AN EVALUATION OF BEST PRACTICES IN ONLINE CONTINUING
THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

by

Stephen Paul Raybon

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Approved by:

_____
Dr. John Gretes

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Dr. Richard Lambert

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Dr. Corey Lock

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Dr. Jack Cathey

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ABSTRACT

STEPHEN PAUL RAYBON An evaluation of best practices in online continuing theological education (Under the direction of JOHN A. GRETES)

The principle purpose of this mixed methods case study was to evaluate the extent to which a wholly online continuing theological education program operated by an Association of Theological Schools accredited seminary modeled best practices of online education, as exemplified by the findings of the *Quality On the Line* study and the University of Maryland University College (UMUC) *Best Online Instructional Practices* (BOIP) study. In support of that goal, the research examined the extent to which key themes in the pursuit of theological education; sense of community, transformational learning and transfer of learning, were reported by respondents, and looked for an association between best practices and those themes in four specific courses.

Evidence of best practices as indicated by the QOL benchmarks and the BOIP rubric was found in all sources evaluated for that purpose. Likewise, evidence for the key themes was found in all sources evaluated for that purpose.

Within the four core courses, evidence of best practices and key themes in theological continuing education was found for each course where that data was available. Because all evaluated courses demonstrated evidence of best practices and the presence of the key themes, there is an implied but not an empirical association.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAHE	American Association for Higher Education, American, (now AAHEA) Association for Higher Education and Accreditation
AIR	Administrative Interview respondent
ATS	Association of Theological Schools
BTSR	Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond
BOIP	Best Online Instructional Practices
FIR	Faculty Interview respondent
FR	Respondent to Faculty Survey
R	Respondent to Student Survey
SACS	Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
SCM	School of Christian Ministry
SIR	Student Interview respondent
TEE	Theological Education by Extension
UMUC	University of Maryland University College

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Setting the Stage

The world has shifted. In almost every area of life rapid advances in technology have changed the way we live. How we engage in commerce, communication, politics, medicine, leisure, even religion and romance, has been radically transformed by the advent and exponential growth of the internet, and broadband and cellular telecommunications.

The field of education has been upended by this revolution as much as other arenas of society. Extending access to knowledge and learning is one of the foundational tenets of the educational mission, so using technology in the furtherance of that goal would seem a foregone conclusion. But saying yes to something new often requires saying no to something old and many educators struggle to accommodate new methods for teaching and learning without compromising long held beliefs about what constitutes a classroom or meaningful interaction. Despite those struggles the revolution has continued and online distance education in particular has undergone explosive growth and transformation.

Distance Education

The modern history of distance education began with correspondence school by mail in the 19th century. As new technologies arose in the 20th, they were appropriated for the purpose of extending access to higher education and professional training. Radio, audio recordings, television and then video recordings provided opportunities for those

separated from physical campuses to study for degrees. Correspondence school was invaluable for students who lacked the resources or time to devote to campus-based learning, but was perceived as the poor relation of "real" education at institutions of higher learning (Seevers, 1993; Tilton, 2010).

This view was even more prevalent in theological education. "Access and equity have been driving principles behind educational reform but those principles have not always been pertinent to theological education…. [which] traditionally has viewed itself as involving the formation of a specific chosen/called population" (Patterson, 1996, p. 62). In other words, since theological education was not intended for everyone, great efforts were not necessary to grant universal access. The road to a degree in theological studies was decidedly narrow.

The democratization of American society and higher education in the mid to late 20th century also opened up new possibilities in theological higher education. While formal academic training for the ministry has always been a part of some religious traditions, for many if not most churches in the United States it was not a prerequisite. As more Americans sought and attained college degrees, more churches and pastors decided that an educated pastorate was going to be the norm. But not all ministers were willing or even able to stop in mid-career and relocate families to attend traditional seminaries or divinity schools (Hess, 2005). Ricciuti points out that "theological study and the practice of ministry are no longer sequential for most students, but simultaneous" (2003, p. 147). One response to this reality was the development of theological education by extension.

Theological Distance Education

Theological education by extension (TEE) began as a missionary effort in the 1960's in Guatemala. It was built around very basic study materials that could be mailed to and from students and evaluated by a qualified educator. That educator would also travel to central locations in country for intensive classroom experiences. The model worked so well there and around the world that schools and denominations in the United States began to consider how it might be adapted to meet the growing need for theological education here (Meyers, 2007).

The Association of Theological Schools (ATS), the primary accrediting body for theological higher education in the United States and Canada began a formal study of the issue in 1974, at which time an ATS official expressed his concerns about "the 'deschooling' tendencies" of TEE (Aleshire, 1999, p. vii). The model began to grow in popularity but it was not until 1980 that ATS adopted its first standard regarding extension education. Over the next twenty years ATS would produce four major revisions of its distance education standards in an effort to adjust to the changes in technology. The wording of the 2000 standards reflected many of the shifts that had taken place in the previous decades. "Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous and usually encompasses a wide range of technologies." Library requirements included "electronic access to digital resources" for distance education students (ATS, 2000, p. 92). Enrollments in ongoing online courses grew from 7,670 students in 2005 to 14,140 in 2011 (Chris Meinzer, ATS, personal communication, February 27, 2012). At the 2012 Biennial Meeting of ATS, a new set of standards will be proposed to reflect the continued growth of online offerings among member schools.

Theological Distance Education Online

In 1998, the Lilly Endowment began awarding grants to 72 institutions of theological higher education through the Information Technology for Theological Teaching program. Each school received $300,000 to improve capacity to use computer technologies and online resources more effectively. A further grant was issued to ATS in 2002 to study the results of the effort ("Of wikis, moodle and blogs: technology and educational practices program suggests new directions," 2008).

The initial grants were focused on technology in the classroom and resulted in the installation of smart classrooms and training of faculty in applications. But as the electronic infrastructure began to develop on campus, including the adoption of course management systems like Blackboard, many began to see new possibilities for distance education.

Theological Continuing Education Online

One institution that received major funding from Lily was The Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond (BTSR). A million dollar grant received in 1999 led to the research and development for a distance education program that became the School of Christian Ministry (SCM) in 2003, offering asynchronous online courses in a non-degree program of study for church leaders. Although originally conceived as a certificate program, demand for individualized courses of study and continuing education for graduates led the program to expand to 26 short term web-based courses offered to hundreds of learners from around the country and the world.

Despite a promising start as the only program of its kind; a wholly online, non-degree program offering unique courses, under the aegis of an ATS accredited graduate

school, SCM fell victim to the economic downturn and was suspended in 2010. The SCM experiment offers an illuminating case for research on the use of online learning to meet the continuing theological education needs of lay leaders in congregations across the globe.

Research Problem

These developments in technology and distance education have come at a critical time for Christian congregations. In the last twenty years, a number of factors, including devaluation of training, decentralization of denominations, time, money, and distance issues, have made it more difficult to gather lay church leaders for concentrated onsite continuing education events. The need for training in education, worship, theology, and ministry for lay leaders is perhaps stronger than ever before because leaders who were so thoroughly trained in the past are retiring from active service. Although the need is great, the time-tested means of meeting that need are no longer working. Simultaneously, schools of theological higher education are looking for ways to build bridges with local congregations both as a function of their mission and as a means to foster relationships that result in future students and financial support (Aleshire, 2010). It appears that if these institutions can use internet technology to meet the training requirements of local congregations, then all parties will benefit: schools, churches and individuals seeking further training.

Significance of this Study

Studies of online learning have prompted careful consideration of pedagogical, social, technological, structural and assessment issues that in turn have led to the development of best practices standards. Theological higher education has been hesitant

to accept the possibilities of online education because of specific concerns about the quality of interaction and the capacity for community, barriers to achieving the affective learning goals of theological education, including transformational learning, and the theological compatibility of a medium that is essentially disembodied. Research that can help build a case for the compatibility, perhaps even the synchronicity, of best practices in online education and the goals of theological education will do much to pave the way for further exploration of the uses of this medium to meet congregational continuing education needs.

The School of Christian Ministry presents a model that may meet these needs and be reproducible in other settings. However, although established in 2003, SCM never underwent a formal program evaluation. Ongoing formative evaluation was done internally through student evaluations and course observations, but there was no objective study of the program's effectiveness. Being able to analyze the efficacy of this medium in the field of theological continuing education could encourage other institutions to explore the possibility of adding online continuing education programs. Schools, larger churches and groups of churches could partner for training which develops church leaders, cultivates ongoing peer relationships, and strengthen congregations and their connections to schools of theological higher education.

Purpose of Research

The principle purpose of this study is to evaluate the extent to which the School of Christian Ministry (SCM) at Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond (BTSR) modeled best practices of online education, as exemplified by the findings of the *Quality On the Line* study and the University of Maryland University College (UMUC) *Best*

Online Instructional Practices (BOIP) study. In support of that goal, the research examines the extent to which key themes in the pursuit of theological education are reported by students, and looks for a connection between the two.

<div align="center">Process of Research</div>

This is a mixed methods case study program evaluation. Program documents, including original proposal, strategic plan, catalog, and training materials for instructors, were examined for awareness and inclusion of best practices of online education using a checklist built from the twenty-four benchmarks from the *Quality On the Line* report (Appendix A).

Next, the key components (syllabi, course schedules, assignments, discussion boards, etc.) of the four core courses of the program: *The Church—A System of Relationships*, *Biblical Basis for Ministry, Theological Reflection,* and *Spiritual Formation and Calling* were analyzed for implementation of best practices using the BOIP Online Classroom Observation rubric.

SCM Online Course evaluation data was then analyzed for descriptions of the program participants, and further evidence of the dimensions of best practices from the BOIP rubric. Wrap up comments from discussion boards, student and faculty surveys and follow up interviews with students, faculty and administrators served to fill in gaps of information from previous steps as well as to discover the degree to which students experienced a sense of community and transformational learning in their online courses, and the extent to which transfer of learning has taken place for students in their ministry settings as a measure of changes in behavior influenced by the program. Finally, the

study explored the possibility of an association between implementation of best practices in specific courses and these three desired themes in theological continuing education.

Research Questions

This study undertook to answer five key questions regarding the SCM program:

1. To what extent does SCM model best practices of online curriculum and instruction?

2. To what extent do students report experiencing a sense of community in their courses?

3. To what extent do students report experiencing transformational learning?

4. To what extent do students report transferring their learning into ministry settings?

5. Is there an association between implementation of best practices in specific courses and these three desired themes in theological continuing education?

Delimitations

Study will be focused on one theological continuing education program. No equivalent programs at other institutions were discovered during the literature review.

Limitations

Because the study will be limited to one program with a small student population and a small number of courses, the question of generalizability is legitimate. It is anticipated that the use of accepted standards of best practices supported by research will make the findings helpful in multiple settings.

Definitions

Asynchronous: mode of online learning that does not require teachers and learners to be connected at a given time.

Continuing education: formal plan of study to improve the knowledge and practice of adult learners.

Course management system: software application and electronic superstructure, also known as a platform, for the development, offering and administration of training programs, classes and course content via the internet.

Distance education: The provision of instruction by an institution in which learners and teachers are not usually gathered in the same physical location but are linked by technology that enables shared content and communication. Also "distributed education" and "education by extension."

Online education: distance education using the internet as the primary technology.

Theological education: The education of individuals in the theological disciplines of religious heritage (scripture, history and doctrine), cultural context, personal spiritual formation, and ministry leadership practices.

Theological higher education: post-baccalaureate education for professional ministerial leadership, offered typically by seminaries and divinity schools that confer the Master of Divinity as the basic degree.

Summary

The world has shifted, and the efforts of institutions of theological higher education to provide continuing education for church leaders must shift as well. The School of Christian Ministry of the Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond

represented one such effort. This study seeks to evaluate the possibility that this effort could be an exemplar for others.

Toward that end, an examination of the current research literature that focuses upon basic issues in online learning, best practices in online education, theological education online and evaluation theory and practice will be presented in Chapter 2. The gaps in research provide more than adequate ground for this study to explore. No evaluation of an online continuing education program connected with an accredited theological institution was found. Chapter 3 then describes in detail the research questions, setting, theoretical approaches and procedure that guided the study. Chapter 4 presents the results of the research and Chapter 5 a discussion of the findings, implications, and recommendations of this study.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Shifts in the use of computer and internet technology have sent unremitting
seismic waves through institutions of higher education for the last ten to fifteen years.
Administrators, faculty, and students have been striving to discover new norms in a world
where a "class" can consist of students living on three continents, facilitated by an
instructor on a fourth, studying content drawn from a collection on a fifth, or all five.
Early adopters, who had existed on the fringe of faculties, became e-learning gurus with
their own specialized programs and consulting firms. For-profit institutions that had been
disdained for less than adequate correspondence courses became leaders in the field of
online learning and chief competitors for enrollment with historic 'brick and mortar"
institutions, a term which is in itself is an indicator of the tsunami of change. Before the
wave was fully experienced, how many knew there was any other kind of educational
institution?

As one indicator of the scope of change, over twenty years ago as an
undergraduate history major and then a master of divinity student, I spent many of my
waking hours researching in an academic library, scanning the periodical indices for
articles and hoping hardcopies could be found in the stacks rather than in the microfilm
collection. Freedom from the study carrel came in the expensive form of copying
machines and microfilm printers. Interlibrary loan was a time-consuming process that had
to be initiated at the beginning of a project or not at all. In contrast, during four years of

doctoral study at a level II research university, I have spent hundreds upon hundreds of hours in reading and research, almost all of it from a recliner in my home.

But there is more than anecdotal evidence for this shift. In 2002 1,602,970 higher education students at public institutions, slightly less than 10 percent of enrollment took at least one online class. The most recent estimate, for fall 2010, indicated 6.1 million online students, slightly more than 31 percent. The compound annual growth rate for online students between 2002 and 2008 was 18 percent, compared to the overall higher education growth rate of 2 percent (Allen & Seaman, 2010, p. 5). In the for-profit sector, Phoenix University, founded in 1976, grew to over 470,800 students, making it one of the largest mega-universities in the world, alongside wholly online institutions Open University in the United Kingdom and Gandhi University in India (De Groote, 2010) (Seok, Meyen, Poggio, Semon, & Tillberg-Webb, 2008).

These developments in technology and distance education have come at a critical time for both theological education and Christian congregations. In the last twenty years, it has become more difficult to gather leaders for concentrated training while at the same time the need for such training in education, worship, theology, and ministry for lay leaders is perhaps stronger than ever before because the highly trained leaders of the past are retiring from active service (Hollon, & Hammon, 2004; Reber, 2010). Today both lay and professional ministry leaders are less able or willing to disrupt their families or their ministries to travel for concentrated educational opportunities (MacLeod, 2008). Many churches are selecting and training paid staff from their volunteer leadership, familiar with the local context, rather than importing highly-educated staff that must spend

significant time and energy becoming acclimated (Hall, 2009). The need for training in place has never been greater.

Simultaneously, schools of theological higher education, many with declining enrollments and resources, are looking for ways to build bridges with local congregations both as a function of their mission and as a means to foster relationships that result in future students and financial support (Aleshire, 2006; Hess, 2005, p. 23). Institutions that were established as the next step for young college graduates seeking professional ministerial education now have shrinking student populations, of which 50% are over the age of 35, many of whom are retraining for a second vocation. There are also indications that there are fewer individuals entering ministry leadership positions through formal seminary training than by informal routes (Hess, 2005). Online educational opportunities may provide the key to fulfilling the requirements of both constituencies. But first there are questions that need to be answered.

Focus

Much of the scholarship in the field has centered on determining if online education works at all. Early studies, often comparing the online version to a face to face version of a single course, or focusing on a small sample of courses, lacked generalizability (Hiltz & Arbaugh, 2003; Lewis & Abdul-Hamid, 2006; Means,, Toyama, Murphy, Bakia, & Jones, 2009). However as research continued, broad themes emerged as central to any discussion of the efficacy of this developing tool in higher education. Questions about pedagogy, social interaction, technology, support, and learning outcomes have been raised and addressed over a decade of research. Some of the best research then

began to concentrate on how to evaluate online education, especially in terms of best practices.

This review will begin by addressing those key questions that have framed the study of online education. Examining research on best instructional practices then supplies the key to analysis for this study, particularly in the area of curriculum and instruction. Next are specific issues that have become the subject of much debate within theological higher education circles about the compatibility of online teaching with the affective and transformational learning goals of theological education. Finally, a survey of evaluation theory and examples provides the methodological baseline for this dissertation.

<div align="center">Online Education Issues</div>

Pedagogical:

Mary Hess' *Engaging Technology in Theological Education* notes what would seem to be self-evident, ineffective teaching is just as ineffective online as it is face to face. Furthermore, weaknesses that are attributed to online education are just as prevalent in classrooms (Hess, 2005; Patterson, 1996). The central issue in the literature of online education is pedagogy. The hows and whys of teaching online far outweigh the technical and technological questions of using a new medium in both quantity and fervor. In research and practice, online learning seems to have rejuvenated consideration of teaching in higher education. In fact, professors have found that designing and teaching online courses have sharpened their pedagogical skills (Groeling & Ruth, 2007; MacLeod, 2008; Osborn, 2006).

The growing capacity of course management systems and other technology provides a wealth of tools for online education. But good technology does not obscure bad teaching, as one author so aptly summarized: "many institutions are jumping on the technology bandwagon…, their goal is to use the technology to transmit a tired and stale pedagogy over fiber optic cable—as if the fiber optic cable will somehow transform the pedagogy" (McIntyre in Paloff, 2007, p.231).

What sort of pedagogy then should be should be implemented through online education? Early critics were skeptical of the theoretical basis for online teaching, as one commented; "I had read glowing testimonies by people who successfully practiced distance education, and thought to myself – yes, but it will never work in theory" (Delamarter et al., 2007, p. 73). In fact, the principles of constructivist educational theory came to be central to online practice (Nkonge & Gueldenzoph, 2006). The phrase "from sage on the stage to guide on the side" first coined by Alison King (1993) has become clichéd shorthand for the shift in the professor's role from knowledge transmission to learning facilitation called for by both constructivist theorists and online education best practices.

The penchant for best practices research and writing is reflective of the fast pace of change in online higher education, and the subsequent demand for equally quick fixes. Practitioners and reporters of case studies do not always take the time to connect effective methods to underlying theory. But the influence of constructivist theory is apparent when terms like *collaboration, active learning, readiness, learner-centered, reflection, dialog, scaffolding* and *interaction* pepper the literature of online education (Byer, Glen C.J.; Clark, John; Mahfood, Sebastian; Welch, Lawrence J., 2002; Herrington, Herrington,

Oliver, Stoney, & Willis, 2001; Holdener, 2010; Ko, 2005; Lewis & Abdul-Hamid, 2006; Magnussen, 2008; Oliver, 2005; Phipps & Merisotis, 2000; Tilton, 2010).

As further indication of the influence of constructivist thought on online pedagogy, a comparison of widely recognized sources of basic principles of constructivist learning theory (Doolittle, 1999; Hein, 1991) and online teaching best practices (Alley & Jansak, 2001; Hacker & Niederhauser, 2000; Keeton, 2004b) reveals several common themes (see Table 1). Four themes; "Active learning," "Social interaction," "Context-based," and "Motivation" were present in each list of basic principles or best practices. Three more, "Learner-centered," "Prior knowledge", and "Critical inquiry/ reflection" were found in every author's list or in the supporting text of the articles. "Feedback" was not mentioned at all in Hein's article but was found in the other four. Perhaps feedback is more of a strategy than a principle, to be used to implement each of the basic principles.

The principle of "language" was the only constructivist theme not found in these discussions of online education. In fact, in this entire literature review the only discussions of language have been in terms of the absence of body language (Hess, 2005), the difficulty in reading online colloquialisms (Nam, 2009) and the need to learn the language of the digital native, (Jewel, 2005). Perhaps the absence of this theme in treatments of online pedagogy could be a point of further research.

Table 1: Themes Common to Constructivism and Online Pedagogy

Constructivist Learning Theme/Issue	Hein	Doolittle	Hacker	Alley	Keeton
Active learning	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Social interaction	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Learner-centered	yes	yes	supporting	yes	yes
Context-based	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Motivation	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Prior knowledge	yes	yes	supporting	yes	yes
Critical inquiry/reflection	yes	yes	supporting	yes	yes
Feedback	no	yes	yes	supporting	yes
Language	yes	supporting	no	no	no

It appears that the tremendous growth and development of online learning at a time when the wider academic sphere is experiencing a shift towards constructivist pedagogy (Howell, Williams, & Lindsay, 2003) has created a marriage of theory and technology that addresses the need of adult learners to have their agendas, abilities and lifestyles taken seriously. Learners' need to interact with peers and instructors is at the heart of the next critical issue for online education.

Social Interaction:

Paloff and Pratt, first in 1998 and again in a 2007 revision, make the argument that interaction is central to all online learning, and posit an electronic pedagogy that

builds learning communities characterized by honesty, responsiveness, relevance, respect, openness and empowerment (2007a). The centrality of interaction to effective online learning is reinforced by Phipps and Merisotis' benchmark study (2000) as well as others (Bloomberg, 2006; Eng, 2004; Han, Dresdow, Gail, & Plunkett, 2003; Rovai, 2002).

