants agreed to participate further in the study, checked yes to the last survey item, and voluntarily provided their contact information for a follow up, no identifying information was requested on the electronic survey. With that exception, no specific identifying information was used or reported in any way or in any part of the study. The researcher secured informed consent from all participants, which explains that the participants have a right to withdraw at any time, understands their participation is strictly voluntary, agrees to the confidentiality measures that will be taken, and will be able to review the results of the study for accuracy. Last, participants were made aware of their rights and were provided with the GPS IRB Interim Chairperson Dr. Yuying Tsong's contact information.

Anonymity

No identifying information was required on the survey unless students were willing to participate further in the study in the form of a Skype interview. Once participants provided their contact information, their identities were not anonymous. Participants' information will be kept confidential. Students read and clicked "agree" to

the electronic informed consent before completing the survey. Only those who agreed to an interview by providing their contact information were contacted. Completed surveys received a generic code.

Confidentiality

Once participants provided their contact information, their identities and responses were kept confidential. The principal investigator took the following measures to ensure confidentiality: (a) names of interviewees and all participant's information will be stored separately, as the consent document is the only form linking the subject to the research; (b) hardcopies or data files will be kept in a locked file cabinet at the investigator's residence; (c) electronic statistical and qualitative data will be stored on a flash drive and accessed on researcher's personal computer, which is password and screen saver protected; (d) IP addresses will not be linked to student responses; (e) all information collected will be backed up on an external hard drive, which is also password protected, at the principal investigator's residence; (f) only the researcher will have access to qualitative data; (g) sensitive material will be stored according to IRB transcriptions coding sheets and files will be kept in a locked cabinet at the researcher's residence for 5 years; and (h) after 5 years has expired, the researcher will crosscut shred information collected in the study and destroy all audio and digital recordings and electronic files using a magnet.

The following safeguards were employed to protect the participant's rights (Creswell, 2007): (a) the research objectives were articulated verbally and in writing so that they were clearly understood by the participants; (b) participants were provided with principal investigator, dissertation chairperson Dr. Michelle Rosensitto, and IRB Interim

incorporating qualitative research methods into the design, it is appropriate for the researcher to set aside personal views, assumptions, biases, and beliefs before delving deeper and proceeding to gather the experiences of others in the form of one-on-one interviews. Moustaka's (as cited in Creswell, 2007) transcendental phenomenology focused on epoche or bracketing personal experiences. Bracketing is a process by which the principal investigator or researcher sets aside his or her personal experiences. Creswell (2007) claims bracketing "allows the researcher to take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under examination" (p. 59). According to Moustakas, "This state is seldom perfectly achieved" (p. 60). It is an attempt by the researcher to share experiences explicitly before proceeding with the collection of experiences and insights of others. With this in mind, the principal investigator took this time to share background information with participants:

This is my fourth year in the Organizational Leadership program. I embraced the program and decided during orientation that I would strive for the million-dollar terminal degree. Seeing how I would not walk this way again, I chose to brand myself differently throughout the program by attending and presenting at national, regional, and international conferences as well as publishing papers. I used class projects to meet business leaders as well as local, state, and federal leaders. I created informational DVDs, designed educational programs, and applied organizational leadership theory to practice, while working for LAUSD. I was shocked when I was unable to locate materials beyond technical writing to support doctoral students. I searched for books, support groups on campus, and outside professional alliances and organizations to help me better manage the

entire doctoral experience. I collaborated with other doctoral students and made it a point to write a book and create an informational DVD, which includes our personal experiences to help others manage their journey. It is my hope to collect data that supports the need to support doctoral students and design a hi-tech doctoral support Web site that focuses on building connectedness and managing the process by forming an online community, blogging, live streaming, webinars, e-coaching, e-mentoring, virtual office hours, podcasts, and virtual guest speakers.

Overview of Design Plan

- January 2011 Design Survey Instrument; Choose panel of experts to review survey instrument.
- February 2011 file expedited application to GSP IRB Jean Kang; Engage in a series of requests and approvals from the dean, academic chairpersons, and assistant directors.
- March 2011 make modifications to IRB application.
- April 2011 obtain final IRB approval; May 2011 make corrections to instrument before deployment in June 2011.
- June 2011 conduct phase 1 data collection; Send electronic web link to Christie Dailo to forward to 2nd-year doctoral students and dissertation students; send follow up e-mail 1 week after Dailo's initial e-mail.
- June 2011 continue Phase 1 data collection and analysis; Begin Phase 2 schedule interviews.
- June 2011 continue with Phase 2 data collection; interview 2nd-year doctoral students and dissertation students in EDOL.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of the mixed-method study sought to assess 2nd-year doctoral students' and dissertation students' perceptions of the current GSEP dissertation support Web site, with implications for designing a model dissertation support Web site to help students: (a) manage the process, (b) build connectedness, and (c) better support doctoral students through the entire doctoral process from orientation, through course work, development of their topic, and finalization of the complete practice study. The broader purpose of this two-phased, mixed-method study was to assess the need for developing a model interactive Web site at Pepperdine University GSEP or other universities throughout the nation, which would support doctoral students through the dissertation phase at the departmental, individual, institutional, and relational level.

Tinto's (1985, 1993) Undergraduate Persistence Model (a) adjustment, (b) incongruence, (c) difficulty, and (d) isolation and Tinto's (1993) Model of Institutional Departure were used as a theoretical framework for this study to develop a doctoral support Web site. Tinto's (1985) Model of Institutional Departure takes seriously that both forms of integration, social and intellectual, are essential to student persistence. Tinto (1985, 1993) claims two systems, the academic and social domain, overlap and are equally important to the development of students' academic and social integration.

Tinto's (1993) Model of Institutional Departure Principle III Social and Intellectual Community served as the justification for the dissertation support Web site. Principle III stated effective student retention programs should evaluate the services, programs, and actions of the institution. The models formed the conceptual basis of the research on social and intellectual integration.

Prior to deploying the survey to students the researcher used Rosensitto's (1999) criteria for changing the instrument based on the feedback received from the expert panel. Of the suggested seven-member panel, three returned the validity-rating questionnaire with comments and/or suggested changes. Where two or more expert reviewers agreed on the same item, a change was noted and made to the instrument.

This two-phase mixed-method study utilized Creswell Sequential Explanatory Design. The survey was deployed June 3, 2011. June 10, 2011, 1 week after the initial e-mail, Christie Dailo, assistant program director of Leadership and Technology, sent a follow-up e-mail to sample population. The survey closed on June 18, 2011.

In Phase 1, participants took an anonymous online survey. Of the maximum 147 sample population, 45 respondents started the survey, and 36 respondents (80%) completed the survey. Thirteen respondents (28.9%) declined to participate, while 32 respondents (71.1%) agreed and completed the electronic survey in its entirety.

Researcher contacted 100% of all respondents who provided their contact information, using a follow-up script. Creswell (2007), citing Spradley, claims, "Good informants/participants are those who know the information required, are willing to reflect on the phenomena of interest, have the time, and are willing to participate" (p. 195). Phase 2, consisted of six semistructured Skype interviews. Interviews were conducted June 3, 2011 through June 20, 2011. The principal investigator recorded and transcribed all interviews. The following is a representation of data collected in Phase 1 of the two-phased mixed-method study.

Results from Survey Item 1

Question 1: Electronic consent. The frequency distribution of informed consent

reported 45 respondents answered survey item 1. Of these, 32 respondents or (71.1%) agreed to participate and take the survey. Thirteen or (28.9%) disagreed and did not participate in the survey. See Table 8 below.

Table 8

Frequency Distribution of Informed Consent

Answer	Percent	Count
Agree	71.1	32
Disagree	28.9	13
Total	100.0	45

Results From Survey Item 2

Question 2. What is your current status in the EDOL program? The frequency distribution of respondent's program status reported 32 respondents answered survey item 2 and 13 respondents skipped this question. The data collected reported 22 (68.8%) were dissertation students, while 10 (31.3%) were 2nd-year doctoral students. See Table 9.

Table 9

Frequency Distribution of Respondent's Program Status

Status	Percent	Count
2 nd Year	31.3	10
Dissertation	68.8	22
Total	100.01	32

Results From Survey Item 3

Question 3: Please indicate your gender. Thirty-two respondents answered survey item 3 and 13 respondents skipped this question. Twenty respondents (62.5%) were female and 12 respondents (37.5%) were male. The frequency distribution of respondent's gender displays the demographic breakdown of male and female respondents. Table 10 displays the demographic breakdown of male and female

Eight (30.8%) students chose helpful, while nine (34.6%) chose not very helpful. The average rating for selecting a dissertation topic was 3.88. Twelve (46.2%) students chose not very helpful, while seven (26.9%) chose not at all helpful. The average rating for writing a dissertation prospectus proposal was 3.73. Ten (38.5%) students chose not very helpful and six (23.1%) chose not at all helpful.