Oblinger and Oblinger point out that the "Net Generation" now coming online in higher education "craves interactivity" (2005). But much of that interaction is unstructured and does not necessarily translate into online academic success (Lovvorn, Barth, Morris, & Timmerman, 2009). Landis describes the online setting as "more isolating, because most of the activities are performed alone, and more communal, since it can be argued that more interaction actually occurs than in a regular classroom" (Heinemann, 2005a, p. 180). Thus, social interaction is not an organic component of online education but must be built in to the pedagogical structure of a course (Lewis & Abdul-Hamid, 2006). Roblyer and Wiencke, in designing a rubric to assess interaction, defined it as "a created environment in which both social and instructional messages are exchanged among the entities in the course and in which messages are both carried and influenced by the activities and the technology resources being employed (2003, p. 81)." In other words, effective interaction between instructors, students, technology, and content is multidirectional, multidimensional and intentional.

Wegerif (1998) found a movement among students in online courses from "outsider" to "insider" status that, if frustrated by course design as well as personal factors, resulted in diminished learning and even attrition. That human factor in the online learning community is often termed "social presence," defined by Gunawardena and Zittle as "the degree to which a person is perceived as a 'real person' in mediated

communication" (Shore, 2007, p. 92). Several studies indicate a relationship between low social presence and lowered interaction and learning (Savery, 2005). Instructors and students are challenged with both projecting a personal presence to which others can relate and interpreting the projections of others, without the benefit of body language or vocal cues.

Like all social constructs, the online learning community comes with caveats. Savery reports that the level of intimacy demonstrated by students in their postings exceeds that typical in a classroom and requires compassion and discretion on the part of the instructor (2005). While Drouin's (2008) study clearly links students' sense of community, especially student-student interaction, to course satisfaction, she reminds us that some students who take online classes have no desire for communal interaction. Sener and Humbert (2003) highlight the need for appropriate levels of required interaction that do not reduce the flexibility that is a key component of student satisfaction with online learning. Too much of a good thing is always too much of a good thing.

Technological:

Because technology is what makes the phenomenon of online education possible, there has been a great deal of writing about technological issues. But the salient work for this study is not about technical aspects of hardware but the philosophical and practical implications of using a relatively new technology as the primary means of connecting teachers, learners and content. Three critical issues merit specific discussion: access, who can get to the technology; fluency, how well they can use it; and decision-making, how that technology is chosen and used for educational purposes.

The first issue is access. In the 1990's there was a great deal of concern expressed that not everyone had equal access to the growing phenomenon of the internet. In a series of reports, the U.S. Department of Commerce explored what was being popularized as the *digital divide*: "the divide between those with access to new technologies and those without" and characterized it as "one of America's leading economic and civil rights issues." (U.S. Department of Commerce, National Telecommunications and Information Administration, 1999). Those early reports found a distinct gap in access between races, socioeconomic groups and geographical regions. Subsequent studies by the Kaiser Foundation *The Digital Divide* (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2004, 2010) indicated a narrowing of that gap. By 2010 the lowest percentage of any group of teens with internet access was 74%. Among those whose parents went to college the percentage was 91%. Even concerns about slow or inadequate connections are becoming less prevalent (Nkonge & Gueldenzoph, 2006). While these figures remind us that home online access is not yet universal, increasing access and use in schools make it very likely that students seeking higher education will have experience using the internet.

But experience with a means of communication does not always equate with fluency, which is the second key technological issue. Most students' prior experience has been recreational. Some studies find that the process of orientation of novice learners to the computer mediated learning environment slows both learning and formation of community online (Heinemann, 2005b) (Young, 2007) (Lovvorn et al., 2009).

Fluency has been an even greater issue for faculty members, for while most students are "digital natives," never having known anything but a digitally enhanced world, many faculty are "digital immigrants,' learning a second language of bits and

bytes. Even those who become fluent speak with an accent that gives them away to the native speakers (Jewel, 2005), (Hess, 2005), (Exter, Korkmaz, Harlin, & Bichelmeyer, 2009), (Holdener, 2010). In order to make connections and facilitate communication, community, and learning among online students, faculty have to gain proficiency and or partner with those who can translate into the new medium.

The final technological issue in online education is decision-making. Early judgments about how online programs were to be conceived and implemented were often hardware and software driven, heavily influenced by vendors (Moore & Thompson, 1990). The first major benchmark study was in fact financed in part by Blackboard, the leading course management system provider (Phipps & Merisotis, 2000). Advocates of strong online programs insist that decisions about online education should be guided by pedagogy more than technology, and by educators more than technicians (Cannell, 2008) (MacLeod, 2008) (Delamarter, 2005a) (Hess, 2005).

Structural:

Online education programs at accredited institutions often grew out of existing distance education departments or experimental efforts to take advantage of new technology. In either scenario, the growth of online offerings stretched the existing infrastructure and raised new questions about the kinds of support required by successful online learning programs (Parker, 2008).

The 2000 *Quality on the Line* study proposed twenty-four benchmarks as a tool for evaluating online education (see below and Appendix A). The benchmarks are grouped in seven categories, three of which, institutional support, student support and

faculty support, address infrastructure-related issues centered outside the virtual classroom.

Institutional support is built upon the existence of a plan or vision for the development and use of technology in the teaching mission of the institution. Online course offerings have been seen by some as a low cost revenue stream (Meyers, 2007) Leaders have to allocate sufficient resources for not only starting, but also sustaining an online program (McCarthy & Samors, 2009).

From that plan should come the development of the physical and virtual infrastructure to deliver the courses. (MacLeod, 2008) points out that there is a distinction between administrative technology (systems, software and hardware) and educational technology (tools used in teaching) and each requires different approaches, practices and expertise. Smaller schools, including divinity schools and seminaries, have been especially challenged in developing infrastructure (Delamarter, 2005b; Lovvorn et al., 2009).

Student support is required to provide online students with the same level of services as residential students. These include administrative assistance in registration and financial aid but also technical assistance with network access and hardware compatibility. Specific training or orientation to the course management system and online tools has proven helpful in online student retention (Heinemann, 2005a). One of the early concerns dealt with access to materials traditionally accessed through a library. These have been largely resolved but at great financial and organizational cost (Roberts, 1999; Seok et al., 2008).

Faculty support is necessary to aid instructors, especially digital immigrants, in making the transition from face to face to online classrooms. The perception and reality of the increased time it takes to develop an online course has been documented, but institutions struggle to find ways to fairly provide incentives for faculty and guard intellectual property rights. Faculty also may need technical assistance and training in instructional design (Holdener, 2010; McCarthy & Samors, 2009; Nkonge & Gueldenzoph, 2006; Passmore, 2000; Seaman, 2009; Tilton, 2010).

Learning Outcomes:

In the end it is about what comes out in the end. Most if not all current educational standards are focusing on measuring outcomes. Much of the research in online education focuses on assessing student learning and student satisfaction (Benson, 2003; Buchanan, 2004; Drouin, Michelle, A., 2008; Horton, 2005; Palloff & Pratt, 2007b; Pferdehirt, n.d.; Schifter & Monolescu, 1999; Sener & Humbert, 2003; Sher, 2008; Whitesel, 2005; Whitesel, Abdul-Hamid, & Lewis, 2005)

One of the key questions in early research was the comparison of outcomes between face to face and online classes. Repeatedly the results reported "no significant difference" between student outcomes in the two settings (Patterson, 1996; Russell, 2010) Many of the early studies were limited in scope and generalizability because the they were done with as few as two sections of the same class, but the point was accepted and researchers moved on to try to discover standards by which online learning could be evaluated for the difference it does make.

Best Practices

Defining Best Practices

In 1987 the American Association for Higher Education, (AAHE now AAHEA) published "Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education" by Arthur Chickering and Zelda Gamson. This brief but widely disseminated article distilled the results of decades of research in teaching and learning into seven principles:

(1) good practice encourages contacts between students and faculty;

(2) good practice develops reciprocity and cooperation among students;

(3) good practice uses active learning techniques;

(4) good practice gives prompt feedback;

(5) good practice emphasizes time on task;

(6) good practice communicates high expectations; and

(7) good practice respects diverse talents and ways of learning (1987).

These principles became an accepted tool for guiding and assessing the effectiveness of undergraduate education (Han et al., 2003). In response to the growth of computer mediated education, Chickering and Stephen Ehrmann wrote another essay, "Implementing the Seven Principles: Technology as Lever" (1996) that developed into a point of reference in the growing national discussion of standards for higher education online.

The need for a paradigm by which to judge effectiveness in this new and rapidly changing medium was apparent. Regional accrediting agencies were simultaneously and repeatedly revising standards originally developed to govern correspondence, and more

recently, video courses. The National Education Association (NEA) and Blackboard Inc. commissioned The Institute for Higher Education Policy to

- attempt to validate those benchmarks that have been published by various entities

- ascertain the degree to which the benchmarks are actually incorporated in the policies, procedures, and practices of colleges and universities that are distance education leaders

- determine *how important* the benchmarks are to the institutions' faculty, administrators, and students (Phipps & Merisotis, 2000).

The report, *Quality On the Line*, began with a review of existing standards that resulted in a preliminary list of 41 benchmarks. Six institutions identified as leaders in online education were visited and extensive interviews of faculty students and administration were conducted to answer research questions. The result was a set of 24 benchmarks grouped in seven categories:

Institutional Support

Course Development

Teaching/Learning

Course Structure

Student Support

Faculty Support

Evaluation and Assessment

(See Appendix A for complete list of benchmarks). Chaney (2006) presents a survey of the *Quality On the Line* benchmarks and other examples of quality standards.

In the same year as *Quality On the Line*, eight regional accreditation bodies issued a joint statement on evaluation of online programs and adopted a set of best practices drafted by the Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications, noted for its experience in distance education (Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions, 2001). *Best Practices For Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs* became the norm for evaluating online education programs in accredited schools and was adopted *in toto* as the standard for the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) under whose jurisdiction BTSR exists (SACS, 2000).

Best Practices is comprised of five components:

1. Institutional Context and Commitment

2. Curriculum and Instruction

3. Faculty Support

4. Student Support

5. Evaluation and Assessment

Components include paragraph descriptions of 29 key elements and 107 protocols in the form of evaluative questions. As befits an accreditation standard, the criteria are heavy on infrastructure and institutional issues and less specific on how courses are developed, structured, and taught. Only 3 elements (12 protocols) focus specifically on instructional practices. (See Table 2, Analysis of SACS Best Practices). These three evaluate program development, student access and interaction.

Table 2: Analysis of SACS Best Practices

Component	Elements	Protocols
Institutional Context	10	33
Curriculum and Instruction	5	22[a]

Table 2: Analysis of SACS Best Practices (Continued)

Component	Elements	Protocols
Student Support	4	9
Faculty Support	4	16
Evaluation / Assessment	6	27
Total	29	107

[a] Includes 3 elements and 10 protocols about qualifications of faculty and contracted services.

Evaluating Best Practices

Soon after these standards were widely adopted, institutions and consortiums of schools began to explore ways to evaluate best practices on a course level, focusing on instructional methods. One of the most thorough and rigorous studies was conducted by the University of Maryland University College (UMUC).

UMUC has its origins in the University of Maryland's evening program for adults. In 1947, it became the independent College of Special and Continuation Studies and in 1959 was renamed University of Maryland University College (UMUC) as a unit of the University System of Maryland but not a division of the University of Maryland. UMUC has become a primary source of higher education for military personnel and their families overseas. UMUC's worldwide enrollment in 2007 ranked first among 4-year degree granting public universities in the U.S. and in 2009, UMUC had over 196,000 online course enrollments (UMUC, n.d.)

In 2001 the Institute for Research and Assessment in Higher Education (IRAHE) of UMUC began a pilot study of best online instructional practices (BOIP). Eight online faculty identified by their deans and recognized by students as highly effective online

teachers were surveyed using a prototype Instructional Practices Inventory (IPI). The IPI was based upon eight principles, parallel to Chickering, from Keeton's *Effectiveness and Efficiency in Higher Education for Adults:*

- Make learning goals and one or more paths to them clear.

- Use extensive and deliberate practice.

- Provide prompt and constructive feedback.

- Provide an optimal balance of challenge and support that is tailored to the individual student's readiness and potential.

- Elicit active and critical reflection by learners on their growing experience base.

- Link inquiries to genuine problems or issues of high interest to the learners.

- Develop learners' effectiveness as learners early in their education.

- Create an institutional environment that supports and encourages inquiry (Keeton, 2004a).

The first part of the pilot study consisted of surveys of the participants, self-evaluation using the IPI, and telephone interviews with participants. Researchers found that these instructors typically implemented at least five of the eight principles. Participants were asked to report their most effective strategies, and most challenging practices to implement. The second part of the pilot study called for peer review of courses by co-participants. The results of the pilot were used to modify the initial IPI (Whitesel et al., 2005).

Phase I of the formal BOIP study broadened the scope to include a randomized representative sample of UMUC online instructors. 76% of the 150 invitees used a new version of the IPI to self-evaluate their instructional practices. 30 participants were

selected for further interviews based on IPI results and student course evaluations that

identified and confirmed effective practices used in online courses (Markulis, 2006).

Phase II utilized interviews and focus groups with those 30 "exemplary faculty"

to examine in further detail the implementation of best practices. Qualitative analysis

resulted in the isolation of four categories of effective strategies: Fostering Interaction,

Providing Feedback, Facilitating Learning, and Maintaining Enthusiasm and

Organization (Lewis & Abdul-Hamid, 2006).

Phase III was an evaluation of student learning outcomes and faculty and student

satisfaction levels in courses where strategies have been implemented. In the pilot study

the exemplary faulty from Phase II were invited to participate. Ten were able to complete

the study in the fall of 2004. Participants and researchers worked together to design

assessment plans and conduct faculty self evaluations of online courses. Faculty kept

reflective journals throughout the semester. Researchers also observed classes and

analyzed student evaluations to corroborate findings. The initial study indicated that

"course interactivity and student satisfaction and engagement" were impacted by faculty

assessment plans that linked course goals with learning activities, formats and assessment

measures (Whitesel et al., 2005).

Several documents are available from UMUC websites including a sample of the

final IPI ("Sample Instructional Practices Inventory," n.d.), and a summary statement

"Best Practices for Online Teaching" (Markulis, 2006). An "Online Classroom

Observation" is in development (McCollum, 2010). These and other tools now guide the

training of UMUC's over 3000 online instructors. The research at UMUC is ongoing and

will continue to teach how long term research can develop best practices that have

theoretical underpinnings and applicability beyond a specific course or program. A draft version of the "Online Classroom Observation" rubric will be used in this study with permission of UMUC to evaluate best instructional practices in SCM courses.

Theological Education Online

Before moving to how to measure the accomplishment of these benchmarks, attention must be paid to another set of issues that are specific to the field of theological higher education as it relates to online learning. Some theological educators have argued that theological education is mutually exclusive of online education (Heinemann, 2005a; Hess, 2005; House, 2010; Osborn, 2006). Osborn categorizes opposition as being financial, sociological, pedagogical and theological. Setting aside the financial concern as universal to all educational institutions in the early 21st century, this construct will help in looking more closely at the issues of theological education online.

Sociological

Concern "about the quality of person-to-person interaction in the online environment is the objection to distributed learning raised most frequently by those involved in theological education" (Shore, 2007, p. 92). There is within the field a sense that theological education is "uniquely and integrally relational" (Hess, 2005, p. 64). There are both informal and informal expectations of accountability between students and faculty and among students not only for academic rigor but also for behavior, and in some cases, belief. Much of the power of the seminary experience is not contained within any syllabus. Cormode notes that an ethnographic study of two seminaries found that "seminary culture teaches more than seminary classes do" (1999, p. 102). Similar arguments could be made for other professional academic schools, (Haythornthwaite &

Kazmer, 2000) but the relevancy here is that theological educators have been skeptical if

and to what degree that experience can be replicated online (Olgilvie, 2009).

A second aspect of sociological concern, that is also theological, is the spiritual

community. Students and faculty often worship and fellowship together on campus

outside of class. But the ideal of an isolated community of learning that is also a

community of faith is growing dim in era when more students have families, careers and

congregations that serve as the focal points of their faith and practice (Patterson, 1996;

Reissner, 1999). Life on campus has changed as well. Senior and Weber point out:

"'Being there'—in residence with the community is seen by some as a sine qua non of

good education. But people involved in theological schools today know that the reality is

often much different than the rhetoric" (1994, p. 27). Block scheduling classes for one or

two days a week and the increasing number of commuter students who come to campus

only to attend classes have reconfigured the learning community. Other brick and mortar

institutions have also experienced a sense of loss of academic community (Lucas, 2006,

p. 307).

In contrast, online learning allows students to remain connected with their

longstanding community ties and create new communities with ministry peers from

diverse settings (Porterfield, 2010; Rovai, 2002; Tucker, 1998). Reissner ((1999).found

that for some theological distance education students, the local church community or a

contextual learning site functions as their primary learning community, with the academic

institution performing a supportive role.

Pedagogical

The goals of theological education typically include theological learning, practical preparation for ministry and leadership, and spiritual and personal formation (Graham, 2002). In the accreditation standards for the Master of Divinity degree, one finds the goals: "knowledge of the religious heritage, understanding of the cultural context, growth in spiritual depth and moral integrity, and capacity for ministerial and public leadership" (The Commission on Accrediting of the Association of Theological Schools, 2010). While "knowledge" and "understanding" are in the cognitive domain, "growth" and "capacity" as used here, are of the affective domain. Graham (2003) makes a convincing case for designing affective learning outcomes to meet these goals of theological education. The end result, as with the traditional goals of a classical education, is not just a person with a certain body of knowledge, but a certain kind of person. This pursuit is not limited to theological education (Felton & Sims, 2005).

Content is sometimes simply the focal point around which students are encouraged to develop character, convictions and conduct. Transformational learning, variously defined,[1] is often the goal if not always the result (Delamarter et al., 2007; Macinnis, 2007; Tran, 2011). So the question is raised, can teaching for the affective domain be accomplished across distance via the internet? House (2010) and others argue that it cannot. Hess (2005) and MacLeod (2008) say it can. Heinemann's study indicates that it is happening successfully (2007). Patterson reminds us that "we cannot assume that

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[1]Mezirow: "Learning that transforms problematic frames of reference-sets of fixed assumptions and expectations (habits of mind, meaning perspectives, mindsets) -to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective and emotionally able to change" in Tran (2011) who goes on to describe Mezirow's theory in detail and outlines issues that more conservative theological institutions have with perceived relativism. See also (Taylor, 2008).

formation is happening automatically simply because a classroom does exist" (1996, p. 71).

Theological

David Kelsey questioned the "theological-anthropological assumptions" of distance education (in Delamarter et al., 2007). Since we as humans are inseparable from our bodies, is it possible that we lose too much of the learning experience when our bodies are absent or distant from the process? Hess counters Kelsey: "We actually have more to fear and critique in our current classroom practices of disembodied learning than we do from our experimentation with online learning" (2005, p. 68). Gresham (2006) offers a theological pedagogy for online education that highlights the incarnational possibilities of online learning. Less important is the physical presence of the instructor than the instructor's "ability to communicate and foster …personal faith and insight among students" (p.26). Is the sterile classroom occupied on a rigid schedule by individuals who do not relate outside of class any more connected to the physical world than an online discussion conducted from places of ministry?

Gaps in the Literature

This is perhaps a good point to note that the vast majority of literature regarding theological education online is anecdotal and positional rather than empirical. Arguments are well-reasoned and well-written but not necessarily supported by verifiable data (Graham, 2002; Heinemann, 2007; Lewis & Abdul-Hamid, 2006; Tucker, 1998) Most published studies are built around specific cases; the experiences of a professor, department or program.

The literature of online theological education has grown exponentially in the last decade, in part because of the Lily Endowment grants that both fomented change and funded research. But in the more specific area of theological continuing education the field of research is still scant.

Over a year's worth of research uncovered some three hundred publications and sources in the fields of online learning, distance education, continuing education and theological education, but only three that dealt with theological continuing education online. One was a Ph.D. dissertation detailing the design of an online program in Benedictine spirituality (Gacnik, 2003). The second was a Doctor of Ministry project dissertation describing the design and implementation of a hybrid learning event (Hollon, & Hammon, 2004). The third was an evaluation study of a lay ministry education program in a Roman Catholic diocese (English, McDonald, & Connelly, 2006) All three noted the paucity of similar work in the field. There has been no study found that evaluates an online continuing education program connected with an accredited theological institution. To effectively undertake such a study requires some exploration of the theory and practice of educational evaluation.

<center>Evaluation</center>

Theory

Cervero reminds evaluators to ask "education for what?" (2000). In the field of continuing education the question has most often been answered in terms of increasing or updating professional knowledge. But Cervero posits that perhaps an even more important goal is improving professional practice. An often quoted illustration by Schön paints a vivid picture:

"In the varied topography of professional practice, there is a high, hard ground

overlooking a swamp. On the high ground, manageable problems lend themselves

to solution through the application of research-based theory and technique. In the

swampy lowland, messy, confusing problems defy technical solution. The irony

of this situation is that the problems of the high ground tend to be relatively

unimportant to individuals or society at large...while in the swamp lie the

problems of greatest human concern." (Cervero, 2000, p.8)

In both formal theological education and theological continuing education, the crucial test

of success is lived out in the swamp. Are the content and the learning experience

applicable and applied in the field?

In terms of educational theory this is called *transfer of learning,* defined by Broad

as "the effective and continuing application by learners—to their performance of jobs or

other individual, organizational, or community responsibilities—of knowledge and skills

gained in learning activities" (in Merriam & Leahy, 2005, p. 3). Three key elements

shape effective transfer of learning; the individual, the learning experience, and the work

environment. An individual's readiness and motivation to learn, the design and

implementation of the learning activities, and the receptiveness of the worker and

workplace to change in practice, all affect whether or not what happens in the classroom

will impact what happens in the field.

In Kirkpatrick's levels of evaluation, the first element could be evaluated in level

one; "the learner's reaction." The second element could come under scrutiny in level two;

"knowledge acquired." The final element could be reflected in levels three; "changes in

participant's behavior", and four; "improvements at the organizational level"

(Kirkpatrick, 1998). The parallels and demarcations are not absolute but the comparison is helpful in shaping both perception of the issues and means of measuring outcomes.

Kirkpatrick points out that many organizations are content to measure only levels one and two while others mistakenly want to assess three and four without examining the first two. He also warns that the failure to achieve at levels three and four may be more a reflection of organizational culture than the effectiveness of training.

Caffarella defines program evaluation as "the process used to determine whether the design and delivery of a program were effective and whether the proposed outcomes were met" (2002, p. 225). Chapter 11, "Formulating Evaluation Plans" is a helpful primer for professionals called upon to evaluate adult education programs. The list of key elements of program evaluation (Appendix B) guided initial conversations with the director of the School of Christian Ministry at BTSR and helped determine what was needed in order to proceed with the study.

"Expertise-oriented evaluation" is the term used to describe accreditation processes, blue ribbon panels, and in this case, ad hoc individual reviews. Each of these examples relies on professional expertise in the evaluation of an institution or program. Although widely accepted standards may be the instrument by which value is measured, it is left to the expert to interpret those standards and the extent to which they have been met. The experience and knowledge of the evaluator(s) become the crucial third piece of the process. Both this study and the dissertation committee that critiques it are examples of expertise-oriented evaluations. Because of the inherent subjectivity of the experts and the specificity of the subject being evaluated, replicability is not characteristic of expertise-oriented evaluations (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2004).

Online Education Evaluation

A review of online education evaluation literature indicates that much of the research is focused on comparisons of learning outcomes with face to face courses, followed by measuring student satisfaction with online courses. A few works are sampled here for their relevance to this study.

Benson (2003) points out that that assessment should match the learning that needs to be measured, whether it is higher order thinking, basic knowledge and comprehension, or psychomotor performance. (Martz, Venkateshwar, & Sangermano, 2004) constructed five factors in student satisfaction from survey responses. Those factors were: interaction with professor; fairness; course content; classroom interaction; and value, technology and learning. The authors posited an interesting relationship between course content, explicit instructions and student satisfaction, "course content basically sets expectations and explicit instructions manage these expectations for the distance student." Horton (2005) takes Kirkpatrick's model and applies it to online learning, using electronic means to assess the four levels. Buchanan (2004) looks at the advantages and disadvantages of online assessment of student learning and proposes peer review and online mentors as important human tools in the process. Palloff & Pratt, (2007b) developed a self-assessment of students' readiness to participate in online learning and a list of evaluative questions that could be applied to students, courses and programs. All of these studies point to the use of technological tools for rapid, perhaps even immediate, ongoing formative evaluation of online courses and assessment of student learning. Hiltz and Arbaugh point out that studies tracking student performance

after their asynchronous learning network experiences are essentially non-existent (2003, p. 59).

Schifter & Monolescu (2004) use the Temple Online Learning Program at Temple University as a setting for exploring the purpose and methodology of formative distance education program evaluation. They demonstrate online satisfaction surveys, online focus groups, using text and video formats, as sources of evaluative data for an entire program. Examples

As mentioned previously, English et al (2006) engaged in a comprehensive program evaluation of three year lay ministry education program in a Roman Catholic diocese. The authors employed Patton's utilization-focused framework (2002) that focuses on the intended use by the intended users. After collecting data through document analysis, open-ended interviews, and a group interview, the authors found considerable satisfaction with the actual lay ministry education program but considerable dissatisfaction with the transition of ministerial knowledge and skills back to the faith community. The biggest barrier to transfer of learning was lack of knowledge about or interest in the program by supervising clergy in the participants' home congregations.

Song's dissertation on evaluating student satisfaction in online courses at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary is notable for its use of mixed methods and the careful design and testing of a Seminary Online Learner Satisfaction Survey. Song found that "vocational effectiveness and teaching/learning process" were the two most significant predictors of student satisfaction (2004). "Vocational effectiveness" was a category designed to measure the impact of the teacher-student interactions that address the sociological and theological concerns about online learning described above.

Interestingly this factor is explored in terms of what happens in online classes but not in professional practice.

The most extensive study of online theological education is Heinemann's "Teacher student interaction and learning in online theological education" published in four parts in *Christian Higher Education* (Heinemann, 2005a, 2005b, 2006, 2007). This quantitative study examines the relationships between three major types of teacher student interaction (organizational, social, and intellectual) and two types of learning outcomes (cognitive and affective). Seminary students taking online courses from nine ATS accredited seminaries were invited to complete a web-based survey. The study found that instructors "facilitated adequate social, organizational, intellectual, and overall interaction. Students reported significant cognitive and affective learning gains" (2007, p. 194). More important than the findings were the systematic and empirical methods employed. Now many of the anecdotal positions and thorough but localized case studies have been upheld by generalizable research.

Conclusions

This review has addressed key questions that frame the study of online education. Pedagogical concerns are central to the discussion, strongly influenced by constructivist learning theory. The potential for human interactivity and the formation of learning community is an issue shared by academia in general as well as theological educators. Technological challenges center on access, fluency and decision-making. All institutions wrestle with providing adequate infrastructure and support for students and faculty.

Examining research on best instructional practices found standards on the institutional level, namely *Quality on the Line* benchmarks and *Best Practices* adopted by

SACS, and an extensive research-based model for evaluating instruction and design on an individual course level developed by UMUC.

Discussion in the field of theological higher education focuses on the compatibility of online teaching with affective and transformational learning goals and the embodied nature of theological learning. The vast majority of literature regarding theological education online is anecdotal and positional rather than empirical. However extant research indicates that the two are not only compatible but can be complementary when done well.

A survey of evaluation theory and examples laid out the methodological baseline for this dissertation. Key to this study is the evaluation of transfer of learning and whether a program is effective and meeting proposed outcomes. Online education evaluation literature indicates that much of the research is focused on comparisons of learning outcomes with face to face courses, followed by measuring student satisfaction with online courses. No study was found that evaluated an online continuing education program connected with an accredited theological institution.

Based on this review, it is apparent that there is a need to add to the literature of online theological continuing education. Evaluating the School of Christian Ministry (SCM) across the breadth of accreditation standards would be too great a task for this study. Instead, focusing on instructional issues will provide a manageable scope and a telling indicator of the quality of the program at BTSR. Han (2003) makes a compelling argument that course management in terms of pedagogical concerns is under-researched and yet critical to the success of online programs. The BOIP research has resulted in a

potentially strong instrument for evaluating online teaching in a systematic fashion. That tool will serve as the lynchpin for this study's research methodology.

Chapter 3 outlines the actual process of investigation for this study. A review of the purpose and research questions that shape the work is followed by a closer description of the setting and participants. An explanation of theoretical underpinnings of case study and evaluative method precedes the detailed design of procedures, instruments and analysis used to evaluate

- the extent to which SCM models best practices of online education

- the degree to which students in online courses report experiencing

  a sense of community

  transformational learning

  transfer of learning

- an association between implementation of best practices in specific courses and these three desired themes in theological continuing education.

CHAPTER 3: METHOD

Overview

The primary focus of this study was to evaluate the extent to which the School of

Christian Ministry (SCM) at Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond (BTSR) models

best practices of online education, as exemplified by *Quality On the Line* and the

University of Maryland University College *Best Online Instructional Practices* (BOIP)

study. Research was focused on the implementation of recognized standards in online

education, more specifically the seven dimensions measured by the Online Classroom

Observation rubric (Appendix D) developed by UMUC (2008) as an element of the BOIP

study:

1. Learning objectives and assessment

2. Building the learning environment

3. Faculty feedback

4. Learner development and support

5. Integrating technology

6. Class management

7. Class interaction

Next the study attempted to discover the degree to which students reported

experiencing a sense of community, and transformational learning in their online courses,

and the extent to which transfer of learning has taken place for students in their ministry

settings as a measure of changes in behavior influenced by the program. Finally, the

study explored the possibility of an association between implementation of best practices in specific courses and these three desired themes in theological continuing education. This chapter includes a description of the research questions, study participants and setting, procedures, and design and data analysis.

Research Questions

This study undertook to answer five key questions regarding the SCM program:

1. To what extent does SCM model best practices of online curriculum and instruction?

2. To what extent do students report experiencing a sense of community in their courses?

3. To what extent do students report experiencing transformational learning?

4. To what extent do students report transferring their learning into ministry settings?

5. Is there an association between implementation of best practices in specific courses and these three desired themes in theological continuing education?

Setting and Participants

The School of Christian Ministry (SCM), was the continuing education program of the Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond (BTSR), an Association of Theological Schools accredited graduate theological institution in Richmond, Virginia. Founded in 1991, BTSR is primarily affiliated with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. SCM was established in 2003 to offer asynchronous online courses in a non-degree program of study for church leaders. Although originally conceived as a "Certificate in Congregational Leadership" program, demand for individualized courses of study and

continuing education for graduates led the program to expand to 26 short term web-based courses open to pre and post graduate students. The 4 week courses were designed and offered expressly for this program.

In April of 2010 BTSR announced that SCM would suspend operations in July of that year. A Lilly Foundation grant had covered most of the program's expenses until the end of 2008. BTSR budgeted $111,000 for SCM in 2009, expecting $30,000 in tuition revenues but the poor economy led to a drop in enrollment and tuition income only reached $18,000 (Dilday, 2010). There were attempts to work out partnerships with other educational and congregational support institutions that might sustain the program but these proved fruitless. In March 2011 BTSR announced a new business plan which will place renewed emphasis on online continuing education (Crawford, 2011).

As that process was unfolding, a memorandum of understanding, contact information, course evaluation data, and enrollment data were secured through the SCM director before her departure. The Director of Business Affairs confirmed the memorandum of understanding from March, and authorized continued access to archived data from the SCM program in June 2010. That memorandum (Appendix C) was reconfirmed in May 2011 to meet Institutional Review Board requirements.

Total enrollment for SCM certificate courses in 2008-09 was 174. The unduplicated headcount was 81. Demographic data was drawn from course evaluations from 2008-09. Although the 08-09 data was corrupted and lost some course specific information, it reflects the year that study participants were enrolled.

Theoretical Approaches

It became apparent upon a thorough review that there was not sufficient data to justify extensive quantitative analysis. That conclusion led to the decision to strengthen the qualitative elements of this evaluation and pursue it as an embedded case study to examine the program as a whole and then four core courses as exemplars of the larger case. Preparing for this shift required a closer look at case study theory.

Case Study Theory

Robert Yin notes that the case study has been "stereotyped as a weak sibling among social science methods" (1989, p. 10). But with careful attention to the purpose, context and method of the case study, the researcher can produce a rich source of information that can be useful not only in the context of the case, but as a springboard for further research and application.

Too often the results of case studies are received as universal truths; "if phenomenon A is present in location B then it must be an expected phenomenon for all locations." Guba and Lincoln observe that case studies "tend to masquerade as a whole when in fact they are but a part- a slice of life" (in Merriam, 1998, p. 42). But the case study with a clearly delineated purpose is a valuable slice of life. Yin defines a case study as "an empirical inquiry that: investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used" (1989, p.23). Case studies are attempts to capture what is happening in a given context in such a systematic way that others may be able to determine if that phenomenon and its results are identifiable in other contexts, and therefore may be connected and explained in terms of theory.

Within the context selected for study the researcher describes the setting and the intervention or process taking place and may try to explore the interaction between the themes in place. The focus may be on the case itself, in what Stake (1995) calls an "intrinsic" study and Merriam (1998) calls a "particularistic" study, or on broader questions that are illustrated or raised by the case, Stake's "instrumental" and Merriam's "heuristic" study. This study is designed to be the latter type, with a desire to "illuminate understanding of the phenomenon" (Merriam, p. 30) in such a way that will instigate further exploration of this model of theological continuing education.

The key to accomplishing that purpose is method. Unlike quantitative research that relies primarily on the weight of sound statistical analysis to make the case for generalizability, qualitative case studies must prove their empirical mettle by "analytical generalization" derived from careful design based on theory (Yin 1989). Good case study design will clearly state the research questions, make propositions based on theory, define units of analysis, use clear logic linking the data to propositions, and establish criteria for interpreting the findings.

Several strategies can be used to construct a robust case study design. Construct validity can be supported by using multiple sources of evidence, maintaining a clear chain of evidence (knowing what information came from which source), and having informants perform 'member checking' for accuracy and plausibility (Stake, 1995, Yin, 1989). Internal validity is strengthened by triangulation, using multiple investigators from multiple backgrounds, multiple sources of data, and multiple methods of collecting and confirming data. Reliability is undergirded by developing and following a sound case study protocol and maintaining careful records of research activity.

An important piece of a sound case study protocol is the development of categories for organizing data (Merriam 1998). These categories emerge as the researcher analyzes data in light of the research questions and begins to see patterns and groupings of information that provide answers to those questions. By making these categories exhaustive and exclusive the researcher is forced to carefully weigh the import and relevance of each bit of information and determine if and where it fits in the overall scheme of research.

A mixed methods case study with strong qualitative elements seems to be a viable approach for an exploratory evaluation, based on theories of best practices in online education and desired elements of theological continuing education, of a relatively small program in a specific and perhaps unique context. There is no prospect for control groups or sampling, but there is a great opportunity to create a picture of a "well-tuned reality, one bearing up under scrutiny and challenge (Stake, 102)."

Evaluation Theory

This study is also dependent upon the levels of evaluation approach as exemplified by the work of Donald Kirkpatrick. Such an approach leads one to ask critical questions of participants about their understanding of the program. Their responses, while subjective, uncover the learning process as experienced more than as envisioned by program planners. Our interest is in the implementation of best practices and the effect of that implementation on participants. Toward that end, Kirkpatrick's model is an established means of examining participants' reaction (level one) to the process and the participants' changes in behavior (level three) that they attribute to participation. Because SCM is a non-credit continuing education program, and learning is

assessed by participation, data from which measures of learning (level two) can be extrapolated are not as accessible or as crucial to the study. The ministry setting survey and student interviews are intended to glean information as to the impact (level four) of this program on the ministry settings of participants.

To strengthen the study, a second evaluative model is incorporated; the expertise or professional approach, as exemplified by accreditation standards in educational and other fields (Fitzpatrick, 2004). Although this research may qualify as an ad-hoc individual review, the criteria for evaluating the SCM program will be built upon established standards in the fields of online education and theological education. The cumulative evidence provided by multiple sources, when measured against those standards will provide an accurate portrayal of the effectiveness and impact of the School of Christian Ministry.

Procedure

This was a mixed methods case study, more specifically an embedded case study research design. In preparation for the research proposal, a phone interview and numerous email exchanges with the director of SCM clarified the evaluative needs of the program and resulted in a memorandum of understanding in March 2010 that was reaffirmed in May 2011.

Document Review

The first phase of actual research entailed a review of program documents, including original program description, strategic plan, catalog, and training materials for instructors, examining for awareness and inclusion of best practices of online education using a checklist built from the twenty-four benchmarks from the *Quality On the Line*

report (see Appendix A). Analysis was based on descriptive statistics of those benchmarks which are implemented.

Online Classroom Observation

The key components (syllabi, course schedules, assignments, discussion boards, etc.) of the four core courses of the program: *The Church—A System of Relationships*, *Biblical Basis for Ministry, Theological Reflection,* and *Spiritual Formation and Calling* were analyzed for implementation of best practices using the BOIP Online Classroom Observation rubric. Initial scoring was an average and then percent of all numeric scores (1-4 Likert type). In addition to researcher, four raters, all recent doctoral students with experience in either online education or both online education and theological education, were each assigned to observe two courses so that each course received three ratings to strengthen validity and reliability of findings. Analysis of findings was based upon basic descriptive statistics and narrative analysis.

Online Course Evaluation

To measure the student perception of the application of best practices, scale scores for the seven dimensions measured by the BOIP Online Classroom Observation, and an eighth, "application to ministry" were extrapolated from the SCM Online Course Evaluation (Appendix D), developed and administered by the school with iModules software.

The Online Course Evaluation is organized into five sections: "the online course" (13 items), "the instructor" (6 items), "application to ministry" (3 items), "the course" (11 items), and "participant profile" (9 items), the last being demographic data. Two thirds of the way through each course an announcement with a hyperlink to the online evaluation

form is placed on the course website. At the conclusion of the course, an email from the

instructor encourages students to complete the evaluation. Data are organized and

analyzed using SPSS. Access to data was granted by the Director of SCM.

To find a measure of the student perception of the application of best practices,

scale scores for the seven dimensions measured by the Online Classroom Observation

learning objectives and assessment, building the learning environment, faculty feedback,

learner development and support, integrating technology, class management and class

interaction, were extrapolated from the evaluation response data. Responses to questions

in the "application to ministry" section of the evaluation were used to formulate an eighth

score likewise named.

The face and content validity of the organization of responses into the eight scale

scores were tested through a Q-sort by the panel of online and theological education

experts. Each rater performed a Q sort of questions into the 7 BOIP and application of

ministry dimensions. 12 of 30 questions did not get a common majority on the initial sort.

Those items were sent back to the raters for a second sort. Final sort was determined by

mode of all 8 ratings. Raters agreed that all course evaluation questions could be used as

indicators of student satisfaction.

Online Course Evaluation response data were then grouped according to the final

sort. This was done using SPSS frequency analysis results and Excel spreadsheet. Results

in each dimension were analyzed for degree of positive responses (Yes, Strongly Agree,

Agree, Very Much, Somewhat) This was more difficult in groupings like "interaction"

where questions asked for rating of influences on participation or amount of time spent

on discussion board, in which case more was interpreted as better.

The final stage was to analyze results by specific courses, looking for evidence of implementation of best practices to be compared with student's reports of a sense of community, transformational learning, and transfer of learning into ministry settings, found in narrative responses and in the next stages of research. Course Evaluation responses from the *Theological Reflection* course are missing from the 2008-09 data, but wrap up comments extracted from discussion board thread by SCM provide some basis for comparison.

Student Survey

Assessing transformational learning and the transfer of learning by students to their ministry settings comprised the next phase of research. This stage was built around an electronic survey of former SCM students.

To secure the initial sample of students, the Director of SCM sent out an invitation to participate to the valid emails of SCM students on file. Fifty-four invitations were sent in March 2010 (Appendix F). Twenty-two students replied that they would be willing to participate. Upon approval of the dissertation proposal and subsequent to IRB approval, those students were contacted again with a notice of the forthcoming survey. All were sent a new invitation on June 10, 2011 with reminders on June 18, June 25, July 5, and July 13 (Appendix G). 10 students responded and 9 completed the survey. An additional request for participants was sent on July 23 and a last call for participation was emailed on August 12.

The electronic survey was designed and distributed via SurveyShare.com. Questions were geared towards implementation, asking if and how students used content learned from SCM courses. The Student Survey (Appendix H) was modeled after the

examples given by Kirkpatrick in chapter 6 of *Evaluating Training* (1998). Responses were recorded as following:

Lessons learned: Narrative responses grouped for analysis

Eagerness to implement: Likert scale 1-5

Equipped to implement: Likert scale 1-5

Implementation: Likert scale 1-5

Implementation details: Narrative responses grouped for analysis

Confounds: six items Likert scale 1-5

Plan to implement: Likert scale 1-5

Transfer to setting: Narrative responses grouped for analysis

Results will be described in terms of those scores and narrative analysis.

At the end of the survey, participants are asked if they would provide their contact information for a follow up interview, and provide contact information for a professional peer, church member or client who would be willing to respond to a parallel survey regarding the impact of the student's training on the ministry setting. This Ministry Setting Survey (Appendix G) was designed and distributed in the same manner as the first survey. The ministry setting score was to serve as corroboration of the transfer of learning score. Only one student referred a peer to take the Ministry Setting survey. That person responded, received the link and several reminders, but never completed the survey.

Instructor Survey

Instructor/designers of these courses were invited to participate (Appendix J) in an open question online survey (Appendix K) to ascertain their previous experience,

training in, and implementation of best practices in developing and teaching these courses, their description of the course experience, and the intended application for students.

Follow Up Interviews

The penultimate component of the research design was a series of follow up interviews conducted by phone or email with the instructors and students of the four core courses being evaluated in depth. These were an attempt to corroborate other data or eliminate holes in previously collected data. The interviews also afforded an opportunity to focus on the themes of sense of community, transformative learning, and transfer of learning that emerged from the literature and other sources of data.

Two student survey respondents provided direct contact information for follow up interviews. When it became apparent that interviews would play a greater role in this study, the researcher used SurveyShare email tool and initial email contact lists to recruit additional interviewees. SurveyShare separation of contact information from responses made recruitment based on specific courses problematic.

Drafts of the interview protocols informed by previous data and readings in qualitative case study method, were reviewed by raters and adjusted according to their input (Appendices S, T) Invitations to participate were emailed to students who participated in the online survey and to instructors of the four core courses. As responses came in, appointments for phone interviews were made. The researcher made the phone call from a private room, and with permission, recorded the conversation with a digital recorder via speakerphone. Researcher then typed up transcript of interview and emailed to interviewee for member checking for accuracy. Two instructor and two student

interviews were completed within two weeks. Email reminders were then sent every 9 days. After one month, student responses from *Theological Reflection* and *Biblical Basis* courses were still lacking. Researcher then sent emails to survey participants who indicated on survey they had taken those specific classes. One student from *Biblical Basis* responded and was willing to answer questions via email. Student survey effort terminated after two months. Final two instructor interviews were completed approximately one month after initial invitation.