Results From Survey Item 6

Question 6: How useful is each of the following aspects of Pepperdine University GSEP current dissertation support Web site? Descriptive statistics of respondent's perception of usefulness results are displayed using a rating scale ranging from very useful to not useful at all. Twenty-five respondents answered survey item 6 and 20 respondents skipped this question. See Table 13.

Table 13

Descriptive Statistics of Respondent's Perception of Usefulness Data

Answer	Very Useful	Somewhat Useful	Useful	Not Very Useful	Not Useful at All	Rating Average	Count
Finding/Selecting/Procuring a Dissertation Chair	1	1	4	10	9	4.00	25
Dissertation Development Guidelines	4	2	7	10	1	3.08	24
Dissertation APA Support	5	3	10	5	2	2.84	25
Dissertation Writing Support	6	3	8	5	3	2.84	25
IRB Clearance Support	5	8	4	6	2	2.68	25
Dissertation Support Usability	1	5	10	8	1	3.12	25
Visual Appearance of Dissertation Web site	7	0	9	7	1	2.79	24
Web site Forms and Resources	8	3	9	4	1	2.48	25
Support Web site Policies and Procedures	7	3	11	3	1	2.52	25
Dissertation Support Web site Links	4	5	8	6	2	2.88	25
Dissertation Support Web site Manuals	4	4	10	6	1	2.84	25
Selecting a Dissertation Topic	2	2	2	11	8	3.84	25
Writing a Dissertation Prospectus Proposal	2	3	4	10	6	3.60	25

and 26 respondents skipped this item. Respondents commented in narrative format. The three-digit number corresponds to the order in which respondents completed the survey. Some respondents elected not to answer each item.

003: I found all needed resources at the GSEP dissertation Support webpage.

004: Services might include online writing support or writing workshops with professors to start generating topics or formulating researchable questions

007: There should be a model or chart that shows the various steps and stages for dissertation students from course work, to comps, development of the topic, turning the topic into researchable questions and drafting the first three chapters.

008: I don't use the site much at this point.

011: More detailed information regarding the difference between Chapters 4 and 5.

012: A list of available chairs and their research interest would be very useful.

024: There needs to be more promotion of the site.

025: A sample timeline for completing the dissertation from start to finish.

026: Directing student to the site would be helpful. As a 2nd-year student, I wasn't even aware of the site until the survey!

029: A sample timeline of the dissertation process from start to finish. Including deadlines based on when a student hopes to graduate

030: Information about dissertation support groups that might be available to students who are interested

032: There should be a system in place that holds Pepperdine faculty responsible to respond in a timely manner with a decision to chair or not to chair

someone's dissertation.

033: Current list of faculty with interest to help form committees.

034: It would be good to have a list of professors available to chair dissertations.

036: Pepperdine University Wavenet and information services causes all GSEP students some level of online Internet problems.

037: After studying all the links, the Web site seems very comprehensive.

039: A status update that shows when IRB application or other forms have been submitted indicating receipt of the forms and a progress update.

042: A clear thorough APA guide. A map showing the whole process.

044: There is little to nothing beyond forms. It would be more helpful to have guidance in the process of finding a chair that is well matched with ones in the field. It would be nice to have a clearly defined timeline.

Response From Survey Item 8

Question 8: What do you find most useful about the current dissertation support Web site? Twenty-one respondents answered survey item 8 and 24 respondents skipped this question. Respondents commented in narrative format. The three-digit number corresponds to the order in which respondents completed the survey. Some respondents elected not to answer each item.

003: Dissertation protocol/policy webpage and IRB resources.

004: The policies are clear and the Power Points are helpful. The forms and resources are easy to download.

007: The electronic forms and manuals are available and easy to download. The IRB checklist is also helpful.

- 011: The support available at the writing center/APA is very useful.
- 012: The links to the forms are very useful. The easy to understand manuals are also helpful.
- 022: Forms
- 024: Forms are available and the APA manual.
- 025: IRB information
- 026: Knowing it exists.
- 029: The IRB information
- 030: Well structured, easy to navigate.
- 032: Not a whole lot. First you have to find it and then try and then try to work through it on your own.
- 033: Clarity of the process—especially forms section and policies and procedures section.
- 034: It's very easy to navigate. The links are very useful. The samples are well selected.
- 036:
- 037: I don't find it user friendly.
- 038: It is well organized and functional.
- 039: Examples of forms.
- 041: Nothing useful at all. The whole dissertation process at Pepperdine is useless.
- 042: Nothing
- 044: Aggregation of all the necessary forms in one location.

032: There is not enough information of the current dissertation support Web site.

033: None

034: Nothing

036: The dissertation support processes do not appear to flow smoothly from 1.

Introduction to the available qualitative and quantitative (statistical) processes and procedures through 2. Guidance for general identification of topic

037: Again, it's not user friendly.

038: Not very interactive and is visually uninteresting.

039: It is not very well organized, I have to bounce from one Web site to another fishing for information.

042: It is very weak in helping with the dissertation.

044: Lack of guidance on the more vague components of the dissertation process.

Response From Survey Item 10

Question 10: If you could redesign the dissertation support Web site, what would be your top three changes? Twenty respondents answered survey item 10 and 25 respondents skipped this question. Respondents commented in narrative format. The three-digit number corresponds to the order in which respondents completed the survey. Some respondents elected not to answer each item.

003: N/A

004: Instead of tabs with the colleague magazine, Boone Center for Family, and Urban Initiative replace with current events for dissertation students, voices and video from current students or recent grads of the program and welcome

- subject matter. 2. There should also be an area that would allow one to see remarks about the chair from other students. 3. There should also be a timeline for the chair's response.
- 033: 1. Link to a few "model dissertations using the 4 chapter or 5 chapter approaches.
- 034: No redesign, but the following additions. 1) A sample of a successful preliminary defense, with notes indicating what is correct about it—for example using future tense instead of past tense like in the final dissertation.
- 036: Begin with a clear statement of the GSEP mission and vision relating to the dissertation processes and procedures. Create a clear set of line drawings showing the progression from step to step.
- 037: I can't think of anything at this time.
- 038: 1. More personal 2. More introductory narrative.
- 039: Online chat, restructure the site to be more aligned with not only the progress of a dissertation but one that has a timeline, for example a calendar tool that a student enters pre-IRB application and it will forecast a set date.
- 042: APA clear guide overarching map showing the whole process so I can judge where I am in the process.
- 044: 1. Focus more on guidance regarding project conception. 2. Focus more on dissertation chair selection process. 3. Provide timeline of tasks based on built in wait order of operations, etc.

Response From Survey Item 11

Question 11: On average how often do you visit the current dissertation support

Web site per month? The frequency distribution of number of visits to the current Web site is reported below. Twenty-four respondents answered survey item 11 and 21 respondents skipped this question. Twelve respondents (50%) visit the current dissertation support Web site less than once per month. Five (20.8%) visit the current Web site at least once per month. Another 5 respondents (20.8%) reported visiting the current Web site not at all. Two respondents (8.3%) reported visiting the current Web site at least once a week. See Table 14.

Table 14

Frequency Distribution of Number of Visits to Current Web Site

Answer Options	Percent	Count
Four or more times (at least once/week)	8.3	2
One to three times (at least once a month)	20.8	5
Less than once per month	50.0	12
None (not at all)	20.8	5
Total	99.9	24

Response From Survey Item 12

Question 12: What would make you visit the dissertation support Web site more often? Twenty respondents answered survey item 12 and 25 respondents skipped this question. Respondents commented in narrative format. The three-digit number corresponds to the order in which respondents completed the survey. Some respondents elected not to answer each item.

003: N/A

004: If there were new dissertation models uploaded to read and review possibly recommended by professors and some sort of interaction between other dissertation students, a community of sorts.

007: If there were more social interaction, between professors or chairpersons,

and other dissertation students, perhaps a forum to get feedback. I would go more often if the IRB checklist had an electronic checklist.

008: If marketed better.

011: If there was fresh content available.

012: I would visit if there was an accountability page. If I had an incentive to visit the Web site I would. For example, if I have to go to the page to click after each step in the process if completed.

024: Now that I am aware of it, I will go there more. I am not confident, however, that it will be of much use except for process and procedure information.

025: Online support group/message board.

026: Knowing it was available. 2. Information that is engaging.

029: Perhaps a message board where students could post about their progress, roadblocks they are facing, etc.

032: If the information was more user friendly. If, the data somehow met the needs of a dissertation student.

033: As I progress through the writing, I will be using it more often. I had forgotten about it.

034: Being informed that there is a dissertation Web site. I have been working on my dissertation for more than 4 years and I have found about the support Web site this year.

036: Ease of information access, clear Internet links and optional sources of information.

037: If resources were more clearly organized.

038: Just the natural progression through the dissertation phase.

039: More interactive tools, better Web site design, online chat, electronic submission, (which will include electronic approval from faculty).

042: See changes requested.

044: I will go more when I am in dissertation, which I am not currently. A more compelling and intuitive interface would make me visit more.

Response From Survey Item 13

Question 13: Overall, how satisfied are you with the current dissertation support Web site? The frequency distribution of respondent’s satisfaction with current dissertation support Web site is shown below. Twenty-four respondents answered survey item 13 and 21 respondents skipped this question. Two respondents (8.3%) reported being very satisfied. Four respondents (16.7%) reported being satisfied. Eight (33.3%) reported being neutral, while another eight (33.3%) reported being dissatisfied. Last, two respondents (8.3%) reported being very dissatisfied with the current Web site. See Table 15.

Table 15

Frequency Distribution of Respondent’s Satisfaction With Current Web Site

Answer	Percent	Count
Very Satisfied	8.3	2
Satisfied	16.7	4
Neutral	33.3	8
Dissatisfied	33.3	8
Very Dissatisfied	8.3	2
Total	99.9	24

Response From Survey Item 14

Question 14: Visually, what might an ideal dissertation support Web site look

like? Eighteen respondents answered survey item 14 and 27 respondents skipped this question. Respondents commented in narrative format. The three-digit number corresponds to the order in which respondents completed the survey. Some respondents elected not to answer each item.

003: More concerned with resources being available rather than visual appeal of the site.

004: The site should feel welcoming and easy to navigate. The tabs and folders should be clearly organized, useful dissertation structures and examples of each should be uploaded. Visually, it will convey that this is a one-stop shop.

007: You've arrived. We are here to help you through the journey. You are not alone. If you look to the right of the screen there is a list of video clips of professors sharing their interest, underneath are student videos.

008: Something that can be accessed through Sakai and look like a social networking site where you can connect with others who are doing similar research.

011: Easy to navigate.

012: Not sure. I'm not good at web design.

024: I have no changes to the visual. I would put a link for the Web site in the student services or academic resources section.

026: An interactive site that provides useful tools and student accounts of how and when to utilize.

030: I think the format is fine the way it is.

032: If, the information was easily recognized and the ability to follow it was

easy.

033: I think this one is good. It needs to have utility first, bells and whistles second. Perhaps a couple of video clips explaining a few of the more complex processes...like the IRB process would be nice.

034: I like it the way it is.

036: Individual adult learners have numerous preferences so using the standard for Internet handicapped access to information provides the broadest base. Color blind students limits must be considered in Web site design.

037: Well organized with many links to resources and supports.

038: I don't know.

039: Creating the Web site by steps, such as tabs or visually easy to follow the process and under each tab its relevant links or documents.

042: This makes no difference to me. I am not looking for form.—I want function. Clean, clear, easy to follow with good support information.

044: Hands on, ability to view stories from current and past dissertation students.

Results From Survey Item 15

Question 15: Which of the following technologies would you like to see implemented on the dissertation support Web site? Please check all that apply. The frequency distribution of preferred technologies is displayed below. Twenty-three respondents answered survey item 15 and 22 respondents skipped this question. The preferred technologies with a percentage more than 50% that respondents would like to see implemented on a dissertation support Web site are: E-mentoring, Webinars, Skype communication with professors, Links to professional doctoral student organization, and

Virtual office hours. Eighteen respondents (78.3%) elected e-mentoring, followed closely by Webinars. Seventeen respondents or (73.9%) checked webinars. Sixteen respondents (69.9%) would like Skype communication with professors. Fourteen respondents, (60.9%) checked links to professional doctoral student organizations. Twelve respondents (52.2%) checked virtual office hours. The data concluded that e-mentoring was the most desired preferred technology. The preferred technologies are presented in Figure 3.

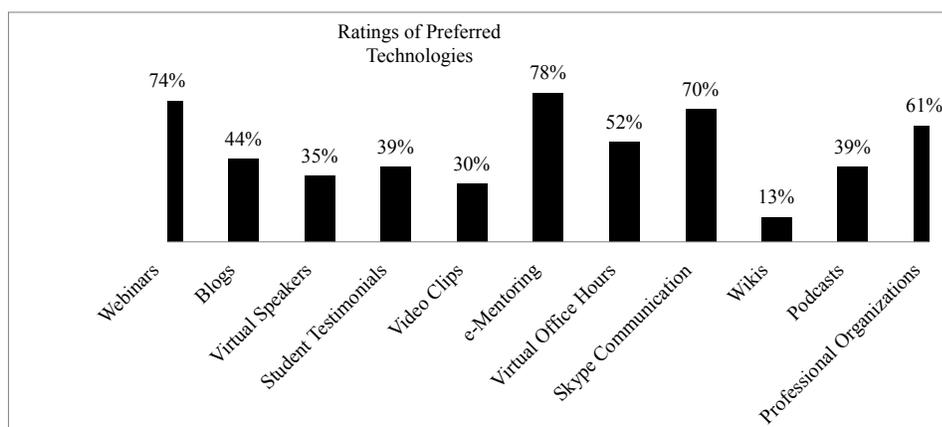


Figure 3. Frequency distribution of preferred technologies.

Results From Survey Item 16

Question 16: Please indicate whether you would participate in any of the following formal and/or informal social activities or events, if offered at your university or another university during your graduate experience. Check all that apply. Twenty-four respondents answered survey item 16 and 21 respondents skipped this question. The preferred formal and/or informal social activities or events with a percentage more than 50% respondents would attend if offered at GSEP or another university are: Dissertation Retreat/Bootcamp, Monthly Faculty Check-in via Skype, Student Support Groups, 2nd-Year Course Work Completion Dinner Monthly Webinar with professor, End-of-1st-Year Luncheon, Writing Seminars/Online Writing. Twenty (83.3%) respondents elected

Dissertation Retreat/Bootcamp. Sixteen respondents or (66.7%) elected Monthly faculty check-in via Skype and Student Support Groups. Fifteen respondents (62.5%) each elected 2nd-Year Course Work Completion Dinner and Monthly Webinar with a professor. Thirteen respondents (54.2%) respectively elected End-of-1st-Year Luncheon and Writing Seminars/Online Writing Support. The data indicated the Dissertation Retreat/Bootcamp is the preferred formal or informal event students would attend if offered. Twenty (83.3%) out of 24 respondents selected Dissertation Retreat/Bootcamp as the most desired social activity. The frequency distributions of preferred social activities are displayed in the Figure 4 the most preferred social activity.

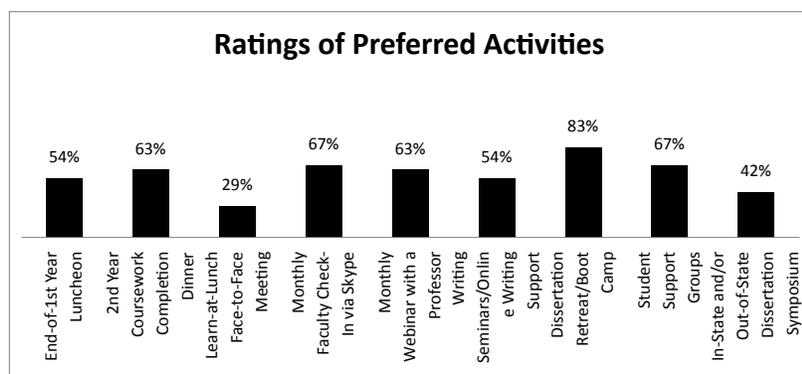


Figure 4. Frequency distributions of preferred social activities.

Results From Survey Item 17

Question 17: Would you use the dissertation support Web site more frequently if more web-based social tools were made available? The frequency distributions of respondent's future visits to dissertation Web site are shown below. Twenty-four respondents answered survey item 17 and 21 respondents skipped this question. Using an ordinal scale, respondents were asked if they would visit the current site if enhanced with social tools. Eight respondents (33.3%) reported definitely, another eight (33.3%) reported probably, six respondents (25.0%) reported maybe, two (8.3%) reported

themes that were represented in Phase 1, which collected both quantitative and qualitative data. Those comments focused mainly on relational and departmental issues such as assistance selecting a dissertation chairperson, faculty mentoring, how to relate with chairperson, and making the dissertation support Web site known during orientation. Other comments focused on procedural issues, online tools, and formal and informal events. The researcher summarized the qualitative data and provided examples of both positive and negative comments both with and without explanations below.

Positive comments without explanations:

- Would not want to redesign dissertation support Web site.
- I like the current layout and it's easy to use.
- Knowing dissertation support Web site exists.

Negative comments without explanations:

- Integrate in class work.
- Make Web site more highly visible.
- No support provided.
- It's really about procedures and fees.
- No links to dissertation samples or similar resources.
- Not having it utilized or introduced more interactively in course work.

Positive comments with explanations:

- I find the section pertinent to writing support the most useful on the site.
- IRB information is thorough.
- The current dissertation support Web site is a common area to find multiple resources, one stop shopping.

Negative comments with explanations:

- No information regarding whom to contact if you have questions on dissertation planning, ideas, topics, and chairs.
- Add a forum for issue discussion.
- The dissertation support Web site would be helpful if it was organized and the site was shown by professors.