One of those instructors was also an administrator who was instrumental in the founding of SCM. In preparing for that interview, the researcher wrote an additional set of questions (Appendix O) complementary to previous interviews and seeking general evaluative reflections on the program. Researcher then emailed the current academic dean of the seminary, also co-founder of the program, and requested an interview using those questions. Exchange of emails led to an emailed response. As additional triangulation, researcher emailed the same set of questions to the former director of SCM, who also responded via email. All of the data from interview responses were grouped and analyzed according to the key variable categories from this study's research questions.

Summary

These methods were designed to evaluate the extent to which the School of Christian Ministry (SCM) at Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond (BTSR) models best practices of online education, the degree to which students reported experiencing a sense of community, and transformational learning in their online courses, and the extent to which students report transfer of learning has taken place for students in their ministry settings. Finally, the study explored the possibility of an association between

implementation of best practices in specific courses and these three desired themes in theological continuing education. The chief components of the study were a review of program documents, observation and evaluation of the components of four online courses, analysis of student course evaluation data, and surveys and interviews of former students, instructors and administrators in the SCM program.

The intent of this study was to convey an accurate portrayal of the SCM program, its implementation of best online education practices, and its impact on students and their ministry settings, in order that BTSR and other institutions of theological higher education will be able to make future determinations on the efficacy of offering online continuing theological education based on extant research literature, sound theory and empirical analysis.

Chapter 4 describes the results of this methodology, beginning with a description of the respondents and setting, and then moving to a careful review of the data collected in relation to each of the research questions. Results are summarized with examples in the text and detailed tables and transcripts located in the appendices.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Introduction

This was a mixed methods case study program evaluation. Program documents, including original proposal, strategic plan, catalog, and training materials for instructors, were examined for awareness and inclusion of best practices of online education using a checklist built from the twenty-four benchmarks from the *Quality On the Line* report.

Key components (syllabi, course schedules, assignments, discussion boards, etc.) of the four core courses of the program: *The Church—A System of Relationships*, *Biblical Basis for Ministry, Theological Reflection,* and *Spiritual Formation and Calling* were analyzed for implementation of best practices using the BOIP Online Classroom Observation rubric.

SCM Course evaluation data were then analyzed for descriptions of the program participants, and further evidence of the dimensions of best practices from the BOIP rubric. Wrap up comments from discussion boards, student and faculty surveys and follow up interviews with students, faculty and administrators served to fill in gaps of information from previous steps as well as gather data on three key themes central to theological education. All of this information was gathered to answer five key questions regarding the SCM program:

1. To what extent does SCM model best practices of online curriculum and instruction?

2. To what extent do students report experiencing a sense of community in their courses?

3. To what extent do students report experiencing transformational learning?

4. To what extent do students report transferring their learning into ministry settings?

5. Is there an association between implementation of best practices in specific courses and these three desired themes in theological continuing education?

Chapter 4 presents the data collected for this study in the form of demographic statistics, narrative descriptions, summary tables, and verbatim examples from surveys and interviews. Following the descriptive characteristics of the respondents and additional information about the setting, the largest part of the data will be shared in terms of the research questions. The chapter will conclude with an analysis of the themes that are at the center of the study. This is the raw material from which findings, interpretations and implications for future practice and research will be drawn in chapter 5.

<div align="center">Descriptive Characteristics of Respondents</div>

Course Evaluation Respondents

SCM course evaluation summary data for the 08-09 year includes 103 respondents (see Tables 3 and 4). The average age was 46, with the oldest being 64 and the youngest 25. Residence data was missing for 08-09 but in the previous year students represented 10 states with 52 percent residing in Virginia. The majority, 71% are currently serving in ministry settings, but only 8% are ordained. This reflects the trend of churches asking lay persons from within the congregation to assume leadership of key ministries.

Table 3: 2008-09 SCM Evaluations: Demographic Summary

Category	Frequency	Percent
Total Respondents	103	100%
Average Age	46	-
Male	46	45%
Female	56	54%
Serving in Ministry Setting	73	71%
Ordained	8	8%
First online course	25	24%
Working towards certificate	75	73%

In Table 4, note that the majority of students, (66%) hold a bachelor's degree or less, but six hold Ph.D. degrees. This reflects the wide range of students who are seeking training as leaders in their churches; some as volunteers, some making the transition from volunteer to paid staff, and staff seeking supplementary training that focuses on a particular type of ministry.

Table 4: 2008-09 SCM Evaluations: Highest Degree Earned

Degree	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
None reported	2	1.9	1.9
High School or GED	9	8.7	10.7

Associates Degree	12	11.7	22.3
Bachelors Degree	45	43.7	66.0
Masters Degree	19	18.4	84.5
Doctoral Degree	6	5.8	90.3
Other	10	9.7	100.0
Total	103	100	

Table 5 lists the courses and number of responses included in the 2008-09 SCM Course Evaluation from 17 classes. The four core courses being evaluated are among the largest, averaging 10 student respondents compared with the average per course of 6. Eight classes reported having 5 or fewer respondents. The data from *Theological Reflection* is missing from the data set, but the instructor reported having 12 students. These small numbers proved to be problematic throughout the research process.

Table 5: 2008-09 SCM Evaluations: Responses by Course

Course	Frequency	Percent
Theological Reflections [a b c]	-	-
No response	3	3
The Church Year & The Lectionary	2	2
Teaching the Small Group Study	2	2
Leading the Choir	2	2
Jeremiah	2	2

Hidden Lives of Congregations	3	3
Adolescent Substance Abuse	3	3
Baptist Identity[a]	4	4
The Effective Church Leader	5	5
Spiritual Formation and Calling[a b]	6	6
Faith Development	6	6
Congregational Singing	6	6
Introduction to Preaching	7	7
Ministry to the School Aged Child	7	7
Pre-School and Children's Ministry	9	9
The Church – A System of Relationships[a b]	11	11
Understanding the Adolescent World	11	11
Biblical Basis for Ministry[a b]	14	14
Total	103	100

[a] Core Course
[b] Subject of Case Study,
[c] Evaluation responses for *Theological Reflection* missing from data.

Student Survey Respondents

Twenty-two SCM students indicated in 2010 that they would be interested in participating in this study. After IRB approval, all were emailed a new invitation on June 10, 2011 and reminders on June 18, June 25, July 5, and July 13. Ten responded to the email and received a link to the student survey on SurveyShare. Nine students completed the consent form and the survey. Table 6 details courses taken by respondents. Five had

taken at least three courses; two had yet to complete a course. R5 did not agree to the

consent form.

Table 6: Student Survey Courses Completed (Question 2)

Respondent	Courses
R1	The Church—A System of Relationships , Biblical Basis for Ministry , Theological Reflection , Spiritual Formation and Calling
R2	I have not completed a whole term yet, but worked on spiritual formation.
R3	Spiritual Formation and Calling, Theological Reflection , Biblical Basis for Ministry , The Church—A System of Relationships , All courses required for Children's Ministry Certification
R4	Congregational Leadership - Children's Ministry
R6	Biblical Basis for Ministry , Theological Reflection , Spiritual Formation and Calling, Baptist Identity, Faith Development
R7	The Church—A System of Relationships , Theological Reflection , Spiritual Formation and Calling
R8	Biblical Basis for Ministry , Spiritual Formation and Calling
R9	Three Children's Ministry courses
R10	Did not complete any courses

Table 7 indicates on which course students focused their comments. Five

remarked about the core courses that are at the center of this study, but none chose

Theological Reflection as a focal point. Again this small number proved to be problematic when seeking follow up interviews on these specific courses.

Table 7: Student Survey Course Focus of Comments (Questions 3 & 4)

Respondent	Course	Term
R1	Biblical Basis	Spring 2009
R2	Not complete	-
R3	Church--System	Fall 2009
R4	Congregational Leadership	Fall 2009
R6	Spiritual Formation	-
R7	Spiritual Formation	Spring 2009
R8	Spiritual Formation	-
R9	Children's Ministry	-
R10	Not complete	

Faculty Respondents

One question that began to surface as the study took shape was that if indeed best practices were found to be evident in the SCM program, what was the source? Was there intentionality in shaping the program around best practices or were the results serendipitous? Towards that end, instructors of the four core courses being evaluated, and a fifth instructor who received a student email invitation and was interested in participating, were invited to complete an online survey via SurveyShare. Respondents FR4 and FR5 did not access the online survey but instead answered their questions in the course of a phone interview.

The survey asked about their current occupation, academic degrees, previous experience teaching continuing education, and previous experience teaching online (see Table 8). All of these instructors either hold or are pursuing terminal degrees. This despite the fact that teaching an SCM course is an adjunctive position and only one instructor is a full time seminary faculty member. All had experience teaching in a continuing education setting but only two, both BTSR faculty or staff, had previous experience teaching online. FR2-FR5, instructors of the core courses, also participated in follow up interviews.

Table 8: Faculty Survey Participants

	Current Occupation	Highest Academic Degree	SCM Course Taught	Continuing Education Experience	Online Teaching Experience
FR1	BTSR Professor	Ph.D.	Preaching Repertoire	yes	yes
FR2	Senior Pastor, Baptist Church	D.Min.	Theological Reflection	yes	no
FR3	Ordained Minister (local church)	D.Min.	Spiritual Formation and Calling	yes	no
FR4	BTSR Administrator	Ph.D.	Church: A System of Relationships	yes	yes
FR5	Pastor/doctoral student	M.Div.	Biblical Basis for Ministry	yes	no

Student Interview Respondents

Two students indicated on the online survey that they would be willing to participate in a follow up interview. Other survey respondents and students who had initially indicated willingness to participate in the study were invited by email to be interviewed. A third student, SIR3, agreed to complete the interview via email. All three interviewees are female and lay leaders in their churches. SIR1 and SIR 2 are Baptist, SIR3 is Lutheran. SIR1 is retired, SIR2 is a soon to retire professional educator, but is also pursuing a Master of Divinity degree through a hybrid online program at an ATS accredited seminary.

Historical Results

During an information gathering visit to the campus in June 2010, the researcher met with FR3, who came to BTSR as an experienced Director of Continuing Education in 1999 and now serves as a seminary administrator and adjunct faculty member. In that conversation and subsequent surveys and interviews, FR3 provided some of the back story of the founding of SCM. When SCM received the initial $1 million Lily grant in 1999, FR3 and a professor, as academic advisor, were charged with implementation. The initial plan had been a video conferencing concept. The school spent $200,000 on video capability and the rest on research and development, which revealed that they needed to shift to an online delivery system. After several pilots with different content providers, platforms and models they decided to go with Blackboard and asynchronous courses. Early on it became evident to FR3:

we had a lot of work to do with faculty to get them to consider teaching online.

That was when [the professor] and I realized that if we don't get faculty online

then we have a tool here that we can take directly to the churches.

They chose five content areas: lay leadership, youth ministry, preschool/children's

ministry, health ministry and Hispanic ministry, and convened content specialists from

partner churches and agencies to begin designing programming.

With that background in mind, the researcher designed a series of questions to not

only corroborate the results of other methods in the study but also fill in the theoretical

and methodological gaps in the story of the development of SCM (Appendix U). A phone

interview request with the professor, now a dean (AIR1), led to an email interview. The

same set of questions was addressed to the former director of SCM (AIR2) who left the

program after it was suspended in 2010, and in the interview with FR3, who became

responsible for the remnants of the program he helped design.

<div align="center">Research Question Results</div>

<div align="center">Best Practices</div>

1. To what extent does SCM model best practices of online curriculum and instruction?

Document Review

Using the 24 *Quality on the Line* (QOL) benchmarks (Appendix A) , the

researcher reviewed "Original Program Description," "Strategic Plan," "Program

Proposal," School of Christian Ministry Catalogs from 2003 through 2010, an instructor

training PowerPoint presentation and supporting articles, the "Course Information"

segment of the SCM courses and an email from the Director of Information Technology

for BTSR. The last was a response to a query channeled through the contact person at

BTSR because to that point there was no evidence of the institutional support

benchmarks related to technology. Some early SCM documents were lost in a burglary at

the office when laptops were stolen. The original program description is provided in

Appendix L as a reference for the goals and purposes of SCM.

The researcher developed an Excel spreadsheet grid for recording scores to

measure evidence of benchmark achievement using a scale of 1 = No Evidence, 2 =

Minimal Evidence, 3 = Partial Evidence, 4 = Complete Evidence (parallel to the scale for

the BOIP rubric used later). Results for the QOL benchmark groupings are shown in

Appendix M. and discussed in chapter 5. Benchmarks for which no evidence was found

were marked for later inclusion in student and faculty interviews. Course observations

also presented some evidence not found in documents.

Online Classroom Observation

The key components (syllabi, course schedules, assignments, discussion boards,

etc.) of four core courses of the SCM program: *The Church—A System of Relationships*,

Biblical Basis for Ministry, *Theological Reflection*, and *Spiritual Formation and Calling*

were assessed for implementation of best practices using the BOIP Online Classroom

Observation rubric (Appendix D). Researcher and four raters completed observations

using a 1-4 Likert type scale of 1 = No Evidence, 2 = Minimal Evidence, 3 = Partial

Evidence, 4=Complete Evidence, with researcher reviewing all four courses and each

rater reviewing three. Scoring, not specified in the rubric, was based on a mean of scores

and a percentage of total possible numeric scores (Table 9).

The transcript for the course *The Church—A System of Relationships* had been

scrubbed of personal identifiers and interactions, robbing it of usefulness in assessing

student and instructor interactions, but was still helpful in observing instructional design

and method. The lack of evidence of those interactions is reflected in the scoring shown

in Table 9 and and even more clearly in Table 10. Even with that missing information,

the four observed courses total mean scores were within seven percentage points of each

other.

Table 9: Online Classroom Observation Scores By Rater

Rater	Church Systems	Biblical Basis for Ministry	Spiritual Formation	Theological Reflections
1	2.22	2.25	3.00	2.92
2	2.42	-	-	2.44
3	-	3.14	-	3.33
4	-	2.66	2.58	-
5	3.16	-	2.97	-
Mean	2.60	2.68	2.85	2.90
%	65%	67%	71%	72%

Table 10: BOIP Online Classroom Observation Scores by Specific Courses

BOIP Rubric Dimensions	Courses			
	Church System	Biblical Basis	Spiritual Formation	Theological Reflection
1. Learning objectives/assessment	88%	87%	92%	95%
2. Building learning environment	68%	63%	77%	73%

3. Feedback/support	50%	39%	50%	50%
4. Learner development/support	61%	61%	56%	72%
5. Integrating technology	38%	30%	30%	36%
6. Class management	narrative	narrative	narrative	narrative
7. Class interaction	49%	74%	79%	61%

In Table 10, some of the variations between courses by BOIP Rubric dimensions are more apparent. In particular, on the third dimension, Feedback/Support, raters did not find any evidence of additional assignments beyond the discussion board for the Biblical Basis course. That was confirmed in the faculty follow up interview. The lower Learner Development/Support score for the Spiritual Formation class appears to reflect a lack of evidence of "examples drawn from a variety of cultures and perspectives." The Learner Development/Support dimension on the BOIP rubric also included measures of research training and emphases on effective learner characteristics and multicultural issues that were not found in the SCM courses and were not part of the SCM design.

Observers commented that all the classes had an engaging class climate, and those that had a complete record were dynamic and above average. Instructors were complimented on "interesting responses and questions that were geared toward eliciting deeper thought," "excellent feedback," and pushing "students to think harder and examine beliefs and underlying assumptions."

An area consistently marked for improvement was addressing different learning styles with a greater variety of learning activities and assessments. The courses leaned heavily on responses to readings and discussion prompts on the discussion board. There

were no group learning activities found, and typically no more than one writing assignment beyond the reading and discussion. These items, measured by the Feedback /Support BOIP dimension, were later included in student and faculty interview questions for corroboration.

The BOIP dimension "integrating technology" was focused on the use of video and audio resources, podcasts, instructional technology resources, synchronous sharing tools, and web 2.0 interactive tools. None of these were evident in the SCM courses, and this absence was addressed in student and faculty interview questions for further explanation.

SCM Online Course Evaluation

The researcher and four raters completed a Q sort of questions from the SCM Online Course Evaluation (Appendix E) into 7 BOIP and application of ministry dimensions. 12 of 30 questions did not get a common majority on the initial sort. Those items were sent back to the raters for a second sort. Final sort was determined by mode of all 8 ratings. The Online Course Evaluation response data was then grouped according to the final sort. Results in each dimension were then analyzed for degree of positive responses: *Yes, Strongly Agree, Agree, Very Much,* and *Somewhat* (Table 11). This was more difficult in the "interaction" dimension where questions asked for rating of influences on participation or amount of time spent on discussion board. Therefore interaction responses are broken down more thoroughly in a second table found in Appendix N.

Table 11: 2008-09 SCM Evaluations: Responses by Q Sort BOIP Dimensions

Dimension	Number of questions	Positive
1. Learning objectives and assessment	8	96%
2. Building the learning environment	3	95%
3. Faculty feedback	6	93%
4. Learner development and support	5[a]	76%
5. Integrating technology [b]	-	-
6. Class management	1	90%
7. Class interaction	4	76%[c]
8. Application to Ministry	3	94%

[a] Responses to 4 technical support related questions not available from SCM
[b] Not measured by evaluation
[c] Multiple scales, see Appendix N for details

Dimensions 1-3, 6 and 8 were scored uniformly high across the program. The fourth dimension included four questions (1-4 on the evaluation) about Blackboard technical support. The responses to these questions were separated from the rest of the dataset by SCM to be forwarded to Blackboard. That left one question, number 12; "Discussion Board questions presented by the instructor (select all that apply)

- Were thought-provoking,

- Challenged me to learn more or dig deeper,

- Enhanced my development in ministry

- Encouraged interaction among classmates."

Responses to the fourth choice were placed by the Q Sort with the 7th BOIP dimension, interaction. The remaining three potential responses received 79%, 79%, and 69% positive responses for an average of 76%. Perhaps the strength of responses was weakened by the multiple choices, but it could also be that the third choice was too great a claim for discussion board questions.

The class interaction responses, detailed in Appendix N, showed that 40% of students reported that they spent 6 hours or more on the discussion board. Sixty-nine percent indicated participation in discussion board "very much enhanced their learning experience." Seventy-three percent chose "amount of interaction among classmates" as the leading factor influencing their participation on the discussion board, followed by amount and type of feedback from instructor and responses from class members.

Three open-ended questions on the SCM Online Course Evaluations (28-30) provided helpful insights into student perceptions of the courses offered. Responses were sorted and grouped into categories using Excel. The 63 responses to "most helpful aspect of this course" included 14 "book/readings," 11 "discussion board," and 10 "interaction." The 52 responses to "least helpful aspect of course were led by 18 variations of "nothing," followed by five comments regarding specific assignments and four each for student's postings and lack of participation. Notably, only two mentioned technical difficulties. Fifty-one responses to "what could be changed to improve the course" included 18 "nothing,", and 10 "make it longer." Two who wanted less reading were balanced by 2 who wanted more challenge. Two felt offline resources would have helped. The 23 general comments were not helpful except to demonstrate that for every unhappy student there was an equally happy student referring to the same elements of the course.

Wrap Up Comments

  At the end of each SCM course students were invited to reflect on what they had

learned or gained the most from the course. These wrap up comments were collected in a

single document and used as a source for evaluative and promotional purposes by the

SCM Director. Reporting on these comments seems to follow the course evaluation data

most smoothly. There were 28 comments, often lengthy and multifaceted, from the four

core courses.

  Two comments stood out as indications of the strength of this program in terms of

best practices. Said one student: "The class has been superior to a traditional classroom

course in that it allowed me, a man too busy and schedule conflicted, to be involved in

the class any time of day or night I was able." Another student commented on the

difficulty of online learning and the effectiveness of best practices:

   I do have great difficulty with online work because it takes more intentional

   planning without the accountability of having to show up in a class. However,

   this class has been my best experience, because [the instructor] has been on top of

   things and has been very clear about when he expects things to be finished.

Faculty Survey

  Faculty Survey (Appendix K) respondents were queried about the provision of

best practices resources or guidelines during course development (Appendix R). They

reported in-service workshops, written resources, online tutorials and easy access to

personal help from the director on issues of course design and online course facilitation.

FR2 points out, and no others contradict, that there was freedom in terms of content and

course specifics. Detailed responses to question 10, describing the process of developing

each course, underscore that theme of freedom in development of content with ample technical and design support from the SCM director. FR2, who taught the same course five times, noted:

> Over the years…I removed a good amount of content, and reduced some writing expectations, giving more choices about theological reflection. The laity focus challenged me because writing was not always the best, so I had to adjust my expectations, but I was also amazed at how vulnerable and open the learners were to me and to one another.

Questions about the basic elements and intended applications of these courses revealed common themes. Instructors were seeking to introduce basic "concepts," "language," and "content," from their discipline, then to help students develop skills in "thinking," "understanding," "reflecting," and "synthesizing" ideas that could then be "applied" in students' contexts.

Comments on the level of student participation indicated a high level of engagement, with only few students failing to earn a certificate of completion. As with traditional face to face classes, smaller enrollments left less room for lurking in the background. FR5 made an interesting observation on the impact of the sequence of courses taken on participation:

> There was a difference, because I was teaching one of the core courses, in the participation depending on whether they took me first or last. If they took me last they had already gone through the routine, they were always responding and responding in depth. If they took me first I had to spend a lot of time making people comfortable with the process.

In judging which aspect of their course was most effective, all but one instructor alluded to interaction on the discussion board. The least effective aspect was reported with greater variety. Two pointed to offline assignments, one commented on the lack of visual engagement, one did not remember, and FR5 spoke at length about course length:

"We want more class time but when we have more class we don't have the time to really do more. So I found the short course format beneficial. When the class was over everybody wanted more, but I like that better than when people go "whoosh" out the door."