Relational issues:

- Obtaining a mentor within my program.
- When is the appropriate time to contact professors, during the summer, right before comps, after comps, in year one, two, or three?
- One-on-one interactions with professors and dissertation chairperson.
- Dissertation chairs availability and capacity to accept new students.
- How do I approach a professor outside of my program when seeking a chair?

Departmental issues:

- Selection of dissertation chairperson.
- More chair options for example obtaining a chair outside of my program.
- Interaction with dissertation chairs.
- More help with topics, locating chairs, and due dates.
- Being informed by where the site is located and how to access it.
- Adding current information and resources that would benefit GAP students.
- Organizing workshops and place for dissertation students to gather and network.

Procedural issues:

- Listing possible dissertation chairs information regarding their limits and capacity to accept new students.
- More help regarding the entire dissertation process start to finish.
- Lack of clarity regarding what topics are appropriate for degree.
- More IRB information and timelines for administrative tasks are needed on the site.
- Recent sample approved IRB applications sample modification letters.
- Adding newly released information such as current comp exams and dissertations.
- Sending e-mail to inform students of the new resources uploaded on the site.
- Links with current dissertations sorted by types.

Online issues:

- Add a forum for discussion and a place to seek input on specific elements.
- Post reflections from students who completed their dissertation and their suggestions to proceed.
- No community blog page.
- Add video—For example coaching tips from professors.
- Make site more interactive.

Six additional comments were neutral and did not seem to fit into any particular category or theme.

Results From Survey Item 19

The frequency of the total number of interviewees is reported below. Eight respondents answered survey item 19 and 37 respondents skipped this question. Eight

respondents completed at least two of the three fields in order for the researcher to contact them for a follow-up Skype interview. All eight were contacted. A total of six interviews were conducted between June 3, 2011 and June 20, 2011. See Table 17

Frequency of total interview respondents.

Table 17

Frequency of Total Interview Respondents

Answer	Percent	Count
Name	100.0	8
Phone Number	100.0	8
E-Mail	100.0	8

In collecting and storing the qualitative data, the researcher engaged in a series of steps to organize the qualitative data first.

1. Researcher first created a table, coding system, to store initial information such as the participant's name, date of Skype interview, MP3 file number, start and end time, and summary/emerging themes. Researcher then summarized the written notes and highlights of the audiotaped interview including exact quotation whenever possible. Researcher showed this by enclosing the exact quote in quotation marks. Also, in storing the data the researcher created individual labels and file folders with the date of the interview and generic numbered code for each interviewee. The coding system along with all notes and a copy of the signed letter of consent for interview were placed inside of the file folder, and placed in a locked cabinet at the researcher's residence.
2. The researcher then created a list of possible categories after rereading the summaries from each interviewee. The researcher derived initial categories

from the summaries and research questions, and created a list of seven broad topics. The researcher then named the seven broad topics principal categories. Seven principal categories emerged: dissertation chairperson, e-mentoring, interactive tools, student recommendations/student responses, critical questions, types of support, and Web site content. The researcher then used the first letter of each word to represent each category, for example dissertation chairperson became DC, E-mentoring became (EM), Interactive Tools became (IT), and so on.

3. The researcher then proceeded to develop subcategories based on the qualitative responses from the textbox questions derived from the online survey. Six subcategories emerged: dissertation support; finding, selecting, and listing available chairs; mentoring; coaching; online support; and face-to-face events. Step 3 also included adding a value of “positive,” “neutral,” or “negative” relation to each category.
4. Step 4 entailed creating a new chart with only principal categories, codes, and theoretical references.
5. Putting it all together—This chart served as a visualization tool to clearly see the principal categories, codes, subcategories, value, and theoretical references side by side. This technique aided in putting structure to the qualitative data.

This system was developed and put in place by the researcher early on, while Phase 1 was still being conducted. Collection of both quantitative and some qualitative data through the electronic survey lasted 2 weeks. The coding system served to assist the researcher in maintaining the integrity of the data, classifying the data, and properly

analyzing reoccurring themes that may repeat in other interviews. While reading, the researcher tagged reoccurring categories using the coding system and codes. New or emergent themes were classified under principal categories, similar or like categories were placed under the subcategory heading. This system proved useful and also served as a mechanism for systematically coding and managing large amounts of qualitative data.

To ensure accuracy of the quotes, the researcher paused and restated pertinent comments. The researcher was prepared to contact participants for further clarification while transcribing the data. Participants were provided the narrative description and the opportunity to review the transcription of the data prior to final submittal. Each interview was numbered and participants were given a generic code in the order of their scheduled interview. The following is a verbatim narrative of the six participants' responses from the Skype interview.

Description of participants. The researcher contacted 100% of all respondents who completed the electronic survey and provided their contact information. The participants' profiles are outlined below. Eight respondents agreed to a follow-up Skype interview. A total of six participants confirmed and scheduled an interview. Six out of eight respondents participated in a 20-minute semistructured audio taped Skype interview. Participants were given a generic code in the order of their scheduled interview. Below is a profile of each participant. The following are direct quotes obtained from participants in the study. See Table 18.

Table 18

Participants' Profiles

Participants Generic Code	Ethnicity	Gender	Program Status
001	Latino/Hispanic	Female	2 nd -year Doctoral Student (GAP)
002	Caucasian	Female	Dissertation Student
003	African American	Female	Dissertation Student
004	Caucasian	Female	Dissertation Student
005	African American	Female	Dissertation Student
006	African American	Female	Dissertation Student

Responses From Semistructured Interview Q1

Interview Question 1: What message would the dissertation support Web site convey upon clicking on it?

Participant 001: Uhm I would probably start by saying it would be good to know there was a dissertation support Web site when you're starting out as a student- because probably until your study it was mentioned a coupled of times but we were never directed there. When I got to participate in your study I decided to go check it out. It's pretty bland at this point for lack of a better word at this point. It is very static. The message I would like to see it convey...convey support and it would convey an obvious place for tools and resources. It would convey a place where I would want to return to not just every semester but I would want to be driven there for every course.

Participant 002: Some kind of encouraging message, maybe a picture of someone being hooded (laughter) something the outcome would be there. Something very

(80%) completed the survey. Of the 36 participants, eight agreed to a Skype interview and six confirmed. All six participants were women. The breakdown of the six participants is as follows: Three African American, two Caucasian, and one Latino/Hispanic. Five of the six participants were dissertation students. One 2nd-year GAP doctoral student participated in the interview process.

Conclusions Related to Semistructured Research Question 1

Participants stated the need for early awareness of the dissertation Web site resources and tools early in the doctoral process. It is not enough simply to upload documents, provide electronic tools, and refer students to the Web site. Traditional face-to-face and online learners must be explicitly directed to locations and provided an opportunity and assistance navigating the site and the resources. D. Davis's (2010) study corroborates these findings, "Students must be provided both information and training on the use of these electronic resources" (p. 55). Participants suggested weaving and incorporating assignments from their course work that might drive students to the dissertation Web site. At the departmental level, when possible, professors might align course work with research on the dissertation Web site. For example, small groups can critique dissertations focusing on design, methodology, and technical writing. Students might conduct a web search, which entails locating five to 10 items on the dissertation Web site. Other assignments might include downloading and printing forms such as the IRB checklist, reviewing IRB PowerPoint slides, and in-class practice writing a 50-word description of their tentative project, which would complete form A1 on the dissertation support Web site. Professors might encourage students to create a dissertation timeline and present it using Voice Thread, an audiovisual online tool that allows participants to

upload, view, share, and record their responses. Voice Thread also permits its users to call, text, or post a response online.

Conclusions Related to Semistructured Research Question 2

Participants recommended day-to-day support such as a dissertation support hotline. This hotline, as one participant noted, need not be 24 hours but available to students 2 to 3 days a week. D. Davis (2010) argues, “online students need to be provided the same range of services as their traditional counterparts” (p. 55). D. Davis asserts, “Technical support should be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and if that is not feasible, at a minimum there should be some evening and weekend hours available with some provisions for emergency situations” (p. 55). Decision makers at the departmental and institutional level might consider offering a graduate assistant or adjunct professor the task of scheduling and being available by phone or online during set hours for doctoral students. The qualitative data suggest that students are open to this form of support.

Conclusions Related to Semistructured Research Question 3

The respondents in both the traditional EDOL format and the GAP program expressed the need for more faculty support and promotion of interaction between students and professors. Instead of placing a traditional face-to-face class online, more measures can be taken to develop thorough online classes and assignments, which promote connectivity, social interaction, and more interaction with professors. Online professors might keep in mind that the types of assignments and group projects that work in a face-to-face classroom setting might not work so well online. These conclusions concur with D. Davis’s (2010) study, “Faculty must be prepared to meet the special

requirements of teaching at a distance. Stated more simply, faculty teaching in a distance learning setting must be proficient in the technology employed in the course” (p. 18).

Faculty development, according to D. Davis, “should address distance education pedagogy, instructional strategies to promote interaction, assessing student learning via a new mode, and how to translate the traditional f2f course to a new distance learning medium” (p. 54). D. Davis purports, “Online students should be able to consult with academic advisors from a distance just as effectively as their f2f counterparts” (p. 55).

Not all literature on dissertation support came to the same conclusions or findings. Green and Kluever (1997) came to a different conclusion. This study found barriers to doctoral dissertation completion. The study concluded it is useful to understand barriers to assist students and help institutions restructure the doctoral program.

Some researchers focus solely on the responsibility of the graduate student to make connections, be interdependent, and ready for the research and writing demands of higher education. These positions are a hard-line approach to learning and teaching and tend to fall under the deficit theory and the instructional paradigm versus the learning paradigm.

Still others (Lovitts, 2001; Nettles, 2006; Tinto, 1985, 1993) tend to view the academic and social integration of students as a dual responsibility. These theorists tend to support the position that attrition, matriculation, and degree attainment are not the sole responsibility of the institution, departments, individuals, or the educational system, but rather a collaborative effort among all concerned parties. When institutions mislabel students as dropouts and nondegree completers, it is detrimental to the sustainability of the program. It is part of the institution’s responsibility to understand why students

experience stop outs, transfer to other institutions, or exit the education system. When students exit the system, the effects are felt at the individual, departmental, and institutional levels. Attrition reflects not only on the individual, but the program and university as a whole. Green and Kluever (1997) claim, “Failure at this point is expensive and painful for the student, discouraging for the faculty involved, and injurious to the reputation of the institution” (p. 4).

Limitations of the Study

The researcher sampled only 2nd-year doctoral students and dissertation students in EDOL. First-year doctoral students along with doctoral students in Educational Leadership Administration and Policy, Organizational Change, Ed. Technology and Learning, and Psy. D students were excluded from the study. This study focused only on 2nd-year doctoral students and dissertation students. Future studies might consider looking at students who have been in the dissertation process longer such as 3rd-, 4th-, 5th-, and 6th-year students.

The researcher focused primarily on two out of the five campuses and did not include 2nd-year doctoral students or dissertation students at the Encino, Westlake, or Malibu campuses. Future studies might consider incorporating a broader sample population to include all students in doctoral programs at the respective campuses to capture a broader array of respondents and feedback. To expand the scope and the response rate, survey all doctoral students at each campus.

Other suggestions includes:

- Offer different types of support for different types of dissertation students
- Have respondents go to 10 Web sites and critique what they like or don't like

on the dissertation support Web site

- Use a focus group
- Conduct only qualitative interviews

Future Research Questions

Given what was found and what the literature said, here's what is known. There are at least four areas that doctoral students need the most structure in order to assist them in completing the dissertation: (a) Writing Support, (b) Dissertation Retreat/Bootcamp, (c) Student Support Groups, and (d) Mentoring. However, there are still things that are not known. Therefore, future research should address the following questions:

1. What are 1st-year doctoral students' perspectives of the dissertation process?
2. How might incorporating a mentoring component at the beginning of the doctoral program lessen the number of ABDs?
3. Which colleges or universities effectively incorporate the use of the dissertation retreat or dissertation bootcamp successfully in the doctoral program?

Recommendations for Further Study

As a result of the findings supported in this study, the following key recommendations for further research are proposed:

- Conduct a replication of this study.
- Implementation of a similar study focusing on the need for mentoring coupled with dissertation support services.
- Examine advisors' perspective, administrative perspectives, university perspective, and multiple kinds of dissertation students.

- This study examined doctoral students in leadership. Future studies might look at the hard sciences, for instance engineering students might need more writing support both face-to-face and support provided online.
- Look at the types of support doctoral students may need who attend a fully online program such as Walden University.

Additional recommendations for graduate students, university administrators, advisors, and doctoral students are found in Table 20.

Table 20

Recommendations for Graduate Students, University Administrators/Advisors, and Doctoral Students

Recommendations for Graduate Students	Recommendations for University Administrators	Recommendations for Doctoral Advisors/Chairpersons	Recommendations for Doctoral Students
If pursuing the doctorate, begin researching the types of supports offered at school of choice; Prepare by reading texts such as <i>Journey to the Ph.D.</i>	Utilize student suggestions and add to what is “Best” to the current site Add purposeful testimonials, webinars, and a dissertation bootcamp	Be knowledgeable of the dissertation support Web site and point students there early in the process during course work; Share expectations of doctoral candidates.	Begin with the end in mind and get to know the dissertation support Web site and all of the resources and tools that are provided by your university at your disposal
Apply to the Ph.D. Project to receive coaching and mentoring; Develop a community of support prior to applying to a doctoral program	Reward intentional mentoring and incorporate into the reward system and tenure system; Support peer groups	Establish clear working expectations early on; Offer e-mentoring Help students map out educational path from course work through development of the topic through dissertation	Develop a mentoring constellation
Join professional organizations, network, and collaborate	Provide formal/informal events for social integration of students	Explicitly discuss the roles/functions of a chairperson, availability, and expectations	Build relationships with your professors during course work

Recommendations Based on Tinto’s (1993) Model of Institutional Departure

Extending fall orientation. Future recommendations include program directors incorporating an extended version of fall orientation at the end of semester 1 to touch bases with doctoral students, covering Knowles’s et al. (2005) salient points and emphasizing the importance of both academic and social integration into the school’s

culture. Yet another possibility includes offering Part II Social Orientation as a 1-day off-campus activity in Malibu at Dresher Campus to clarify the informal expectations, demands, and obligations of doctoral students. This activity will also offer cohorts an opportunity to connect better and those having difficulty within cohorts to network and form interdisciplinary support groups.

Tinto (1993) claims orientation program stresses the sharing of formal information. Orientation should be a time when both the formal and informal demands of new students are addressed. It is here where students need the full glimpse of the informal character of the social and intellectual communities that exist on campus.

Orientation fails to provide informal information in a forum that leads new students to establish personal connections and contacts. Tinto (1993) claims these personal connections “become responsible for providing advising and counseling services which can provide the types of informal information new students require” (p. 159). Program directors underestimate and understate equally important informal demands institutions make upon new students.

Program directors should recognize that during the course of students’ academic careers, these much needed nonthreatening relationships and contacts are often sought after and called upon to provide insider information. Still other techniques can be used to bridge the gap. Orientation can be extended throughout the academic year to include peer and faculty mentoring programs or online e-mentoring. Mentors can serve as advisers, role models, and campus connections to help doctoral students manage both the intellectual and social process and lessen isolation. Last, host a mandatory or optional dissertation retreat or dissertation bootcamp for intensely focused time on ideation, topic

formation, drafting, and preliminary writing of Chapters 1, 2, and 3.

At the departmental level, these things can occur:

- Utilize e-mentoring, webinar, GoToMeeting, and Skype to stay in contact and communication with students throughout the dissertation phase.
- Provide not only technical APA writing support but also creation, formation, and brainstorming of ideas to turn into researchable topics.
- Host dissertation seminars, monthly Skype meetings or check-ins, or face-to-face meetings during lunch or another convenient times.
- Establish new rituals and traditions such as the end of 1st-year celebration, completion of 2nd-year course work luncheon, dissertation retreat off campus, dissertation bootamp.
- Celebrate milestones such as passing comprehensive exam; selecting a chairperson; formation of committee; submitting Chapters 1, 2, and 3; scheduling of preliminary oral defense; passing of oral defense; and IRB Approval—the go ahead to conduct the study, high return response rate.
- Provide students with a list of viable, willing, and available mentors.

At the individual level these things can occur:

- Establish a mentoring constellation.
- Maintain structure after the completion of course work; Continue meeting weekly at the same place during the same hour.
- Attend national, regional, and international professional conferences.
- Register for out-of-state dissertation symposiums such as Eastern Kentucky University.

At the relational level these things can occur:

- Build a writing support team, and establish relationships with professors outside of your program and at other campuses.
- At the institutional level: Reward mentoring and spending time with students, several schools such as Berkeley, Smith, and Fresno State have made mentoring apart of the school culture as well as the center for Learning and Teaching in San Jose, CA

At the institutional level these things can occur:

- Highlight professors who usher students through the process, expose them to insider culture, write/publish with protégés.
- Create a tradition and award professors for excellence in intentional mentoring dissertation students through the process.
- Make mentoring apart of the evaluation process, and formalize it with a mentor protégé orientation, outline clear goals expectations of mentors and protégés, and mentor protégés.
- Provide a stipend for professors who are willing to mentor other students,

Recommendations for dissertation support manager.

- Create an FAQ's list and post on current dissertation support Web site.
- Upload current samples of dissertations and IRB approvals.
- Develop a visual of the process such as a flowchart or model from start to finish.

Host dissertation symposium. Dean Sherwood Thompson, at Eastern Kentucky University, is a leading authority in diversity and support of minority students.

Thompson's passion lies in supporting minority students. Eastern Kentucky University hosts an annual dissertation symposium. This 2-day event is geared toward encouraging, mentoring, and supporting current and prospective African American doctoral students. The 2-day symposium is filled with guest speakers, lectures, breakout sessions, poster board sessions, and ample time to network and establish new contacts. The symposium takes place the 2nd weekend in November at Eastern Kentucky University.