Student Follow Up Interviews

The first four questions in the interview (Appendix M, transcripts in Appendix P) were designed to find evidence for best practices benchmarks that had not been found in the document review or online course observations. Evidence for all was reported by respondents. After question four, the researcher asked SIR2 about other continuing education programs because her profession would have required many such experiences. SIR2 reported that SCM compared very favorably. Question five was an open-ended question about course design. SIR2 replied that course design was "clear cut, well-written, well-executed and consistent, every class worked the same way."

SIR2 also observed that:

SCM was following same best practices as were indicated in my professional reading. All of the staff were so accommodating and affirming through the process. I was referring others who were exploring ministry to get involved with this as a way to explore at such a low price and get a structured experience in learning about your calling.

Faculty Follow Up Interviews

The Faculty Interview Protocol (Appendix T) mirrors that of the student interview. (See Table 8 for descriptions of the respondents). The first set of questions was designed to find evidence for best practices benchmarks that had not been found in the document review or online course observations.

Regarding student learning goals, interviewees reported an awareness of student goals, which were sometimes solicited in opening discussion board thread, but FIR3 reflected that "not all of their expressed learning objectives were, I thought, essential… when I saw that they had a particular interest or particular question I tried to deal with them directly, usually through the discussion board." FIR1 commented: "I didn't see my role as looking for what they wanted to get out of class but for them to understand what I wanted them to get out of class. If other things evolved from that, great..."

When asked about assignments to measure learning outcomes, all reported individual written assignments; essays, reflection papers, case studies, or projects. FIR1 noted shifting from multiple reflection papers, which overwhelmed students in the four week course, to one paper and a case study. Instructors chose not to assign small group work because of time and distance restrictions. Most reported that assignments were effective and taken seriously by students. FR3 related that one assignment made it too easy to "highjack" and adapt existing materials so it was dropped.

Instructors resonated with possibilities for using newer technologies and web-based media, but noted that fewer were available at onset of program in 2003. Some students struggled with basic technology of a discussion board, and instructors' time was limited for choosing, uploading and using such materials.

Questions about evidence of student support services were largely answered in student interviews. Instructors corroborated that SCM staff was helpful in dealing with technical and administrative support issues. They also reaffirmed the role of instructor as first line of technical support.

When queried about thoughts on how their SCM course experience was put together, instructors felt like course design worked well, especially after teaching several times. FIR2 noted a benefit from the flexible scheduling for course in *Theological Reflection*; "Late at night was more reflective time for me. I often heard from students late at night, tech allowed you to engage at a more reflective time of day." FIR4 also saw benefit in using discussion board format: "some students seemed to be a little more candid. Not sure why. There were some things we discussed on Blackboard that I had not discussed in courses sitting in class with people."

Administrator Interviews

AIR1 and AIR2 were given a copy of the BOIP rubric and asked how well it measured what they were trying to accomplish with instruction in the SCM. AIR2 thought it did so "pretty well." AIR1 was concerned about the risk of "imposing assumptions, practices, and standards from one particular contextual program to another that does not work out of the same." Both saw some limitations because of innate differences between a degree program and non-degree continuing education program in size, type of assessment and level of support services.

Best practices for SCM were determined through study of the literature in best practices of online learning. As a result of discussions about the applicability of those

standards they developed rubrics and checklists for course development as well as a template for most courses in the SCM certificate programs.

Both AIR1 and AIR2 were clear that constructivism and andragogy provided the educational philosophy and frame of reference for the program. There was also emphasis on dialogue, concepts attainment, application of learning, good course design and instructional management.

All three respondents were pleased with the results of instructional training. Interestingly, AIR2, who interacted most closely with the instructors, notes that success "depended greatly on their passion to provide continuing theological education, to teach online, commitment to do the work, comfort with technology, willingness to learn, etc. Some efforts were very successful; others were dismal failures." FR3 emphasized the role of accountability in delivering quality instruction.

Other than the inherent difficulty of starting a new program using technology new to the institution and many students, both AIR2 and FR3 saw promotion as the most difficult aspect of getting the program underway. In addition to the expense, connecting SCM with the audience that needed and wanted this kind of education was made difficult by gatekeepers unwilling to share email databases and pass on information.

The use of technology was driven by "pedagogical choices related to program goals and learning outcomes." AIR1 points out that use of technology and media "will not result in increased level of learning apart from appropriate application." AIR2 notes that part time instructors are limited in the time they can spend in developing media elements. Furthermore, AIR2 explained:

understanding what the options are and how to use them in a way that supports

the pedagogy rather than supplants it isn't acquired in a half-day training session.

We lacked the resources to build courses for instructors that incorporated these

tools.

The varying degrees of attention to student learning goals was accounted for by

the underlying andragogical framework of understanding interacting with instructors who

were not trained as educators. SCM leaders focused on helping instructors achieve good

instructional practice.

The respondents spoke or wrote at length about the lessons learned from the SCM

experience (see Appendix R). AIR1's summation points to the challenge of the unique

niche of the SCM program:

> one key lesson I share often is about the economics of continuing education
>
> programs of the SCM type. SCM was an "enrichment" continuing education
>
> program directed at developing lay persons and untrained (non-seminary
>
> graduate) church staff. As such, students gained a lot of learning, and a
>
> certificate, but derived no direct financial benefit or professional advancement
>
> benefit beyond that. Continuing education programs of this type face
>
> considerable challenges in sustainability, especially during difficult economic
>
> times…. if any program SHOULD have succeeded because we did everything
>
> right, it was SCM. Yet, we could not overcome the reality of the challenges of
>
> the economic model of this type of enrichment continuing education program.

AIR2 concludes: "Offering resources to meet an identified need does not insure sufficient participation to sustain the program."

<div align="center">Sense of Community</div>

2. To what extent do students report experiencing a sense of community in their courses?

The BOIP interaction dimension already reported from Course Observations and SCM Online Course Evaluations is integral in the sense of community experienced by students, but other methods in this study provided more direct evidence.

Wrap Up Comments

The theme of community and interaction was evident in nine wrap up comments, summarized by one in this way; "Factors that influenced me were the helpful comments and responses from others in the class. I felt as though I was on a journey together with them and not out in the desert alone!"

Student Follow Up Interviews

Sense of community was the subject of question 6 in the Student Follow Up Interviews and all three respondents indicated the presence of this variable; ranging from "there was interaction" to this response from SIR2:

> I experienced a high degree of community and accountability, community is very
>
> different... we have to accept that people do bond electronically. We became a
>
> very viable community, we were important to each other. Level of intimacy grew
>
> as course went on. Maybe to some degree that can be attributed to the fact that
>
> this is a spiritual experience and if you have men and women who are driven to
>
> take on these classes, you automatically have a collection of people who are going
>
> to want community, looking to encourage each other, who are spirit-acclimated.

Faculty Follow-Up Interviews

Faculty Follow-Up Interview respondents discussed the theme of community at length. FIR1 was ambivalent, seeing interaction, but feeling "more effective in face to face setting." FIR4 attributed some elements of observed community to connections outside the course; common ministry settings and interests, and previous coursework. FIR2 and FIR3 were more emphatic in their observations of "caring, interaction, intimacy and engagement" that occurred so quickly online. FIR2 observed:

I was taken with the level of caring and interaction that I didn't always experience in the classroom setting. In small group, with practicum groups (6-10 students) I have lead over 10 years on campus, they become a group in the second semester, people begin to share at deeper level. I was amazed at online how quickly people were able to share at a pretty deep level.

The relational aspects of theological education were well met in the SCM program but AIR1 makes a clear statement that

Relationship happens when people get connected merely as a consequence—the medium for connection is secondary, though it of course influences the capacity of relationship development. But in and of itself, the medium, whether classroom or online, does not mitigate whether a "relationship" happens. The quality, type, and definition of what constitutes "relational" is a product of the connection, context, and enterprise people engage in.

Transformational Learning

3. To what extent do students report experiencing transformational learning?

SCM Course Evaluations

On question 16 of the SCM Online Course Evaluation, in the "application of ministry" section, when asked if "my understanding of my role in service/ministry has increased as a result of this course" 92% of students replied in the affirmative.

Student Surveys

Responses to question five about lessons learned (Appendix O) were weighted towards personal growth issues like sense of call and spiritual formation, but there were also concrete examples of church systems theory, (R3 and R8), and children's ministry practices, (R9).

Faculty Surveys

FR3 remarked that "I was pleasantly surprised at the depth of reflection accomplished online. In fact, I'm wondering if the visual anonymity and typically late night reflections didn't allow students to open up more."

Student Follow up Interviews

Questions 7 and & 7b measured the experience of transformational learning and how that experience related to expectations. Two students spoke of the confidence they had gained both in the classroom and in their ministry settings. SIR1 replied

I grew as an individual and as a Christian through the interaction and the way the questions were presented." All indicated that the experience exceeded expectations and SIR2 went on to say "BTSR focused on outcome, not indoctrination, but finding who I was."

Faculty Follow up Interviews

When asked about their observations of personal growth in students, all the respondents noted that they were limited to observing student reports of growth in online discussions and assignments. With that caveat in mind they went on to note that change was detectable. FR2 described it thusly: "I could see shifts from the front end, especially in their insights and reflections, and what they began to self disclose. [These] are the most prominent evidences of transformative processes."

In a follow up question, instructors were asked if transformational learning was a realistic expectation for such a short course. They replied in the affirmative, especially if one thought in terms of beginning a process that will continue beyond the class sessions. Seeing the evidence of changes in character, convictions and conduct is difficult in four weeks, more so without observations of behavior, but there are clues. FR2:

> If you can include in transformational learning the beginnings of awareness of self, of things they hadn't had before…. If I sense greater awareness of self, and they are able to articulate that some way without just regurgitating from content, … they are on the road to transformational learning. Why wouldn't that be as important as the behavior you might see if you were with them and operating with them [face to face]?"

Administrator Interviews

Administrators were asked in question 9 if "transformational learning is a realistic expectation for a short continuing education course?" AIR2 replied "Feedback from participants indicated that their experience was transformational. I don't think transformational learning is time-bound." AIR1 reflected that "the extent [of

transformational learning] is more a product of sound pedagogical design and teacher interventions than it is of the medium."

Transfer of Learning

4. To what extent do students report transferring their learning into ministry settings?

Wrap up Comments

Transfer of learning and eagerness to find practical applications was echoed in 4 comments, including one who planned to start a "free market group for those with a heart for special needs at church in January."

Four comments also pointed to a strong motivation to learn more about the course content and its application. For example: "This course has undeniably whetted my appetite for more learning."

Student Survey

The primary focus of the student survey was to ascertain transfer of learning. Responses to three questions dealing with implementation of what students learned are reported in Table 12. Each question called for a Likert scale response where 1= Strongly Disagree and 5= Strongly Agree. The mean scores indicate a satisfactory level of transfer of learning. All but two respondents reported not only an eagerness to implement, and sense of being well-equipped to implement what they had learned, but also actual implementation.

R8 indicated a failure to implement what had been learned despite being eager and well-equipped. The student agreed with all four of possible confounds to implementation (Questions 11-15): "It was not practical for my ministry setting." "I was discouraged by my supervisor." "I was discouraged by lay leaders." "I tried and it was

unsuccessful" and was "undecided" about future implementation. This respondent's

narrative comments did not reveal further details regarding implementation.

R10, who had not yet completed a course, was "undecided" on eagerness and

well-equipped to implement, but was certain there was no implementation. The student

indicated "undecided" for every confound, did not plan to implement in the future, and

made no further comments.

Table 12: Student Survey Responses Implementation Scores (Likert 1-5)

Respondent	Eager to implement.	Well-equipped to implement.	Implemented
	Question 6	Question 7	Question 8
R 1	4	4	4
R 2	5	5	4
R 3	5	5	4
R 4	4	3	4
R 6	5	4	4
R 7	4	4	4
R 8	4	4	2
R 9	5	5	5
R10	3	3	1
Mean	4.33	4.11	3.56

Of six respondents who answered question 9, four were able to reply concretely

when asked to describe what they did to implement their learning (Appendix P). R6

demonstrates a higher level of application when describing using "information in this course to encourage a sense of expectancy, even obligation to relate to the notion of "calling" in all our lives." R9 reports implementing a systemic change in her place of ministry that created a "healthier environment" for children.

The last open-ended question of the survey (Appendix Q) asked students to comment on how their experience in an SCM course was transferable to their ministry setting. R2 focused on personal growth, the rest described skills, resources, strategies and information. Three (R4, R6, R9) described specific impacts on their ministry settings. Despite the failure to implement that is recorded above, R8 commented: "I was excited to see that problems we faced in a small country church were addressed in a class from the seminary. To see strategy to address real problems was encouraging, especially since they were do-able."

Student Follow Up Interviews

Transfer of learning was the focus of questions 8 and 8b. All three indicated that it was easy to apply what they learned in class to their ministry settings. SIR3 mentioned that application was made easier because peers "had much to share from their life and spiritual experiences." SIR1 went on to say:

> Application was easy but acceptance by others [was not]. I realized we can just present something, it takes a while to catch on. They don't like change much, you have to be gentle, taking these courses helped me to be more tolerant and to try to understand where others are coming from and to listen to them and then take what I learned and maybe say 'have you considered so and so.'

Faculty Follow Up Interviews

Instructors described students' ability to transfer of learning to ministry settings in terms of examples that students offered in discussions and written assignments about connections made between reflections and experiences, and between content and real life situations at home and at work in churches. FR4 noted that students often said "I am going to try something we talked about and I'll let you know how it works."

Administrator Interviews

All AIR respondents viewed the SCM model as well suited and especially oriented towards pragmatic application

Best Practices and Theological Continuing Education

5. Is there an association between implementation of best practices in specific courses and these three desired themes in theological continuing education?

Student Follow Up Interviews

Question nine asked for an opinion on the effectiveness of this type of course for theological continuing education. SIR1 described misgivings before starting the program; "'How stimulating is looking at something on a screen going to be?' but I found it very stimulating and very reasonably priced." SIR2 stated that "I am a strong proponent of this model for continuing education…highly appropriate… especially for people in career transition and bivocational ministers." SIR3 noted that "If SCM was still offering these online classes, I would be enrolling in them. They fit my time schedule and were useful in my ministry."

Faculty Follow Up Interviews

Question 13, as to the effectiveness of this type of online course for continuing theological education, was also addressed by instructors throughout their responses. All were positive about their experiences and the experiences of their students. Making theological education available to lay leaders who would not otherwise have access was the primary theme. Second was introducing the content and methods of theological education to individuals who might later go on to full-time enrollment. The third central theme was the continuing exploration of how theological education could be accomplished at least in part through online courses. FR2 expressed the internal dialogue within most of the four instructors:

> I'm not trying to make a big case for the fact that we ought to go this way but I don't think we are losing as much with this as sometimes we might think we are online. [In terms of] disconnected learning, I mean disconnected from bodily learning.... If I had my druthers I would love to see a mix and not just one or the other. I have been convinced that you can go places with the online work that you cannot with the other and there are things that you can do in a classroom that you cannot do online.

Finally, the researcher asked the two instructors who were also local pastors how people in their churches might take advantage of something like SCM. FR4 responded; "there are people in my church … who would like to learn but just aren't able to move from one place to another" who could benefit from a certificate process supplemented by online learning. FR1 has given serious thought "how that might work and how I might

structure some kind of Blackboard conversation…. I think there is some real viability as a

pastor and teaching pastor to use this format."

Administrator Interviews

All AIR respondents viewed the SCM model as very effective as a model for

theological continuing education. AIR2 commented: "The model is sound; the execution

determines effectiveness."

With this data in hand it is possible to chart the evidence in the SCM program,

and particularly the four core courses examined in depth, for best practices in online

education and the three desired themes in theological continuing education: sense of

community, transformational learning and transfer of learning into ministry settings. As

Table 13 illustrates, (using the same 1-4 Likert type scale as the BOIP Rubric: 1 = No

Evidence, 2 = Minimal Evidence, 3 = Partial Evidence, 4=Complete Evidence)

evidence of best online instructional practices as indicated by the QOL benchmarks and

the BOIP rubric was found in all sources evaluated for that purpose. Likewise, evidence

for the key themes was found in all sources evaluated for that purpose. Note that a 4,

"complete evidence" indicates that the source provided all the evidence that was sought.

A 3 indicates that some data was not found or some data did not support that theme.

Table 13: Evidence of Best Practices and Theological Education Themes by Source

Source	Themes Evidenced			
	Best Practices	Sense of Community	Transfer of Learning	Transformational Learning
Document Review	3	-	-	-
Online Course Observations	3	3	-	-
Course Evaluation	3	3	3	3
Wrap Up Comments	3	3	3	3
Student Survey	-	-	4	-
Faculty Survey	3	-	-	-
Student Interview	4	4	4	4
Faculty Interview	3	3	4	4
Admin Interview	4	3	3	4

1 = No Evidence, 2 = Minimal Evidence, 3 = Partial Evidence,
4 = Complete Evidence
Dash indicates theme was not measured by this method

On the case within a case level, the four core SCM courses, evidence of best practices and key themes in theological continuing education was found in the appropriate source for each course where that data was available (Table 14). The course *Theological Reflection* was missing course evaluation data and a student interview and none of the student survey responses indicated a focus on that course. In terms of the BOIP scale, (1 = No Evidence, 2 = Minimal Evidence, 3 = Partial Evidence, 4 = Complete Evidence) that course would have to labeled closer to a 2, "minimal evidence" than a 3. Because the *Church Systems* course had been scrubbed of personal identifiers and interactions, it would have to judged as presenting only partial evidence. The evidence for the other two courses from eight different sources could be fairly assessed as having presented complete evidence for the presence of both best online instructional practices and the three themes central to theological education.

Table 14: Evidence of Best Practices and Theological Education Themes by Course

Source	Themes in Core Courses			
	Church System	Biblical Basis	Spiritual Formation	Theological Reflection
Online Course Observations	a[1]	a	a	a
Course Evaluation	a,b,c,d	a,b,c,d	a,b,c,d	missing
Wrap Up Comments	a,b,c,d	a,b,c,d	a,b,c,d	a,b,c,d

Student Survey	c	c	c	missing
Faculty Survey	a	a	a	a
Student Interview	a,b,c,d	a,b,c,d	a,b,c,d	not conducted
Faculty Interview	a,b,c,d	a,b,c,d	a,b,c,d	a,b,c,d
Administrator Interview	a,b,c,d	a,b,c,d	a,b,c,d	a,b,c,d
Level of Evidence (BOIP Scale)	3	4	4	2

[1] Missing personal interactions from discussion board
Themes: a = Best practices, b = Community, c = Transfer of Learning, d= Transformative Learning

Emerging Themes and Connections

In reviewing the evidence of best practices in online education found in this study, it became clear that social interaction, one of the major themes in online education literature, was also a central theme in the descriptions of how SCM courses were designed, taught and experienced by students and faculty. Even in the course that had been scrubbed of personal interactions, students and faculty reported in other sources that "intimacy", "sharing" and "interaction" were present. Observers remarked on the "engaging climate" of classes. Faculty used terms like "vulnerability", "candid" and "reflective" to describe the student interactions. It was clear that attention was being paid to how students interacted.

Secondly in terms of best practices, it was very apparent that attention was also being paid to faculty support and training. The program designers had clear ideas, refined through experience, of how a short term online continuing education course should be experienced, and those ideas were communicated to instructors through multiple channels.

Those two pieces seem to lead clearly to the first major theme central to theological education that was sought and found across the sources of data; a reported sense of community. It appears that if the goal is for students to experience a sense of community in their online learning, the first key is to plan for that to happen and then execute that teaching methodology effectively.

The second key may be built into the student population. A one student pointed out, the speed and depth of the sense of community experienced could be "attributed to the fact that this is a spiritual experience and if you have men and women who are driven to take on these classes, you automatically have collection of people who are going to want community." If that is indeed the case, then the fears of theological educators about the potential loss of community online maybe overstated. Those who want community will make it happen.

The second theme from theological education that emerged from this study was transformational learning. Again there were roots in best practices. Observers found discussion board questions that, according to the rubric, "were geared to deeper thought and examination of beliefs and assumptions." Student comments on evaluations and wrap up comments echoed that finding. The first step to students experiencing change in their character, convictions and conduct is for that to be a goal of the instructional design and

execution. Based on student and faculty reports, that experience does not seem to be hindered by the online format. However, the confirmation of those reports may be problematic without the ability to witness behavior face to face.

The final theme of theological education that emerged from this study was transfer of learning. Exploring this possibility was one of the original goals of this study. The Student Survey and Ministry Setting Survey were designed to gather data to see if this program met the test of Schön: were the content and learning experiences applicable and applied in the swamp of real life experience? Administrators and faculty confirmed that as a goal of the program. Students and faculty reported that students were able apply their learning. If the Ministry Setting Survey been successful, and especially if it had generated follow up interviews, the study might have been able to evaluate the program on Kirkpatrick's level four; impact on the learner's organization.

The connection between solid pedagogy, including carefully considered instructional design, and the desired learning goals of theological continuing education, or any given field, regardless of the medium, seems to be reinforced by the data collected in this study. It is good to recall that many of the best online instructional practices are pedagogical descendants of an article on good practices for face to face undergraduate education (Chickering, 1987).

<center>Summary</center>

This chapter has presented the data collected for this study via seven methods or sources: Document Review, Online Classroom Observation, Online Course Evaluation, Wrap Up Comments, Student and Faculty Surveys, and Interviews. Organized around the five research questions, results were reported in the form of demographic statistics,

narrative descriptions, summary tables, and verbatim examples from surveys and interviews. Despite some missing data, a rich picture of the SCM program has emerged from demographics, rubrics, scales, scores, and narrative responses. Emerging themes and connections concluded the chapter. Chapter 5 will focus on interpreting these results in terms of answering the research questions and in light of the review of literature in online best practices and theological continuing education. The chapter will conclude with implications for future practice and research and a summary statement.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This final chapter will review the purpose and methodology of the research, present analysis of the results of the study in terms of the research questions and the review of literature, raise questions for future research, and discuss these findings in light of the original research problem. Such a summation serves to condense all that has been described in a way that allows the reader to decide if the goals of this study have been met and what lessons might be drawn from the result.

The principle purpose of this study was to evaluate the extent to which the School of Christian Ministry (SCM) at Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond (BTSR) modeled best practices of online education, as exemplified by the findings of the *Quality On the Line* study and the University of Maryland University College (UMUC) *Best Online Instructional Practices* (BOIP) study. In support of that goal, the research examined the extent to which key themes in the pursuit of theological education are reported by students, and looked for a connection between the two. This purpose is expressed in five research questions:

1. To what extent does SCM model best practices of online curriculum and instruction?

2. To what extent do students report experiencing a sense of community in their courses?

3. To what extent do students report experiencing transformational learning?

4. To what extent do students report transferring their learning into ministry settings?

5. Is there an association between implementation of best practices in specific courses and these three desired themes in theological continuing education?

This was a mixed methods case study program evaluation. Program documents, including original proposal, strategic plan, catalog, and training materials for instructors, were examined for awareness and inclusion of best practices of online education using a checklist built from the twenty-four benchmarks from the *Quality On the Line* report.

Next, the key components (syllabi, course schedules, assignments, discussion boards, etc.) of four core courses of the program: *The Church—A System of Relationships*, *Biblical Basis for Ministry, Theological Reflection,* and *Spiritual Formation and Calling* were analyzed for implementation of best practices using the BOIP Online Classroom Observation rubric.

SCM Course evaluation data was then analyzed for descriptions of the program participants, and further evidence of the dimensions of best practices from the BOIP rubric. Wrap up comments from discussion boards, student and faculty surveys and follow up interviews with students, faculty and administrators served to fill in gaps of information from previous steps as well as gather data on three key themes central to theological education. On both a program and course level, evidence of best practices and key themes in theological continuing education was found in the appropriate source where that data was available.

At this point it is essential to examine that evidence through the lenses of the research questions that have driven this study. The remainder of this chapter will describe how those questions have been answered and how the findings relate to the reviewed

literature, raise implications for future practice and research, and reflect on what the answers to these questions mean to the field of theological continuing education.

<div align="center">Best Practices</div>

1. To what extent does SCM model best practices of online curriculum and instruction?

This study found evidence of best practices of online curriculum and instruction at all levels (see Table 14). Results from the document review using the QOL benchmarks and the online course observation using the BOIP rubric showed marked correspondence.

Those dimensions that were missing evidence in the document review (see Appendix M) were explored further through other methods and sources. Two QOL benchmarks that remained unsupported were elements that were arguably inappropriate for the scope and design of the SCM program: training in research methods and procurement of electronic materials. The lack of extensive academic support would be typical for a continuing education program and student needs were adequately met by SCM faculty and staff.

The issue of greater use of web-based instructional media and technology was common to both the QOL and BOIP measures. Interviews with faculty and administrators revealed that while such use may have been a benefit to the students, the program was not designed to support training for and implementation of technology which may not have been used due to time constraints. This corroborates the findings of Lovvorn (2009) regarding the limitations of smaller institutions in developing online programs.

Responses from students and instructors regarding technology also supported the findings of (Heinemann, 2005b), (Young, 2007), and (Lovvorn et al., 2009) that orientation of novices to the technology requires time and energy from instructors and can slow the pace of learning. Wisely SCM leadership determined that use of technology would be driven by pedagogy (Cannell, 2008) (MacLeod, 2008) (Delamarter, 2005a) (Hess, 2005) and appropriateness to the targeted student population.

SCM demonstrated a strong level of faculty support and training, deemed to be a necessary best practice in the literature (Jewel, 2005), (Hess, 2005), (Exter et al., 2009), (Holdener, 2010). Formal face to face training, online and print resources and ongoing coaching gave each instructor every chance for success.

One best practice that was almost a sidebar in the literature review came to play a critical role in the story of SCM. (McCarthy & Samors, 2009) found that leaders have to allocate sufficient resources for not only starting, but also sustaining an online program. While SCM had a business plan that may have worked in a stronger economy, AIR1 found that as an "enrichment continuing education program directed at developing lay persons and untrained (non-seminary graduate) church staff" who derive no direct financial or professional benefit from participation other than a certificate, the SCM program was particularly vulnerable in a weakening economy.

Most missing elements on the course level mirror those of the program and are accounted for likewise. The one instructional element that could have been addressed in a way that would have strengthened each course was the inclusion of a greater variety of learning activities. This is a key element of effective online learning (Chickering & Ehrmann, 1996) The discussion board was designed to be the center of instruction in each

course, and that was very effective. But supplemental learning activities were also

individual in scope and written in form. Even in the short four week format using the

Blackboard platform it would have been technologically possible to assign projects

choices that included audio, visual or other formats and required some sort of

collaboration with other learners.

Sense of Community

2. To what extent do students report experiencing a sense of community in their

courses?

Course evaluation narrative responses, wrap up comments from course discussion

boards, and student follow up interviews all pointed to interaction with other students

and the formation of elements of community as central to their experience as a

student in the SCM program. Their reports were corroborated by the observations of

faculty and administrators.

It might have been expected that in a learning experience so short-lived, four

weeks, this would not have been so. Instead it appears the content under study, the

design of the courses, the skill of the instructors at asking self-revelatory questions,

the intrinsic desire of the students for community, and the perceived safety of the

semi-anonymous discussion board format, all led to an accelerated forming of bonds

among students and instructors. This supports the work of Lewis & Abdul-Hamid,

(2006) and others at UMUC that maintains that interaction and community are

products of intentional design.

Reports by instructors of surprising levels of intimacy on the discussion boards

corroborates the findings of Savery (2005) who cautioned that instructors should be

prepared to deal with such. Perhaps the ministerial training of all the faculty was more than adequate preparation.

Transformational Learning

3. To what extent do students report experiencing transformational learning?

Course evaluation narrative responses, wrap up comments from course discussion boards, and student follow up interviews all present evidence of students experiencing at least the beginning stages of personal growth in their character, convictions and conduct as a result of their participation of the program. Here too, student reports are corroborated by the comments of faculty and administrators. These findings are consistent with the literature; (Heinemann, 2007; Hess, 2005; MacLeod, 2008; Tran, 2011).

Despite that consistency, an important acknowledgement needs to be made here on the nature of the evidence. All that we have are the reports of the students. Even the instructors note that their reports are based upon written accounts of such changes, not face to face encounters or personal observation of behavior. We have no reason to believe that students are being disingenuous, but we neither do we have independent verification of behavior, the ultimate measure of transformational learning.

Transfer of Learning

4. To what extent do students report transferring their learning into ministry settings?

The Student Survey was designed especially to ascertain students' perceptions of their transfer of learning to ministry settings. Seven of 9 respondents reported not only an eagerness to implement, and a sense of being well-equipped to implement what they had learned, but also actual implementation. One of those that did not report any

implementation had not completed a course. Course evaluation responses and wrap up comments reinforced these reports.

This survey was to have been corroborated by a Ministry Setting Survey completed by peers referred by the survey respondents. Only one student referred a peer to take the Ministry Setting survey. That person responded, received the link and several reminders, but never completed the survey. Level 4 evaluation, defined by Kirkpatrick as determining the effect of the training on the organization (1998) is still a gap, also found by Hiltz & Arbaugh (2003) and needs to be filled by future research. In its stead for this study there were reports of faculty and administrators that students are finding practical application in the field for their learning from the online classroom.

<div align="center">Best Practices and Theological Continuing Education</div>

5. Is there an association between implementation of best practices in specific courses and these three desired themes in theological continuing education?

All the courses under study demonstrated the implementation of best practices and all the data connected with the courses provided evidence of a sense of community, transformational learning, and transfer of learning being present (see Table13 and Table 14). That being said, although there is a strong implied association and a certain logical implication based upon the literature, it would take the comparison of courses that did not demonstrate best practices in online curriculum and instruction, to demonstrate a clear empirical association.

Implications for Future Research

As mentioned in the discussion of online pedagogy and constructivist learning theory, this study did not find significant discussion of the role of language in online theological education. What is the role of language and language education in a medium that is dependent on reading and writing effectively? To what extent are poor written communication skills proving to be a barrier to effective online learning?

This research found among most SCM students a growing comfort with using discussion board and other features of the basic Blackboard platform. But there were several reports in evaluation comments that students had to reach to attain that comfort. What is the threshold of comfort among continuing education students for programs moving to greater use of interactive and multimedia technology?

It was the intent of this study to ascertain the level of transfer of learning by SCM students to ministry settings in part by collecting data from peers in those settings. That kind of research could not only reinforce the findings of this study, but could also illuminate whether or not programs like SCM are providing for the educational needs of congregations as well as individuals. If that case can be made, then the likelihood of future programs like SCM being supported by a broad range of churches increases significantly.

Finally, to find courses in the SCM or other online theological continuing education programs that clearly do not show evidence of best practices in online education and ascertain the extent of the key themes in theological education examined in this study would provide stronger empirical support for the association of best practices and those themes.

Implications for Practice

The School of Christian Ministry is an excellent example of the capacity of a wholly online program to meet the theological continuing education needs of lay church leaders. Students, faculty and administrators all reported on the success of the program in achieving its goal of "preparing congregational leaders to answer their calling to serve God through the church and in their vocational settings" (Appendix L).

Program leaders worked carefully to research the literature and establish guidelines, training and accountability in best practices for their instructors. Staff provided coaching and formative assessment for faculty as they developed and taught courses. Those courses were evaluated by students and evaluations were taken seriously by the staff. The structural pieces were in place for success.

Leadership was committed to the principles of constructivist and andragogical learning theory and put materials and training in the hands of instructors so that those principles could be put into practice. The pedagogical pieces were in place for success.

The school invested time, money and personnel in setting up a Blackboard learning environment that was well-supported and tailored to meet the needs of part time instructors and novices to online learning. The technological pieces were in place for success.

Administrators, faculty and students demonstrated a high level of awareness of the sacredness of their task and of the themes that comprised effective theological education. They were focused on nurturing community and transformational learning that was transferable to the needs of the ministry setting. The theological pieces were in place for success.

If all these pieces were in place, then why is the School of Christian Ministry no longer operating and what can leaders in theological continuing education learn from the experience? First, there was of course the economic downturn, and the impact it had on institutional and grant funding as well as personal and congregational continuing education spending. While the national economy was certainly out of the hands of SCM leadership, what might have made a difference?

First is the issue of assessment. It is possible that a robust needs assessment at the beginning would have provided a more realistic picture of the potential audience for an enrichment based continuing education program. This study found no evidence of such an assessment. It is also possible that earlier external formative evaluation may have better alerted program leaders to the potential funding issues. Again, there was no evidence of an external evaluation. Despite that fact, research conversations with program leaders indicated that they were very aware of the need to move beyond grant funding, but were unable to do so.

This raises the second issue of collaboration. The original program announcement for SCM listed at least five major denominational organizations as partners in the conversation that led to its founding. Several of those partnerships proved to be short-lived. As funding dried up and BTSR looked for additional partners that could perhaps share the burden, none could be found. That was again partially a function of the economy. But since the trends noted in this study's delineation of the research problem:

- devaluation of training
- decentralization of denominations
- issues of time, money, and distance

- and the need of schools of theological higher education to build bridges with local

  congregations,

are all still in effect, a program like SCM could still offer a unique opportunity for

collaboration.

Distance, time and space are not considerations. Faculty and students could be

drawn from around the globe. Financial and technical support could be likewise spread

across a number of institutions. All the pieces are in place, it only takes enough partners

to decide that the need and the opportunity are greater than the desire to wholly own, and

wholly receive credit for, an effective tool for equipping church leaders.

Summary

The principle purpose of this study was to evaluate the extent to which the School

of Christian Ministry (SCM) at Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond (BTSR)

modeled best practices of online education, as exemplified by the findings of the *Quality

On the Line* study and the University of Maryland University College (UMUC) *Best

Online Instructional Practices* (BOIP) study. In support of that goal, the research

examined the extent to which key themes in the pursuit of theological education are

reported by students, and looked for a connection between the two. This purpose is

expressed in five research questions:

1. To what extent does SCM model best practices of online curriculum and

   instruction?

2. To what extent do students report experiencing a sense of community in their

   courses?

3. To what extent do students report experiencing transformational learning?

4. To what extent do students report transferring their learning into ministry settings?

5. Is there an association between implementation of best practices in specific courses and these three desired themes in theological continuing education?

Evidence of best online instructional practices as indicated by the QOL benchmarks and the BOIP rubric was found in all sources evaluated for that purpose. Likewise, evidence for the key themes was found in all sources evaluated for that purpose.

On the case within a case level, the four core SCM courses, evidence of best practices and key themes in theological continuing education was found in the appropriate source for each course where that data was available. Because all evaluated courses demonstrated evidence of best practices, and the presence of the key themes, there is an implied but not an empirical association.

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APPENDIX A: *QUALITY ON THE LINE* BENCHMARKS

Each benchmark will be assessed on the following scale:
1. No Evidence   2. Minimal Evidence   3. Partial Evidence   4. Complete Evidence

Institutional Support Benchmarks

- A documented technology plan that includes electronic security measures (i.e., password protection, encryption, back-up systems) is in place and operational to ensure both quality standards and the integrity and validity of information.

- The reliability of the technology delivery system is as failsafe as possible.

- A centralized system provides support for building and maintaining the distance education infrastructure.

Course Development Benchmarks

- Guidelines regarding minimum standards are used for course development, design, and delivery, while learning outcomes—not the availability of existing technology—determine the technology being used to deliver course content.

- Instructional materials are reviewed periodically to ensure they meet program standards.

- Courses are designed to require students to engage themselves in analysis, synthesis, and evaluation as part of their course and program requirements.

Teaching/Learning Benchmarks

- Student interaction with faculty and other students is an essential characteristic and is facilitated through a variety of ways, including voice-mail and/or e-mail.

- Feedback to student assignments and questions is constructive and provided in a timely manner.

- Students are instructed in the proper methods of effective research, including assessment of the validity of resources.

Course Structure Benchmarks

- Before starting an online program, students are advised about the program to determine (1) if they possess the self-motivation and commitment to learn at a distance and (2) if they have access to the minimal technology required by the course design.

- Students are provided with supplemental course information that outlines course objectives, concepts, and ideas, and learning outcomes for each course are summarized in a clearly written, straightforward statement.

- Students have access to sufficient library resources that may include a "virtual library" accessible through the World Wide Web.

- Faculty and students agree upon expectations regarding times for student assignment completion and faculty response.

Student Support Benchmarks

- Students receive information about programs, including admission requirements, tuition and fees, books and supplies, technical and proctoring requirements, and student support services.

- Students are provided with hands-on training and information to aid them in securing material through electronic databases, interlibrary loans, government archives, news services, and other sources.

- Throughout the duration of the course/program, students have access to technical assistance, including detailed instructions regarding the electronic media used,

practice sessions prior to the beginning of the course, and convenient access to technical support staff.

- Questions directed to student service personnel are answered accurately and quickly, with a structured system in place to address student complaints.

Faculty Support Benchmarks

- Technical assistance in course development is available to faculty, who are encouraged to use it.

- Faculty members are assisted in the transition from classroom teaching to online instruction and are assessed during the process.

- Instructor training and assistance, including peer mentoring, continues through the progression of the online course.

- Faculty members are provided with written resources to deal with issues arising from student use of electronically-accessed data.

Evaluation and Assessment Benchmarks

- The program's educational effectiveness and teaching/learning process is assessed through an evaluation process that uses several methods and applies specific standards.

- Data on enrollment, costs, and successful/ innovative uses of technology are used to evaluate program effectiveness.

- Intended learning outcomes are reviewed regularly to ensure clarity, utility, and appropriateness**.**

APPENDIX B: ELEMENTS OF PROGRAM EVALUATION (CAFFARELLA)

Secure support for evaluation from stakeholders

Identify persons responsible for evaluation process

Define purpose of evaluation

(Meets expectations of stakeholders?)

Specify what elements are to be evaluated

Formulate Evaluation Questions

Determine who supplies needed evidence and if data are already available

Delineate Evaluation Approach

Choose data collection techniques

When and how can new data be collected?

How can existing data be organized?

Stipulate criteria for judging data or process for setting criteria

Determine:

Timeline

Budget

Resources

Monitor and complete evaluation

Make judgments about value of program

Determine ways evaluation data can be used

APPENDIX C: MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Parties

S. Paul Raybon, doctoral candidate at University of North Carolina-Charlotte (UNC-C), is to engage in a program evaluation of the School of Christian Ministry (SCM) of the Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond (BTSR) as the subject of his Ed.D. dissertation research.

BTSR will be represented by Dr. Jim Peake.

Time Frame

While preliminary conversations and sharing of information began in the fall of 2009, the evaluation research as approved by the Dissertation Committee and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of UNC-C will begin officially in the summer of 2011 and should conclude by the end of 2011. Specific Benchmarks:

Proposal Defense:	April 14, 2011
UNC-C IRB approval	May 2011
Online Surveys/Interviews:	June 2011
Data Analysis:	July 2011
Writing:	August 2011
Completion:	December 2011

Benefits

This evaluation process will not only afford S. Paul Raybon the opportunity to complete his doctoral research, but will provide BTSR with an impartial review of the SCM program in relation to best practices of online and theological continuing education as researched by S. Paul Raybon. Being able to analyze the efficacy of this medium in the field of theological continuing education could assist BTSR in decisions about future online programs as well as other institutions exploring the possibility of developing online continuing education programs. Schools, larger churches and groups of churches could partner for training which develops church leaders, cultivates ongoing peer relationships, and strengthen congregations and their connections to schools of theological higher education.

Focus

The principle focus of this study is to evaluate the extent to which the School of Christian Ministry (SCM) at Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond (BTSR) modeled best practices of online education, as exemplified by the *Quality On the Line* study and the University of Maryland University College (UMUC) Best Online Instructional Practices (BOIP) study. Research will be focused on the implementation of recognized standards in online education, more specifically the seven dimensions measured by the Online Classroom Observation rubric developed by UMUC as an element of the BOIP study.

This study will undertake to answer four key questions regarding the SCM program:

1. To what extent does SCM model best practices of online curriculum and instruction?

2. Is there an association between implementation of best practices and student satisfaction in specific courses?

3. To what extent are students transferring their learning into ministry settings?

4. Is there an association between implementation of best practices in specific courses and transfer of learning?

Responsibilities

The SCM of BTSR will provide:

Data from student evaluations of SCM courses.

Email addresses of SCM students and instructors willing to participate in research through surveys/interviews.

Access to online courses and course content through Blackboard

Documentation of SCM program vision/mission, goals, objectives, and strategic plans.

S. Paul Raybon will provide:

A copy of the research proposal as approved by dissertation committee.

Monthly updates as to the progress of the research.

A final copy of the dissertation.

Additional reporting on findings at the request of BTSR.

Costs

No costs to BTSR are anticipated.

Privacy

All data collected will be screened for personal identifiers and information from interviews and surveys will be reported in such a way as to protect the privacy of individuals and their places of ministry.

Ownership

Raw data collected through student surveys remains the property of BTSR and will not be shared with any parties beyond the scope of this research. All evaluation and analysis work product will be the property of S. Paul Raybon.
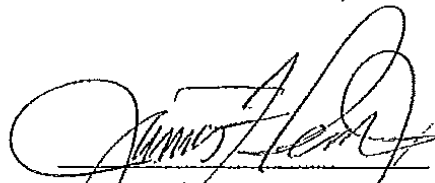
S. Paul Raybon   Date

58 Wagon Road

Asheville, NC 28805

Dr James Peak   Date

Director of Business Affairs

Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond

APPENDIX D: ONLINE CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

Online Classroom Observation
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Evaluation and Assessment
Office of Institutional, Planning, Research, and Accountability
University of Maryland University College
All rights reserved.

Objective:
This instrument assesses online classroom activities in the following dimensions:
1. Learning objectives and assessment
2. Building the learning environment
3. Faculty feedback
4. Learner development and support
5. Integrating technology
6. Class management
7. Class interaction

Observer's Name:	
Course Number and Section:	
Faculty Member's Name:	
Date(s) Observed:	

Instructions to the Observer: The focus of this observation is to assess the teaching and learning process with focus on interaction activities and the pace of the process in meeting the class objectives.

Before the Observation
- Become as familiar as possible with each indicator prior to conducting the observations. The rubric notes areas in learning management system (e.g. Webtycho) which should be checked for evidence of instructional practices. This list should not be considered exhaustive of all areas; however it does provide a useful starting point for the observations.

During the Observation
- Provide as vivid a description as possible answering each question with the description section.
- Provide running observation notes related to each focus area, taking care to address every indicator.

After the Observation
- Summarize your overall assessment of the course.