Join professional organizations. Doctoral students can also become members of professional organizations, thereby broadening their experiences and outlook on the doctoral journey. There are organizations nationwide doctoral students can solicit for support to help them along the process and lessen isolation. For example, the Ph.D. Project prepares prospective African American, Hispanics, and Native American doctoral students to enter doctoral programs across the country. The Ph.D. Project has corporate sponsors and has supported doctoral students since 1994. KMPG, a large consulting firm, sponsors students, programs, and organizations. This nonprofit organization gives scholarships to help increase more doctors in the area of business, marketing, and finance. The Ph.D. Project is one large organization that supports doctoral students and helps them to get hired in academic areas. The Ph.D. Project has a 92% completion rate compared with the national average of 50%. Highlights of the Ph.D. Project include scholarships, intentional mentoring, and an annual conference.

Furthermore, doctoral students can reach outside their respective programs and develop and expand their base of contacts outside of their cohort by joining professional networking associations. For example, MyPhDNetwork is a networking association limited to current doctoral students and faculty. The Doctoral Student Association is the

official networking place for the Ph.D. Project. Doctoral students and faculty can network with others across the nation.

In addition, Black Web 2.0 is yet another social networking site with articles, webinars, and stimulating topics for doctoral students. Here students can post comments, write articles, and connect with others.

Association of Pan African Doctoral Scholars. Association of Pan African Doctoral Scholars was founded in 1981 at Claremont Graduate University. A group of doctoral scholars was concerned with the high drop out rate of Pan African doctoral students. They formed a support group to address the issues and concerns of Pan African students as they pursued their terminal degree. Association of Pan African Doctoral Scholars hosts monthly meetings, encourages mentoring, and hosts social events. One of the expectations upon joining the nonprofit organization is that members return to mentor others. In addition, the University of Hawaii offers a student association that supports other doctoral students through the process.

Attend professional conferences. Attend professional conferences such as the Hawaii International Conference, Paris International Conference, or Pepperdine University Society of Educators. Build a supportive and diverse support group and mentors.

Utilize books, DVD's, programs, and tools. Last, doctoral students can reach outside their respective programs and obtain personalized support and structure in the form of electronic tools, one-on-one dissertation coaching, and informational DVD's. Thesis and Dissertation Accomplished, by Dr. Wendy Carter, is a program that assists masters and doctoral students from start to finish. This program and electronic tools help

students select topics, draft, edit, and write their dissertation. *Thesis and Dissertation Accomplished* provides advice on selecting a dissertation committee, creating and sticking to a timeline, and the oral defense.

A Thin Book for 1st Year Doctoral Students by Nicole Simmons-Johnson is a compilation of short stories written by doctoral students and recent graduates of doctoral programs to encourage, inspire, and support other doctoral students. *A Thin Book for 1st Year Doctoral Students* focuses on beginning with the end in mind, being best at something, branding, and balancing while immersed in the doctoral journey. The book is accompanied with a 30-minute inspirational and motivational DVD with short stories, tools, and dialogue focusing on managing the doctoral process. The DVD uses stories and tools on how to handle life's joys, successes, and upsets while in the program. One tool used in the DVD ask the viewer(s) to pause and list 10 things they will START, STOP, or CONTINUE doing while in the program. Another tool utilized in the *A Thin Book for 1st Year Doctoral Students DVD* is beginning with the end in mind and writing a 3, 5, and 7-year résumé.

Obtain dissertation coaching services. Dr. Michelle Rosensitto, owner of the Dissertation Coach, provides educational and writing coaching for doctoral students. Dissertation Coach provides one-on-one small group and workshops on developing topics, selecting methods, and penning the manuscript.

Given the changing economic climate and President Obama's charge for single mothers to go back to school to retool and equip themselves for the New America, more nontraditional students are attending college and graduate school than ever. This population will require more flexibility, mentoring, and academic and social integration.

Typically, nontraditional students are adult learners older than the age of 25, work 45 to 60 hours a week in notable careers, have dependents, and attend school part-time. They enter the classroom as self-directed learners, self-motivated, and with a wealth of real-world experience. It would behoove future researchers and studies to examine different types of support for this particular group. Knowles et al. (2005) says to introduce the learner to the new environment.

Nontraditional students may need time to adjust to the demands of graduate school. They have been immersed in the workforce; the type of writing there is, at best, relegated to reports, summaries, and workplace documents. Students will need writing support from conception and germination of ideas and topics to assistance managing the process from start to finish. Furthermore, academic coaching and how to interact and relate with dissertation chairpersons is essential, as chairpersons take on many roles—academic, emotional, personal, and professional.

Doctoral students who are younger, newly minted, and fresh out of graduate school may also need a different type of support during the dissertation phase. The process and experience will be different for someone who has attended the university as an undergraduate or graduate, became a graduate assistant, receives a stipend, and lives on campus as a doctoral student. These students are more likely to work in a laboratory and interact with their advisors more often, or be graduate assistants. They would even have an easier time obtaining a chairperson, as they are on campus and able to make connections, be connected with mentors inside and outside of their program, and establish working relationships, as they are visible and already in the workplace setting. Naturally, these types of doctoral students would more have more contact with their dissertation

chairpersons and establish a different working relationship with their chairpersons or advisors. These students may not see the need for dissertation support such as monthly check-ins, dissertations seminars, or dissertation retreats, as they are getting this service. On the other hand, they may see the need for motivation, establishing rituals and traditions, and student support groups.

Dr. Madjidi (personal communication, February 26, 2011), full-time professor at Pepperdine University, says, “It takes about 1 year for our doctoral students in EDOL to complete the dissertation. On average it takes 4 semesters, give or take, to complete.” The pursuit of the doctorate is self-actualization at the highest level. It is a transformative process. It is a journey not a destination. Dr. Madjidi states:

This is a gourmet meal. The course work you take is part of the gourmet meal. Take your time; be careful of what people hear when you say you finished your dissertation in 7 months. This is not a race; it is a marathon, so take your time. Your reward is a doctorate. This is a qualitative reflective exercise. This is an exercise in contemplation.

Dr. Laura Hyatt (personal communications, February 26, 2011), full-time professor at Pepperdine University, offered her advice on the preliminary oral defense and the dissertation phase, during a Saturday morning dissertation workshop at GSEP. Hyatt asked:

Do any of you know what prelims mean? It means you are ready to go and collect your data. Preliminary defense is a working meeting “hey put this here, add this”—it is a closed meeting. Passing prelims is a confirmation from your committee members. It means your methods are sound; you are not going to hurt

anybody, or embarrass your committee members, yourself, or other scholars.

Getting to and passing prelims means your research is also doable; the data you're collecting is reasonable.

Hyatt goes on to say, "Be kind to yourself; don't beat yourself up. We have a good track record at Pepperdine."

Summary

This chapter presented a summary of the findings of the perspectives of 2nd-year doctoral students and dissertation students in the EDOL about the current dissertation support Web site and dissertation support. The findings were corroborated with research in the literature. Conclusions were drawn based on the data collected and presented in Chapter 4. Implications for further study as well recommendations were presented. This study has added to the collective body of knowledge on dissertation support.

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APPENDIX A

Projected Dates, Timeline, and Activity Schedule

- Submit chapters 1,2, and 3 to chairperson October 2010.
- Preliminary Oral Defense November 3rd, 2010 at 1:00 p.m. at the West LA Campus; December 2010 build expert panel; January 2011 design instrument
- February 2011 submit Expedited IRB Application and application for waiver or alteration of informed consent;
- March 2011 complete IRB modifications, April 2011 resubmit IRB Modifications
- April 22, 2011 obtained full IRB approval to collect data April 2011 through April 2012; April 25, 2011 obtained Site Approval from Dean Weber
- April 2011 mail packet to expert panel; make necessary changes to instrument before deploying to students Begin Phase 1 data collection;
- May 2011 make corrections to instrument before deployment;
- June 3, 2011 E-mail link to Ms. Christie Dailo; Deploy electronic survey to doctoral students and dissertation students; June 10, 2011 one week after initial e-mail Assistant Program Director will resend follow-up e-mail
- June 17, 2011 Close survey; Complete Phase 1 data analysis
- Mid-June 2011 Begin Phase 2 data collection; Schedule Skype interviews;
- June 2011 conduct all interviews; Conduct data analysis for Phase two
- June 2011 continue writing chapter four results
- July 2011 write chapter five conclusions, implications, and recommendations
- July 2011 submit paper to editor; Schedule final Oral Defense July 20th, 2011

APPENDIX B

Approvals

Site Approval

Dear Dean Weber,

My name is Nicole Simmons-Johnson and I am writing to request site approval, permission to conduct *The Path to Graduation: A Model Interactive Web site Design Supporting Doctoral Students* at Pepperdine University's Graduate School of Education, and permission for Ms. Christie Dailo, Assistant Program Director, Leadership and Technology Programs, to use GSE intranet to access student's e-mail addresses to recruit participants. My dissertation chairperson is Dr. Michelle Rosensitto. My committee is comprised of Dr. June Schmieder-Ramirez and the 26th Senator for the State of California, Curren D. Price, Jr.