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[1] Not final—Reliability and validity are not finalized. Not to be used without the permission from Husein Abdul-Hamid

LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND ASSESSMENT

1. Does the instructor clarify and make course objectives observable, measurable & achievable? e.g. Assignments and activities are designed and/or communicated to students to ensure that all course competencies are covered and assessed *Check: Syllabus, Announcements, Conferences, Grade book, Course content*			
No Evidence **(1)**	**Minimal or Insufficient Evidence (2)**	**Partial Evidence** **(3)**	**Complete evidence of success** **(4)**
Describe how this is done:			
2. Does the instructor define or review course objectives, including making sure that they are clearly stated and understandable to students. *Check: Syllabus, Announcements, Conferences, Grade book, Course content*			
No Evidence **(1)**	**Minimal or Insufficient Evidence (2)**	**Partial Evidence** **(3)**	**Complete Evidence** **(4)**
Describe how this is done:			
3. To what extent are student learning assessed in a <u>variety</u> of formats (e.g. exams, quizzes, papers)? *Check: Syllabus, Grade book*			
No Evidence **(1)**	**Minimal or Insufficient Evidence (2)**	**Partial Evidence** **(3)**	**Complete Evidence** **(4)**
Describe how this is done:			
3a. The number and scope of assignments seem appropriate *Check: Syllabus, Grade book*			
Strongly Disagree **(1)**	**Disagree (2)**	**Agree** **(3)**	**Strongly agree** **(4)**
Describe how this is done:			
3b. The course activities/assignments are appropriately paced *Check: Syllabus, Grade book*			
Strongly Disagree **(1)**	**Disagree (2)**	**Agree** **(3)**	**Strongly agree** **(4)**
Describe how this is done:			

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

4. Does assessment occur at established times throughout the semester; with students assessed at the beginning and throughout the course? *Check: Syllabus, Grade book*			
No Evidence (1)	Minimal or Insufficient Evidence (2)	Partial Evidence (3)	Complete Evidence (4)
Describe how this is done:			

5. Does the instructor use assessment information to refine instruction by providing additional explanations, information, activities, or references to further resources? *Check: Syllabus, Announcements, Conferences, Grade book*			
No Evidence (1)			Complete Evidence(4)
Describe how this is done:			

6. Does the instructor use a variety of activities to stimulate students' interest? *Check: Announcements, Conferences, Grade book*			
No Evidence(1)			Complete Evidence(4)
Describe how this is done (can you identify activity/activities that seem to be most stimulating to students):			

7. Does the instructor make students aware of course resources (including textbooks, lectures, class modules, external Web resources, etc.? *Check: Syllabus, Announcements, Conferences, Course content*			
No Evidence(1)			Complete Evidence(4)
Describe how this is done:			

8. Does the instructor share his/her professional and real-world expertise and experiences during student interaction? *Check: Syllabus, Announcements, Conferences, Grade book, Course content*			
No Evidence(1)			Complete Evidence(4)
Describe how this is done:			

9. Does the instructor expose students to different applications of the course subject matter and pose learning tasks in terms of solving problems as well as in terms of accumulating knowledge? *Check: Syllabus, Announcements, Conferences, Grade book, Course content*			
No Evidence(1)			Complete Evidence(4)
Describe how this is done:			

10. Does the instructor encourage students to use tools (e.g. automated quizzes, computer-assisted tasks) for the sake of enhancing their skills and learning and to save their time? *Check: Syllabus, Announcements, Conferences, Grade book, Course content*			
No Evidence(1)			Complete Evidence(4)
Describe how this is done:			

11. Are students provided with opportunities to work together in small groups or pairs, to share results? *Check: Syllabus, Announcements, Conferences, Study Group*			
No Evidence(1)			**Complete Evidence(4)**
Describe how this is done:			
12. Are students provided with opportunities to develop social rapport amongst themselves and with the instructor? *Check: Announcements, Conferences, Study Group*			
No Evidence(1)			**Complete Evidence(4)**
Describe how this is done:			
13. Are students encouraged or required to participate in class discussion; are they provided with clear guidelines for acceptable contributions? *Check: Syllabus, Announcements, Conferences*			
No Evidence(1)			**Complete Evidence(4)**
Describe how participation is encourage or required:			
Rate the quality of the observed student participation:			
No Evidence (1)	**Minimal participation in class discussion**	**Good evidence of participation**	**Strong Evidence of rich participation(4)**
Describe how this is done:			

FEEDBACK AND SUPPORT

14. Does the instructor provide consistent and significant feedback on student performance, including identifying errors, their causes, and ways to correct the errors? *Check: Grade book, Conferences, Syllabus, Announcements.*			
No Evidence(1)			**Complete Evidence(4)**
Describe how this is done:			

15. Are students challenged and supported based on variation in their knowledge and skills (e.g. through additional reading/resources, variety of activities targeting different levels of students, or by providing different tasks/options in assignments? *Check: Syllabus, Announcements, Conferences, Grade book, course content*			
No Evidence(1)			**Complete Evidence(4)**
Describe how this is done			

16. Are students referred to academic support (e.g. tutoring, writing center) or other college services as needed? *Check: Syllabus, Announcements, Conferences, Grade book*			
No Evidence(1)			**Complete Evidence(4)**
Describe how this is done:			

17. To what extent are students provided with guidance and feedback on group activities? *Check: Syllabus, Announcements, Conferences, Grade book, Study groups*			
No Evidence(1)			**Complete Evidence(4)**
Describe how this is done:			

LEARNER SUPPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

18. Does the instructor make students aware of the characteristics of highly effective learners in the context of the class? *Check: Announcements, Conferences, Grade book, Course Content*			
No Evidence(1)			**Complete Evidence(4)**

Describe how this is done:

19. Does the instructor encourage students to draw on their experiences on the job or in non–course activities to assist in learning? *Check: Announcements, Conferences*			
No Evidence(1)			**Complete Evidence(4)**

Describe how this is done:

20. Does the instructor introduce students to examples drawn from a variety of cultures and perspectives (e.g. professional, social, personal, international) to broaden the experience of the learner or to add relevance to the course content? *Check: Announcements, Conferences, Course content*			
No Evidence(1)			**Complete Evidence(4)**

Describe how this is done: not really applicable in this type of course

21. Does the instructor foster student learning by encouraging students to examine assumptions made by themselves or others? *Check: Announcements, Conferences, Grade book*			
No Evidence(1)			**Complete Evidence(4)**

Describe how this is done: not really applicable in this type of course

22. Does the instructor arrange for students to conduct well-designed research or case analyses? *Check: Syllabus, Announcements, Course content*			
No Evidence(1)			**Complete Evidence(4)**

Describe how this is done:

23. Are the course content and discussion supplemented by other learning activities such as role-playing, simulations, projects or case studies? *Check: Syllabus, Announcements, Conferences, Course content*			
No Evidence(1)			**Complete Evidence(4)**

Describe how this is done:

INTEGRATING TECHNOLOGY

24. How well are learning modules (e.g. class modules, learning objects, and external learning resources) incorporated into the class? *Check: Conferences, Course content, Announcements*			
No Evidence (1)	**Limited or Unsuccessful Utilization**	**Utilized correctly with minimal class use**	**Evidence of correct and successful course utilization (4)**
Describe how this is done:			

25. Is course information presented in other multimedia forms such as video and audio clips, podcasts, blogs, or online journals? *Check: Announcements, Conferences, Course content*			
No Evidence (1)	**Limited or Unsuccessful Utilization**	**Utilized correctly with minimal class use**	**Evidence of correct and successful course utilization (4)**
Describe how this is done and which multimedia form is used, if possible indicate whether the multi-media was internally (UMUC) or externally developed:			

26. Are other technology-based instructional materials, such as textbook CDs, automated quizzes, publisher websites, or online journals incorporated into the class? *Check: Syllabus, Announcements, Conferences, Course content*			
No Evidence (1)	**Limited or Unsuccessful Utilization**	**Utilized correctly with minimal class use**	**Evidence of correct and successful course utilization (4)**
Describe how this is done:			

27. Are new technology tools (e.g. Web 2.0 resources, wikis, podcasts, social networking sites) effectively utilized in the class? *Check: Syllabus, Announcements, Conferences, Grade book*			
No Evidence (1)	**Limited or Unsuccessful Utilization**	**Utilized correctly with minimal class use**	**Evidence of correct and successful course utilization (4)**
Describe which technologies and how this is done:			

28. Are new collaboration tools (e.g. Google Docs, iGrOOps) successfully utilized in the class? *Check: Group projects, Syllabus, Announcements, Conferences, Grade book*			
No Evidence (1)	**Limited or Unsuccessful Utilization**	**Utilized correctly with minimal class use**	**Evidence of correct and successful course utilization (4)**
Describe which technologies and how this is done:			

29. Are synchronous technologies (e.g. Adobe Connect, Skype, Yahoo messenger) utilized in the class? *Check: Syllabus, Announcements, Course Content, Conferences, Grade book*			
No Evidence (1)	**Limited or Unsuccessful Utilization**	**Utilized correctly with minimal class use**	**Evidence of correct and successful course utilization (4)**
Describe how this is done:			

30. Other than Webtycho and Microsoft Office, are there indications that students are using other technological tools?			
No Evidence (1)	**Limited or Unsuccessful Utilization**	**Utilized correctly with minimal class use**	**Evidence of correct and successful course utilization (4)**
Describe how this is done:			

OVERALL COURSE ASSESSMENT

31. **SUMMARIZE AND DESCRIBE THE OVERALL CLASS MANAGEMENT AND FACILITATION OF CLASS ACTIVITIES IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS:**
   o Responsiveness to students questions and requests in conferences (including Cyber Café)
   o Turnaround time in grading
   o Tone and quality of student interaction (e.g. sketchy/terse/unapproachable vs. detailed/professional/engaging)
   o Class schedule was clear and detailed
   o Overall class climate (i.e. routine/detached vs. dynamic/engaged)

32. **RATE CLASS INTERACTION: (USING THE ATTACHED INTERACTION RUBRIC[2]) Score by dimension: #1 ( ) , #2 ( ), #3 ( ), #4 ( ), #5 ( ), #6 ( )**

33. **IDENTIFY AND DESCRIBE AREAS OF STRENGTH IN THE COURSE:**
a. Overall, which area (s) of the course contributed the most to enhancing the learning experience of students in this class
b. Overall, how did the instructor contribute to the learning experiences of the class
c. Overall, which course component(s) received the most attention from students in this class
d. Overall, which university resource(s) did students seem to rely on for their success in the class
e. Other than the instructor what, if any, University resource/service contribute positively to the learning experience of students
f. In terms of overall performance, this instructor is:
     Below average --- Average---Above Average --- Exemplary
g. In terms of class engagement and learning, overall, this class is:
     Below average --- Average---Above Average --- Exemplary

34. **IDENTIFY AND DESCRIBE AREAS/ISSUES REQUIRING IMPROVEMENT IN THE COURSE:**
    a. Which areas or activities of the class appear to need the most improvements? (based on discussions in conferences and Cyber Café)
    b. What if any areas of the class were students observed asking for additional assistance or clarification from the instructor?
    c. What is the most under-utilized class feature in this course?
    d. What if any areas where learning goals unmet?
    e. What if any areas contributed negatively to student success?

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[2] Built based on Roblyer, M. D. & Wiencke, W. R. (2004).

Interaction Rubric

Scale (see points below)	Element #1 Social Rapport-building Activities Created by the Instructor	Element #2 Instructional Designs for Learning Created/Utilized by the Instructor	Element #3 Interaction with Course Content and Resources	Element #4 Impact of Interactive Qualities as Reflected in Learner Response	Element #5 Evidence of Instructor Engagement/ Feedback on Student Work	Element #6 Evidence of Instructor Involvement to Promote Interaction
Few interactive qualities (1 point)	The instructor does not encourage students to get to know one another on a personal basis. No activities require social interaction, or are limited to brief introductions at the beginning of the course.	– Instructional activities do not require two-way interaction between instructor and students; they call for one-way delivery of information (e. g., instructor lectures, text delivery) and student products based on the information. – Only one-way of delivery of information (instructor to student) is used (text and/or graphics).	Instructor informs but does not direct students to use course resources (e.g. library resources, Web resources, course modules, writing center,...)	Most students are *replying to* messages from the instructor but *only* when required; messages are sometimes unresponsive to topics and tend to either be brief or wordy and rambling.	Instructor responds only randomly to student queries; responses take more than 48 hours; feedback is brief and provides little analysis of student work or suggestions for improvement.	Faculty did not initiate significant conferences or discussion areas in the course or just initiated very few general and inactive conferences
Minimum interactive qualities (2 points each)	In addition to brief introductions, the instructor provides for one other exchange of personal information among students, e.g., written bio of personal background and experiences.	– Instructional activities require students to communicate with the instructor on an individual basis only (e. g., asking/responding to instructor questions). – Two-way asynchronous exchange of information is used but not heavily recognized.	A limited amount of instructional activities utilized course resources such as learning modules, writing resources, library, webliography, and wikies.	Most students are replying to messages from the instructor and other students, both when required and on a voluntary basis; replies are usually responsive to topics but often are either brief or wordy and rambling.	Instructor responds to most student queries; responds usually within 48 hours; feedback sometimes offers some analysis of student work and suggestions for improvement.	Faculty member initiated conference topics for each week or unit but faculty involvement was not highly visible
Moderate interactive qualities (3 points each)	In addition to providing opportunities for exchanges of personal information among students, the instructor creates spaces which provide at least one other in-class activity designed to increase social rapport among students.	– In addition to providing students to communicate with the instructor, instructional activities require students to work with one another (e. g., in pairs or small groups) and share results within their pairs/groups).	More than half of all instructional activities incorporate the use of course resources (e.g. lectures, course modules) and instructional tools, including library and writing resources.	All or nearly all students are replying to messages from the instructor and other students both when required and voluntarily; replies are always responsive to topics but sometimes are either brief or wordy and rambling	Instructor responds to all queries; responses usually are within 48 hours; feedback usually offers some analysis of student work and suggestions for improvement. Students are referred to other campus resources as necessary.	Faculty member initiated conference topics for each week or unit, faculty appropriately (e.g. facilitated not dominated) participated in each conference.
Above average interactive qualities (4 points each)	In addition to providing social spaces for exchanges of personal information among students and encouraging communication and social interaction, the instructor also consistently interacts with students on a social/personal basis (e.g. virtual "office hours", Cyber café).	– In addition to requiring students to communicate with the instructor, instructional activities require students to develop products by working together cooperatively (e.g. in pairs or small groups) and sharing feedback. – In addition to technologies used for two-way synchronous and asynchronous exchanges of written information, additional technologies used; e.g., Breeze, teleconferencing) allow one-way visual and two-way voice communications between instructor and students.	Clear evidence of student interaction with course content and resources. Well-structured activities utilizing learning/course modules that are built in the course as well as referral to outside learning resources with follow up and significant guidance from the instructor. Regular referral to library and research resources and active engagement with librarians.	Almost all students are both replying to and initiating messages when required and voluntarily; messages are detailed and responsive to topics and usually reflect a noticeable effort to communicate well.	In addition to the above, most course structures demonstrate reasonable level of instructor engagement in facilitating student discussion and stimulating student learning. However, some of these activities are unaligned.	In addition to the above, faculty played an active role in group projects/work; faculty stimulated student's interaction by proposing real life situations. Faculty used his experience in the field and elicited experience of the learners.

High level of interactive qualities (5 points each)	In addition to providing social spaces for exchanges of information and encouraging student- student and instructor- student interaction, the instructor provides ongoing course structures designed to promote social rapport among students and instructor.	– In addition to the above activities, instructor supplements the discussion with other forms of collaborative activities such as case studies, role-playing and simulations. – In addition to technologies to allow two-way exchanges of text information, visual technologies, multi-media tools, two-way video or videoconferencing technologies allow synchronous voice & visual collaboration between instructor and students and among students.	In addition to the above, heavy focus on learning using course resources and additional resources (resources for publishers or Internet). Regular follow up on student experiences with course modules and objects. Use advanced learning features such as simulations and case studies. Faculty engagement and guidance are clear in all these activities. Heavy interaction with library resources and librarians and advanced technologies are sometimes used. Engagement with invited experts is demonstrated.	Most students are both replying to and initiating messages, both when required and voluntarily; messages are detailed, responsive to topics, and well- developed communications.	Most course structures demonstrate a high level of instructor engagement in facilitating student discussion and stimulating student learning. These activities are consistent and aligned throughout the course.	In addition to the above, all interaction opportunities were consistent and aligned with course objectives and learning outcomes. Faculty regularly asked follow-up questions of students that promoted critical thinking or questioning assumptions or used redirection to elicit responses from classmates or challenge them.
Total for each:	_____ pts.	_____ pts.	_____ pts.	_____ pts.	_____ pts.	_____ pts.
Overall	_____ pts.					

APPENDIX E: SCHOOL OF CHRISTIAN MINISTRY
ONLINE COURSE EVALUATION

DIRECTIONS: The School of Christian Ministry is committed to provide you with a quality learning experience. We ask that you take a few minutes to complete this evaluation so that we can continue to improve the learning experience. For each item below, please select the response that most accurately reflects your experience.

The Online Course

1. Support provided to be able to use Blackboard
   - ❍ Excellent
   - ❍ Good
   - ❍ Adequate
   - ❍ Poor
   - ❍ Not Applicable

2. In using Blackboard, I need clearer instructions on how to (select all that apply)
   - ❑ Install Adobe Acrobat
   - ❑ Attach documents in the Digital Dropbox
   - ❑ Post on the Discussion Board
   - ❑ Attach documents to E-Mail
   - ❑ Download documents to my disk or hard drive
   - ❑ Other _____

3. Promptness of response to my requests for help with Blackboard
   - ❍ Within 6 hours
   - ❍ Within 12 hours
   - ❍ Within 24 hours
   - ❍ Within 48 hours
   - ❍ More than 48 hours
   - ❍ Did not request assistance

4. Helpfulness of Blackboard technical assistance in solving my problem
   - ❍ Very helpful
   - ❍ Helpful
   - ❍ Somewhat helpful
   - ❍ Not helpful
   - ❍ Did not request technical assistance

5. On average the amount of time I spent reading assigned materials **each week** was
   - ❍ 1 hour
   - ❍ 2 hours
   - ❍ 3 hours
   - ❍ 4 hours
   - ❍ 5 hours
   - ❍ 6 hours
   - ❍ more than 6 hours

6. On average the amount of time I spent reading and responding to Discussion Board posts **each week** was
- ○ 1 hour
- ○ 2 hours
- ○ 3 hours
- ○ 4 hours
- ○ 5 hours
- ○ 6 hours
- ○ more than 6 hours

7. On average, **each week** I visited the Discussion Board
- ○ 1 time
- ○ 2 times
- ○ 3 times
- ○ 4 times
- ○ 5 times
- ○ 6 times
- ○ more than 6 times

8. On average, **each week** I posted comments to the Discussion Board
- ○ 1 time
- ○ 2 times
- ○ 3 times
- ○ 4 times
- ○ 5 times
- ○ 6 times
- ○ more than 6 times

9. Percentage of assigned readings completed
- ○ 100%
- ○ 75%
- ○ 50%
- ○ 25%
- ○ 0%

10. Degree to which participation in Discussion Board enhanced my learning experience
- ○ Very much
- ○ Somewhat
- ○ Not much
- ○ Not at all

11. The following factor(s) influenced my level of participation on the Discussion Board (select all that apply)
- ❑ Amount of feedback from instructor
- ❑ How quickly the instructor provided feedback on my comments
- ❑ The type of feedback I received from instructor
- ❑ Amount of interaction among classmates
- ❑ How quickly classmates responded to my comments
- ❑ The type of response I received from classmates
- ❑ Participation requirements set by instructor
- ❑ Relevance of questions to my development in ministry

❑ Manner in which the questions were phrased
❑ Other _____

12. Discussion Board **questions** presented by the instructor (select all that apply)
❑ Were thought-provoking
❑ Challenged me to learn more or dig deeper
❑ Enhanced my development in ministry
❑ Encouraged interaction among classmates
❑ Other _____
❑ None of the above

13. Discussion Board **responses** posted by the instructor (select all that apply)
❑ Were thought-provoking
❑ Challenged me to learn more or dig deeper
❑ Enhanced my development in ministry
❑ Encouraged interaction among classmates
❑ Increased my understanding of the issue/concept
❑ Other _____
❑ None of the above

Application to Ministry

14. Degree to which the material presented in the course was applicable to my service/ministry
❍ Very much
❍ Somewhat
❍ Not much
❍ Not at all

15. Degree to which this course helped address my vocational concerns
❍ Very much
❍ Somewhat
❍ Not much
❍ Not at all

16. Degree to which my understanding of my role in service/ministry has increased as a result of this course
❍ Very much
❍ Somewhat
❍ Not much
❍ Not at all

The Instructor

17. How satisfied were you with the amount of interaction you had with the course instructor via Discussion Board?
❍ Very satisfied
❍ Satisfied
❍ Dissatisfied
❍ Very Dissatisfied

18. How satisfied were you with the amount of interaction you had with the course instructor via email or other communications?
❍ Very satisfied
❍ Satisfied

❍   Dissatisfied
❍   Very Dissatisfied

19. Timeliness of instructor feedback
     ❍   Response within 24 hours
     ❍   Response within 48 hours
     ❍   Response within 3-4 days
     ❍   Response more than 4 days

20. The instructor gave evidence of knowledge of the content
     ❍   Strongly Agree
     ❍   Agree
     ❍   Disagree
     ❍   Strongly Disagree

21. The instructor helped me apply the course content to my service/ministry context
     ❍   Strongly Agree
     ❍   Agree
     ❍   Disagree
     ❍   Strongly Disagree