So far, I have shared my plans for dissertation with Dr. Schmieder-Ramirez, Dr. Linda Purrington, Dr. Kay Davis, Dr. Robin Bailey Chen, Ms. Christie Dailo, Ms. Jean Kang, Mr. John Kim, Dr. Stephen Berra, Dr. Thomas Granoff, Dean Eric Hamilton, and President Benton. Each of the above mentioned persons have offered valuable insights to improve my study.

By signing below you give your authorization and permission to conduct *The Path to Graduation: A Model Interactive Web site Design Supporting Doctoral Students* at Pepperdine University's Graduate School of Education, obtain permission to recruit participants and permission to communicate with Graduate School of Education Academic Chairperson and professors, to schedule class visits to invite students to take the online survey, during the spring and summer 2011 term. Furthermore, I, Dean Weber give Nicole Simmons-Johnson permission to obtain statistics, such as enrollment,

graduation rates, and doctoral candidate status at Pepperdine University Graduate School of Education.

Dean Margaret Weber

Date

Principal Investigator

Date

Thank you,

Nicole Simmons-Johnson

Doctoral Candidate

Dean Weber's Approval

April 27, 2011

Nicole, thanks for having the conversation today and being able to talk through the data collection process. Given that the students who wish to participate further will give you their information, you will know that they responded to the survey, but you will not know their answers, so the responses are anonymous.

I give my permission for you to move forward with the study.

It looks like a great study and I hope to hear about the results.

Best wishes,

Margaret

-----Original Message-----From: Simmons, Nicole (student)
Sent: Saturday, April 23, 2011 9:56 PMTo: Weber, Margaret Cc: Rosensitto,
Michelle

Subject: Requesting Site Approval to Conduct Study at Pepperdine University
Graduate School of Education

APPENDIX C

Request Permission From EDOL Academic Chair

Dear Dr. June Schmieder-Ramirez,

As you know, I successfully passed my preliminary oral defense November 3, 2010 with modifications. My dissertation chairperson is Dr. Michelle Rosensitto and my committee consists of the 26th Senator for the State of California Curren Price Jr. and yourself. The title of my dissertation is *The Path to Graduation: A Model Interactive Web site Design Supporting Doctoral Students*.

I am writing to request your permission to sample your second year doctoral students and dissertation students in EDOL, during the Spring and Summer 2011 term. I plan to survey second year doctoral students and dissertation students only at the Graduate School of Education in EDOL.

In addition, with your permission I am also requesting permission to contact professors in order to visit classes. The purpose of the classroom visit is to personalize the study. It is my aim to personalize my study by introducing myself to the students, putting a face to the survey, sharing the importance of the study, and informed consent.

I can be reached by e-mail by phone. I look forward to your response.

Thank you for your continued support,

Nicole Simmons-Johnson

Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX D

Online Survey Instrument

Doctoral Student Support Survey

Instructions:

This study seeks to assess doctoral student's and dissertation students perception of the current Graduate School of Education dissertation support website, with implications for designing a model dissertation support website to help students (a) manage the process, (b) build connectedness, and (c) better support doctoral students through the entire doctoral process from orientation, through course work, development of their topic, and finalization of the complete practice study.

Please indicate your consent by reading and clicking "agree" on the electronic informed consent, which outlines your rights as a participant and my duties as the principal investigator. The next step is to then to complete an online survey assessing the helpfulness and usefulness of the current dissertation support services and website. The questions are rated on a 5-point Likert Scale. The survey also includes open-ended questions. In total, the survey should take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Once the results of the survey are coded, the researcher will contact willing participants to collect additional data in the form of interviews.

Doctoral Student Support Survey

7. I understand during the class visit, the principal investigator will describe the electronic informed consent. Given the intentional recruitment of participants, names are not required on the survey and each participant will be given a unique identification number. If a student agrees to further participate in the interview portion of the study their name, email addresses and/or, phone numbers will be collected. Participant's information will be kept confidential. All electronic, statistical, and qualitative data will be stored on a flash drive and researcher's personal computer, which is password and screen saver protected. All information collected will be backed up on an external hard drive which is also password protected, at the principal investigator's residence. Only the principal investigator will have access to the data. Sensitive material will be stored according to IRB transcription coding sheets and files will be kept in a locked cabinet at the researcher's residence for five years. Principal investigator will crosscut shred information collected in the study and destroy all electronic, audio, and digital recordings using a magnet, after a period of five years.

8. I understand that there are no direct benefits for participating in this study. Possible benefits from participation in this study include: (a) Contributing to the literature and body of knowledge of dissertation support and (b) Being an agent of change, using the appreciative eye and the 4-D cycle to contribute personal insight to add to what is "BEST" at Pepperdine University Graduate School of Education. Key stakeholders and decision makers such as the academic chairperson of each program, EDOL and EDEL, the Dissertation Support Manager Jean Kang; the Director of Technology, John Kim; and the Dean, Margaret Weber will review and have access to the results of the study. Other benefits include possible enhancements and improvement of dissertation support services and the dissertation support website.

9. I understand that no form of compensation, financial or otherwise, is being offered for participating in the study.

10. I understand that participants have the right to refuse to participate in, or to withdraw from, the study at any time without prejudice.

11. I understand that I also have the right to refuse to answer any question I choose not to answer.

12. I understand that there might be times the investigator may find it necessary to end my study participation.

13. I understand that no information gathered from my study participation will be released to others without my permission, or as required by law. Under California law, an exception to the privilege of confidentiality includes but is not limited to the alleged or probable abuse of a child, physical abuse of an elder or a dependent adult, or if a person indicates she or he wishes to do serious harm to self, others, or property.

14. I understand that if the findings of the study are published or presented to a professional audience, no personally identifying information will be released. The data gathered will be stored in locked file cabinets to which only the investigator will have access. The data will be maintained in a secure manner for five years for research purposes. After the completion of the study, the data will be destroyed.

15. I understand that if participants have any questions regarding the study procedures, they can contact Nicole Simmons-Johnson at 536 S. Flower Street #4, Inglewood, CA 90301 or at 323.947.4838 to get my questions answered.

16. I understand that if participants have questions, they may contact Dr. Michelle Rosensitto at 949.223.2565 or contact the IRB Interim Chairperson Dr. Yuying Tsong, Chairperson of the GPS Institutional Review Board, Pepperdine University at 310.568.5768 or Yuying.Tsong@pepperdine.edu.

Doctoral Student Support Survey

17. I understand to my satisfaction the information in the consent form regarding my participation in the research project. All of my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I hereby consent to participate in the research described above.

*** 1. ELECTRONIC CONSENT: Please select your choice below.**

Clicking on the "Agree" button below indicates that:

- I have read the above information
- I voluntarily agree to participate
- I am at least 18 years of age.

If you do not wish to participate in the research study, please decline participation by clicking on the "Disagree" button.

- Agree
- Disagree

*** 2. What is your current status in the EDOL Program?**

- 2nd Year Doctoral Student
- Dissertation Student

*** 3. Please indicate your gender.**

- Male
- Female

*** 4. Please identify your ethnic group.**

- African-American or Black
- Native American
- Latino/Hispanic
- Caucasian
- Asian
- Pacific Islander

Other (please specify)

Doctoral Student Support Survey

7. What services/information are needed on the dissertation support website that are not already available?

8. What do you find most useful about the current dissertation support website?

9. What do you find least useful about the current dissertation support website?

10. If you could redesign the dissertation support website, what would be your top three changes?

11. On average, how often do you visit the current dissertation support website per month?

- Four or more times (at least once/week)
- One to three times (at least once a month)
- Less than once per month
- None (Not at all)

Doctoral Student Support Survey

12. What would make you visit the dissertation support website more often?

13. Overall, how satisfied are you with the current dissertation support website?

- Very Satisfied
 Satisfied
 Neutral
 Dissatisfied
 Very Dissatisfied

14. Visually, what might an ideal dissertation support website look like?

15. Which of the following technologies would you like to see implemented on the dissertation support website?

Please check all that apply.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Webinars | <input type="checkbox"/> Virtual Office Hours |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Blogs | <input type="checkbox"/> Skype communication with Professors |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Virtual Guest Speakers | <input type="checkbox"/> Wikis |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student Audio/Video Testimonials | <input type="checkbox"/> Podcasts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Video Clips | <input type="checkbox"/> Links to professional doctoral student organizations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> e-Mentoring | |

Other (please specify)

Doctoral Student Support Survey

16. Please indicate whether you would participate in any of the following formal and/or informal social activities or events, if offered at your university or another university during your graduate experience. Check all that apply.

- End-of-1st Year Luncheon
- 2nd Year Coursework Completion Dinner
- Learn-at-Lunch Face-to-Face Meeting
- Monthly Faculty Check-In via Skype
- Monthly Webinar with a Professor
- Writing Seminars/Online Writing Support
- Dissertation Retreat/Boot Camp
- Student Support Groups
- In-State and/or Out-of-State Dissertation Symposium

Other (please specify)

17. Would you use the dissertation support website more frequently if more web-based social tools were made available?

- Definitely
- Probably
- Maybe
- Probably Not
- Definitely Not

*** 18. Interview Consent:**

Would you like to further participate in this study in the form of a 20 minute Skype interview?

- Yes
- No

Interview Consent:

Please provide your name along with your email and/or phone number so that I may contact you.

Doctoral Student Support Survey

*** 19. All individuals who provide contact information at the end of this online survey will be contacted to set up interviews. All contacts will be interviewed if they agree to set up an interview time and sign the letter of consent for interview prior to the Skype interview.**

Name
Phone Number
Email

Thank you very much.

APPENDIX E

E-Mail Invitation to Participate in Study

You have been invited to participate in a study entitled *The Path to Graduation: A Model Interactive Web site Design Supporting Doctoral Students*, Spring 2011. Your participation is strictly voluntary.

Please take 3-5 minutes to peruse the current dissertation support Web site at <http://services.pepperdine.edu/gsep/dissertation/>. Then follow the link <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/DoctoralStudentSupportSurvey> to complete the electronic online survey hosted by Survey Monkey. If you agree to participate read and click “agree” on the electronic letter of consent.

Thank you in advance for your time and helping me to collect the necessary data for completion of my dissertation.

APPENDIX F

Alignment Table

Research Questions	Survey Item #	Analytical Techniques
1. What are second year doctoral students and dissertation students, at Pepperdine University Graduate School of Education in the EDOL doctoral program, perceptions of the existing dissertation support Web site?	1,2,3,4,	Descriptive Statistics
	5,6,7,8,9, 11,13,	Descriptive Statistics Mean, Medium Mode; Present information in tables, charts and figures.
2. What do second year doctoral students and dissertation students at Pepperdine University Graduate School of Education in the EDOL doctoral program, recommend as future enhancements to a dissertation support Web site?	10, 12,14,15, 16	Descriptive statistics; Present information in tables, charts and figures.
	18, 19	Resend follow-up e-mail with link to electronic survey two week after initial e-mail and class visit; contact participants using the follow-up script within two weeks.
	7,8,9,10, 12, 14	Semistructured interview protocol; audiotape the interview and transcribe the interview; Begin coding system; organize material into chunks, label categories; generate themes; themes will be represented in a narrative passage to convey the findings of the analysis; Visuals such as tables, figures and chart will also be used in the discussion;
3. What do second year doctoral students and dissertation students at Pepperdine University Graduate School of Education in the EDOL doctoral program, recommend as a future model for a state-of-the-art dissertation support Web site?	10, 14,15,16, 17,	Descriptive Statistics; Present information using tables, charts, and figures in addition to narrative description.

APPENDIX G

Criteria for Selecting Panel of Experts

The following is Dr. Michelle Rosensitto's (1999) criteria for selecting a panel of experts, to ensure the validity of the instrument.

1. All validating judges who were employed by universities possessed an earned academic doctoral degree, and those who were employed by community or junior colleges possessed an earned academic Master's degree.
2. At least one of the judges held a degree in each of the four academic discipline groups: Education, Psychology and Social Sciences Humanities, and the Arts and Sciences.
3. At least half of the validating judges on this panel were not known personally by the researcher. (Rosensitto, 1999, p. 104)

Dear Nicole,

Thank you for your request. Please consider this written permission to use the material detailed below in your dissertation. Proper attribution to the original source should be included. The permission does not include any 3rd party material found within the work. Please contact us for any future usage or publication of your dissertation.

Best,

Adele

- EDEL, the Dissertation Support Manager Jean Kang; the Director of Technology, John Kim; and the Dean, Margaret Weber will review and have access to the results of the study. Other benefits include possible enhancements and improvement of dissertation support services and the dissertation support Web site.
8. I understand that no form of compensation, financial or otherwise, is being offered for participating in the study.
 9. I understand that participants have the right to refuse to participate in, or to withdraw from, the study at any time without prejudice.
 10. I understand that I also have the right to refuse to answer any question I choose not to answer.
 11. I understand that there might be times the investigator may find it necessary to end my study participation.
 12. I understand that no information gathered from my study participation will be released to others without my permission, or as required by law. Under California law, an exception to the privilege of confidentiality includes but is not limited to the alleged or probable abuse of a child, physical abuse of an elder or a dependent adult, or if a person indicates she or he wishes to do serious harm to self, others, or property.
 13. I understand that if the findings of the study are published or presented to a professional audience, no personally identifying information will be released. The data gathered will be stored in locked file cabinets to which only the investigator will have access. The data will be maintained in a secure manner for five years for research purposes. After the completion of the study, the data will be destroyed.
 14. I understand that if participants have any questions regarding the study procedures,

- How the consent document is the only record linking the subject to the research.
- How the principal risk to the subject is the potential harm from a breach of confidentiality.
- Why, if performed outside the research context, written consent is not normally required for the proposed experimental procedures.

If the IRB approves a Waiver of Documentation of Informed Consent, the investigator must:

- Ask each participant if he or she wants documentation linking the participant with the research (i.e., wishes to complete an informed consent form). The participant's wishes will govern whether informed consent is documented. *{45 CFR 46.117(c)(1)}*

AND

- At the direction of the IRB, provide participants with a written statement regarding the research. *{45 CFR 46.117(c)}*

APPENDIX V

Copy of Expedited IRB Approval

PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY

Graduate & Professional Schools Institutional Review Board

April 22, 2011

Nicole Simmons-Johnson
**Protocol #: E0111D09****Project Title: *The Path to Graduation: A Model Interactive Website Design Supporting Doctoral Students***

Dear Ms. Simmons-Johnson:

Thank you for submitting your revised IRB application, *The Path to Graduation: A Model Interactive Website Design Supporting Doctoral Students*, to Pepperdine's Graduate and Professional Schools Institutional Review Board (GPS IRB). The IRB has reviewed your revised submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. As the nature of the research met the requirements for expedited review under provision Title 45 CFR 46.110 (research category 7) of the federal Protection of Human Subjects Act, the IRB conducted a formal, but expedited, review of your application materials.

I am pleased to inform you that your application for your study was granted **Full Approval**. The IRB approval begins today, **April 22, 2011** and terminates on **April 21, 2012**. In addition, your application to waive documentation of informed consent for the survey portion of your survey, as indicated in your **Application for Waiver or Alteration of Informed Consent Procedures** form has been approved.

Your final consent form for the interview portion of the study has been stamped by the IRB to indicate the expiration date of study approval. One copy of the consent form is enclosed with this letter and one copy will be retained for our records. You can only use copies of the consent that have been stamped with the GPS IRB expiration date to obtain consent from your participants.

In addition, please be sure to submit copies of site approvals (i.e. Appendix B, C, and D) when you have obtained approval. These must be submitted before participant recruitment.

Please note that your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the GPS IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For **any** proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit a **Request for Modification Form** to the GPS IRB. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for expedited review and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the GPS IRB. If contact with subjects will extend beyond **April 21, 2012**, a **Continuation or Completion of Review Form** must be submitted at least **one month** prior to the expiration date of study approval to avoid a lapse in approval. These forms can be found on the IRB website at <http://services.pepperdine.edu/irb/irbforms/#Apps>.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite our best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the GPS IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete explanation of the event and your response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the GPS IRB and the appropriate form to be used to report this information can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual* (see link to "policy material" at <http://www.pepperdine.edu/irb/graduate/>).

PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY

Graduate & Professional Schools Institutional Review Board

June 16, 2011

Nicole Simmons-Johnson

636 S. Flower Street
Inglewood, CA 90301

Re: Request for Modification

Protocol #: E0111D09

Project Title: *The Path to Graduation: A Model Interactive Website Design Supporting Doctoral Students*

Dear Ms. Simmons-Johnson:

The GPS IRB has received your Request for Modification Form requesting permission to modify your approved protocol for your study, *The Path to Graduation: A Model Interactive Website Design Supporting Doctoral Students*. Your Request for Modification for your study has been approved and you may proceed with your study.

As noted in the IRB approval letter from April, 22, 2011, study approval for your project will expire on **April 21, 2012**. If any further changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit a Request for Modification Form to the GPS IRB. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for expedited review and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the GPS IRB. If contact with subjects will extend beyond **April 21, 2012**, a Continuation or Completion of Review Form must be submitted at least one month prior to the expiration date of study approval to avoid a lapse in approval.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite our best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the GPS IRB as soon as possible. If notified, we will ask for a complete explanation of the event and your response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event.

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all further communication or correspondence related to this approval. Should you have additional questions, please contact me. Thank you for submitting such complete and thorough application. On behalf of the GPS IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,



Jean Kang
Manager, GPS IRB & Dissertation Support
Pepperdine University
Graduate School of Education & Psychology
6100 Center Dr. 5th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90045