22. The instructor served as a mentor in service/ministry through this course
     ❍   Strongly Agree
     ❍   Agree
     ❍   Disagree
     ❍   Strongly Disagree

The Course

23. The amount of material presented in the course was manageable
     ❍   Strongly Agree
     ❍   Agree
     ❍   Disagree
     ❍   Strongly Disagree

24. The assignments were appropriately demanding for a continuing education course.
     ❍   Strongly Agree
     ❍   Agree
     ❍   Disagree
     ❍   Strongly Disagree

25. The course was well organized and proceeded in a logical manner
     ❍   Strongly Agree
     ❍   Agree
     ❍   Disagree
     ❍   Strongly Disagree

26. The objectives, design, and requirements for the course were clearly indicated at the beginning of the course.
     ❍   Strongly Agree
     ❍   Agree
     ❍   Disagree
     ❍   Strongly Disagree

27. The course was effective in accomplishing the objectives stated in the syllabus.
     ❍   Strongly Agree

○   Agree
○   Disagree
○   Strongly Disagree

28. The aspects of the course that were **most** helpful to my learning experience are:
_____

29. The aspects of the course that were **least** helpful to my learning experience are:
_____

30. If I could change anything in the course, I would change:
_____

31. Other comments.
_____

32. I am working toward a Certificate in Congregational Leadership
○   Yes
○   No

33. Please indicate which course you are evaluating:
○   The Church Year & The Lectionary — In Our Worship & Study
○   Baptist Identity
○   The Church – A System of Relationships
○   Biblical Basis for Ministry
○   Hidden Lives of Congregations: Understanding Congregational Dynamics
○   Spiritual Formation and Calling, October session
○   Introduction to Preaching
○   The Effective Church Leader
○   Social Dynamics in Ministry
○   Preschool and Children's Ministry in the Church
○   Ministry to the Preschool Child
○   Ministry to the School Aged Child
○   Understanding the Adolescent World
○   Developing a Balanced Ministry with Youth
○   Adolescent Substance Abuse
○   Faith Development
○   Small Group Dynamics
○   Teaching the Small Group Study
○   Congregational Singing
○   Music in the Life of the Congregation
○   Leading the Choir
○   Ministering to Individuals with HIV/AIDS
○   Jeremiah
○   Theological Formation
○   Spiritual Formation and Calling, June session

Participant Profile

34. Age
_____

35. Gender
○   Male
○   Female

36. Ordained minister
- ○ Yes
- ○ No

37. Highest degree earned
- ○ High School Diploma or GED
- ○ Associates Degree
- ○ Bachelors Degree
- ○ Masters Degree
- ○ Doctoral Degree
- ○ Other _____

38. Currently serving in a church or ministry setting?
- ○ Yes
- ○ No

39. State of residence

_____

40. First online course?
- ○ Yes
- ○ No

41. Population of community in which your church or ministry setting is located
- ○ 200,000 or more
- ○ 100,000 to 199,999
- ○ 50,000
- ○ 10,000
- ○ Less than 9,999

42. Type of community in which your church or ministry setting is located
- ○ Inner city
- ○ Urban
- ○ Suburban
- ○ Rural

APPENDIX F: INITIAL INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY

March 16, 2010

You are invited to participate in a study to assess SCM's effectiveness as a tool in equipping church leaders. Paul Raybon, Associate Pastor of Hominy Baptist Church and doctoral student at UNC-Charlotte is conducting the study. His letter of invitation follows. I hope you will seriously considering participating. Please respond directly to Paul.

Grace to you, Kim L. Siegenthaler, Ph.D.
Director of Continuing Education & Alumni Relations

Dear School of Christian Ministry participant,

For over a decade I have enjoyed leading training opportunities for lay leaders in North Carolina Baptist churches. I stay busy as the Associate Pastor of Hominy Baptist Church, www.hominybaptist.com, in Candler, North Carolina, teach as an adjunct professor at the Gardner-Webb University Divinity School, and work with church staff members as a certified Christian Leadership Coach. As a result of my interests and responsibilities, I am intrigued by the potential for online learning as a tool in equipping church leaders, which is why I am contacting you.

The School of Christian Ministry at BTSR may be the only wholly online continuing education program for non-degree seeking students at an ATS accredited seminary. That is one of the reasons why, as a doctoral student in the Ed.D. program at UNC-Charlotte, I chose to focus on this remarkable program for my dissertation research.

This spring I will be evaluating the School of Christian Ministry as a model of training Christian leaders. In addition to examining the structure and execution of the online courses, I would like to get some feedback from you as a participant. That may take the form of an online survey, an email interview or an online focus group. Those details are yet to be determined. What I need to know now is your interest in participating in this study.

If you would be willing to be contacted by me with a more formal request to participate, or if you have questions about this study, please contact me at spraybon@uncc.edu. We have an opportunity to explore the significance of the School of Christian Ministry model for continuing education. I hope you will be willing to be a part of this process. Your timely response will greatly assist me in my planning.

Sincerely,
S. Paul Raybon
Asheville, North Carolina

APPENDIX G: STUDENT INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

Dear School of Christian Ministry participant,

Last year you responded to an email from then Director Kim Siegenthaler, and expressed an interest in participating in a study of the School of Christian Ministry program of Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond. A lot has happened since then. Please let me reintroduce myself and the study.

For over a decade I have enjoyed leading training opportunities for lay leaders in North Carolina Baptist churches. I stay busy as the Associate Pastor of Hominy Baptist Church in Candler, North Carolina, teach as an adjunct professor at the Gardner-Webb University Divinity School, and work with church staff members as a certified Christian Leadership Coach. As a result of my interests and responsibilities, I am intrigued by the potential for online learning as a tool in equipping church leaders.

The School of Christian Ministry at BTSR may have been the only wholly online continuing education program for non-degree seeking students at an ATS accredited seminary. That is one of the reasons why, as a doctoral student in the Ed.D. program at UNC-Charlotte, I chose to focus on this program for my dissertation research.

Although the program has been suspended, I still think it merits study. Being able to evaluate this program in terms of best practices of online education could assist BTSR in decisions about future online programs as well as other institutions exploring the possibility of developing online continuing education programs. Schools, larger churches and groups of churches could partner for training which develops church leaders, cultivates ongoing peer relationships, and strengthen congregations and their connections to schools of theological higher education.

This summer I begin the evaluation stage of my research. In addition to examining the structure and implementation of the online courses, I would like to get some feedback from you as a participant. That will take the form of an online survey. At the end of that survey you will be given the opportunity to identify someone in your ministry setting (peer, church member, client) who could also respond to a survey about how what you learned in the SCM program has been implemented in your ministry.

If you are interested in participating in this study, respond to this email and I will reply with a link to the survey. Please read carefully and respond appropriately to the consent form on the first page of the survey before proceeding. Also if you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at this email address.

Sincerely,
S. Paul Raybon
Asheville, North Carolina

APPENDIX H: STUDENT SURVEY

Before taking this survey, please read the consent form below and click on the "I Agree" button at the bottom of the page if you understand the statements and freely consent to participate in the study.

Consent Form

This study involves survey of participants in the four core courses of the School of Christian Ministry at BTSR. The study is being conducted by S. Paul Raybon and it has been approved by the University of North Carolina-Charlotte Institutional Review Board. No deception is involved, and the study involves no more than minimal risk to participants (i.e., the level of risk encountered in daily life).

Participation in the study typically takes less than 50 minutes.

Survey responses include your contact information to facilitate follow up interviews if needed. Identifying information will be extracted from responses on receipt and stored in a separate database associated only by assigned identification number. At the end of the survey you will be given the opportunity to identify someone in your ministry setting (peer, church member, client) who could respond to a survey about your implementation of learning from the SCM program in your ministry. Your name will be used as a means to connect the researcher with that person. All data collected through interviews and surveys will be screened for personal identifiers and information will be reported in such a way as to protect the privacy of individuals and their places of ministry. Participants should be aware that the experiment is not being run from a "secure" https server of the kind typically used to handle credit card transactions, so there is a small possibility that responses could be viewed by unauthorized third parties (e.g., computer hackers). Data will be stored on a private laptop computer that is password protected and used only by the researcher. Only researcher and supervising professors will have access to data. Once the study is completed all data from the study will be securely archived on the researcher's computer.

You may benefit from reflection on both your experience in SCM course(s) and your transfer of learning to a ministry setting. Your participation may also help BTSR and other institutions develop stronger online continuing education programs.

Participation is voluntary, refusal to take part in the study involves no penalty or loss of benefits to which participants are otherwise entitled, and participants may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which they are otherwise entitled.

If you have further questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this study, contact the UNCC Compliance Office at (704) 687-3309. If you have questions

concerning the study, contact the principal investigator, S. Paul Raybon at (828) 713-6986 or by email at spraybon@uncc.edu

If you are 18 years of age or older, understand the statements above, and freely consent to participate in the study, click on the "I Agree" button to begin the survey.

I Agree   I Do Not Agree

The purpose of this survey is to determine the extent to which what you learned in the Baptist Theological Seminary in Richmond's (BTSR) School of Christian Ministry (SCM) program has been implemented in your ministry. All information supplied will be held confidential.

2. Which of the following School of Christian Ministry (SCM) courses have you completed?
        Course
The Church—A System of Relationships
Biblical Basis for Ministry
Theological Reflection
Spiritual Formation and Calling
Other

3. In which term did you complete the course(s)

	Fall 08	Spr 09	Fall 09	Spr 10
The Church—A System of Relationships	❑	❑	❑	❑
Biblical Basis for Ministry	❑	❑	❑	❑
Theological Reflection	❑	❑	❑	❑
Spiritual Formation and Calling	❑	❑	❑	❑
Other				

4. If you completed more than one course, on which course would you like to focus your responses?
The Church—A System of Relationships
Biblical Basis for Ministry
Theological Reflection
Spiritual Formation and Calling
Other

5. What were some specific lessons or behaviors (content or methods) that you learned?

To what extent would you agree with the following statements?

6. I was eager to implement what I learned in the course in my ministry setting
❑ Strongly disagree ❑ Disagree   ❑ Undecided ❑ Agree ❑ Strongly agree

7. I was well equipped to implement what I learned in the course in my ministry setting
❒ Strongly disagree   ❒ Disagree   ❒ Undecided ❒ Agree ❒ Strongly agree

8. I have implemented changes in my ministry because of what I learned in the course
❒ Strongly disagree   ❒ Disagree   ❒ Undecided ❒ Agree ❒ Strongly agree

9. If you have implemented what you learned, briefly describe what you are doing and how it is working.

If you have <u>not</u> implemented what you learned, to what extent would you
agree with the following statements? If you <u>have</u>, go to question 17
If you have <u>not</u> implemented what you learned, to what extent would you agree with the following statements?
10. It was not practical for my ministry setting
❒ Strongly disagree   ❒ Disagree   ❒ Undecided ❒ Agree ❒ Strongly agree

11. I was discouraged by my supervisor.
❒ Strongly disagree   ❒ Disagree   ❒ Undecided ❒ Agree ❒ Strongly agree

12. I was discouraged by lay leaders.
❒ Strongly disagree   ❒ Disagree   ❒ Undecided ❒ Agree ❒ Strongly agree

13. I have not had the time.
❒ Strongly disagree   ❒ Disagree   ❒ Undecided ❒ Agree ❒ Strongly agree

14. I tried and it was unsuccessful.
❒ Strongly disagree   ❒ Disagree   ❒ Undecided ❒ Agree ❒ Strongly agree

15. Other reasons (please specify)

16. I plan to do things differently in the future
❒ Strongly disagree   ❒ Disagree   ❒ Undecided ❒ Agree ❒ Strongly agree

17. Please comment on how your experience in an SCM course was transferable to your ministry setting.

18. If you would be willing to participate in a follow up phone interview (if necessary) please provide the contact information below.
Name:
Email:
Phone:

19. Is there someone in your ministry setting (peer, member, client) who could also speak to the extent to which what you learned in the SCM program has been implemented in your ministry?

Name   _____

Email   _____

Thank you for your time! If you have any questions please contact me at spraybon@uncc.edu.

APPENDIX I: MINISTRY SETTING SURVEY PROTOCOL

SCM Ministry Setting Survey
1) Before taking this survey, please read the consent form below and click on the "Yes" button at the bottom of the page if you understand the statements and freely consent to participate in the study.
Consent Form
This study involves a survey of persons in the ministry settings of students in the School of Christian Ministry at BTSR. The study is being conducted by S. Paul Raybon and it has been approved by the University of North Carolina-Charlotte Institutional Review Board. No deception is involved, and the study involves no more than minimal risk to participants (i.e., the level of risk encountered in daily life).
Participation in the study typically takes less than 50 minutes.
Survey responses include your contact information to facilitate follow up interviews if needed. Identifying information will be extracted from responses on receipt and stored in a separate database associated only response number assigned by survey software. All data collected through interviews and surveys will be screened for personal identifiers and information will be reported in such a way as to protect the privacy of individuals and their places of ministry. Participants should be aware that the experiment is not being run from a "secure" https server of the kind typically used to handle credit card transactions, so there is a small possibility that responses could be viewed by unauthorized third parties (e.g., computer hackers). Data will be stored on a private laptop computer that is password protected and used only by the researcher. Only researcher and supervising professors will have access to data. Once the study is completed all data from the study will be securely archived on the researcher's computer.
You may benefit from reflection on your experience of the impact of an SCM student in a ministry setting. Your participation may also help BTSR and other institutions develop stronger online continuing education programs.
Participation is voluntary, refusal to take part in the study involves no penalty or loss of benefits to which participants are otherwise entitled, and participants may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which they are otherwise entitled.
If you have further questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this study, contact the UNCC Compliance Office at (704) 687-3309. If you have questions concerning the study, contact the principal investigator, S. Paul Raybon at (828) 713-6986 or by email at spraybon@uncc.edu
If you are 18 years of age or older, understand the statements above, and

freely consent to participate in the study, click on the "Yes" button to begin
the survey.
Yes   No
The purpose of this survey is to determine the extent to which someone in your ministry
setting who participated in the Baptist Theological Seminary in Richmond's (BTSR)
School of Christian Ministry (SCM) program has been implementing their learning in
your ministry. All information supplied will be held confidential.

2. Name of person in your ministry setting who attended the School of Christian
Ministry

_____

3. Which of the following courses are you aware of this person taking?
   ❒ The Church—A System of Relationships
   ❒ Biblical Basis for Ministry
   ❒ Theological Reflection
   ❒ Spiritual Formation and Calling
   ❒ I am not aware of specific coursework at the School of Christian Ministry
   ❒ Other:
To what extent would you agree with the following statements?

4. The student was eager to implement what he/she learned in the course in our ministry
setting
❒ Strongly disagree ❒ Disagree   ❒ Undecided ❒ Agree ❒ Strongly agree

5. The student was well equipped to implement what he/she learned in the course in our
ministry setting
❒ Strongly disagree ❒ Disagree   ❒ Undecided ❒ Agree ❒ Strongly agree

6. The student implemented changes in ministry because of what he/she learned in the
course
❒ Strongly disagree ❒ Disagree   ❒ Undecided ❒ Agree ❒ Strongly agree

7. If the student implemented changes, briefly describe what they did and how worked.

8. If the student implemented changes, please skip to question 16.
Yes
No

If the student did not implement what he/she learned, to what extent would you agree
with the following statements?

9. It was not practical for our ministry setting
❒ Strongly disagree ❒ Disagree   ❒ Undecided ❒ Agree ❒ Strongly agree

10. The student was discouraged by a supervisor.
❐ Strongly disagree ❐ Disagree   ❐ Undecided ❐ Agree ❐ Strongly agree

11. The student was discouraged by lay leaders.
❐ Strongly disagree ❐ Disagree   ❐ Undecided ❐ Agree ❐ Strongly agree

12. The student did not have the time.
❐ Strongly disagree ❐ Disagree   ❐ Undecided ❐ Agree ❐ Strongly agree

13. The student tried and it was unsuccessful.
❐ Strongly disagree ❐ Disagree   ❐ Undecided ❐ Agree ❐ Strongly agree

14. Other reasons (please specify)

15. The student plans to do things differently in the future
❐ Strongly disagree ❐ Disagree   ❐ Undecided ❐ Agree ❐ Strongly agree

16. Other comments regarding your experience with this student and his/her learning in the School of Christian Ministry?

17. Would you be willing to participate in a follow up phone interview?
❐Yes ❐No

18. Please provide the contact information below to facilitate a follow up interview if necessary.

Name:
Email:
Phone:

Thank you for your time! If you have any questions please contact me at spraybon@uncc.edu

APPENDIX J: FACULTY INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

Dear School of Christian Ministry faculty member,

For over a decade I have enjoyed leading training opportunities for lay leaders in North Carolina Baptist churches. I stay busy as the Associate Pastor of Hominy Baptist Church in Candler, North Carolina, teach as an adjunct professor at the Gardner-Webb University Divinity School, and work with church staff members as a certified Christian Leadership Coach. As a result of my interests and responsibilities, I am intrigued by the potential for online learning as a tool in equipping church leaders.

The School of Christian Ministry at BTSR may have been the only wholly online continuing education program for non-degree seeking students at an ATS accredited seminary. That is one of the reasons why, as a doctoral candidate in the Ed.D. program at UNC-Charlotte, I chose to focus on this program for my dissertation research.

Although the program has been suspended, I still think it merits study. Being able to evaluate this program in terms of best practices of online education could assist BTSR in decisions about future online programs as well as other institutions exploring the possibility of developing online continuing education programs. Schools, larger churches and groups of churches could partner for training which develops church leaders, cultivates ongoing peer relationships, and strengthen congregations and their connections to schools of theological higher education.

This summer I begin the evaluation stage of my research. As a part of examining the structure and implementation of the online courses, I would like to get some feedback from you as a course developer and instructor via an online survey. Questions will deal with your previous experience, training, and implementation of best practices in developing and teaching SCM courses, a description of your experience in the course, and your intended application for students.

All data collected through surveys will be screened for personal identifiers and information will be reported in such a way as to protect the privacy of individuals and their places of ministry.

If you are interested in participating in this study, respond to this email and I will reply with a link to an online consent form. After you read carefully and respond appropriately to the consent form the interview questions will emailed to you. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at this email address.

Sincerely,
S. Paul Raybon
Asheville, North Carolina

APPENDIX K: FACULTY SURVEY PROTOCOL

Before receiving the survey questions, please read the consent form below and click on the "I Agree" button at the bottom of the page if you understand the statements and freely consent to participate in the study.

Consent Form

This study involves email interviews of faculty of the School of Christian Ministry at BTSR. The study is being conducted by S. Paul Raybon and it has been approved by the University of North Carolina-Charlotte Institutional Review Board. No deception is involved, and the study involves no more than minimal risk to participants (i.e., the level of risk encountered in daily life).

Participation in the study typically takes less than 50 minutes.

Interview responses include your contact information to facilitate follow up interviews if needed. Identifying information will be extracted from responses on receipt and stored in a separate database associated only by assigned identification number. All data collected through interviews will be screened for personal identifiers and information will be reported in such a way as to protect the privacy of individuals and their places of ministry. Participants should be aware that the experiment is not being run from a "secure" https server of the kind typically used to handle credit card transactions, so there is a small possibility that responses could be viewed by unauthorized third parties (e.g., computer hackers). Data will be stored on a private laptop computer that is password protected and used only by the researcher. Only researcher and supervising professors will have access to data. Once the study is completed all data from the study will be securely archived on the researcher's computer.

You may benefit from reflection on your experience as an instructor in an SCM course.Your participation may also help BTSR and other institutions develop stronger online continuing education programs.

Participation is voluntary, refusal to take part in the study involves no penalty or loss of benefits to which participants are otherwise entitled, and participants may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which they are otherwise entitled.

If you have further questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this study, contact the UNCC Compliance Office at (704) 687-3309. If you have questions concerning the study, contact the principal investigator, S. Paul Raybon at (828) 713-6986 or by email at spraybon@uncc.edu

If you are 18 years of age or older, understand the statements above, and freely consent to participate in the study, click on the "I Agree" button to receive the interview email.

I Agree   I Do Not Agree

Thank you for your willingness to answer a few questions about your involvement with the School of Christian Ministry program at BTSR. Information from this interview will be used for an evaluation of implementation of best instructional practices by the program. All identifying information will be protected.

1. Current occupation

2. Highest degree earned

3. Which course(s) did you teach in the SCM Program?

4. If you taught more than one SCM course, on which course would you like to focus your responses?

5. How many times did you teach this course(s)?

6. Describe your previous experience in teaching continuing education classes.

7. Describe your previous experience in developing/teaching an online course.

8. With what resources or guidelines about best practices did BTSR provide as you developed this course?

9. Describe your process of developing the course.

10. What were some key elements that you sought to include in the course?

11. What was the intended application of this course?

12. Describe your experience of teaching the course.

13. Describe student participation in the course.

14. What aspect of the course was most effective?

15. What aspect of the course was least effective?

16. Other thoughts that might help evaluate the SCM program?

17. If you would you be willing to participate in a follow up phone interview (if necessary) please provide contact information below: Name, Email, Phone

APPENDIX L: ORIGINAL PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

BTSR Non-credit Web-based Leadership Training Program
The BTSR Center for Distance Education (CDE) convened a group of representatives from BTSR, CBF, CBF Virginia, the Virginia Baptist Mission Board, the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, and leaders from Baptist associations and local churches to dialogue about the creation of a congregational leadership training program that would utilize the Blackboard course management system. The purpose of this project is to initiate a non-credit program using distance education technology that will bring the classroom to the church with an immediacy that until now has not been possible. The CDE is attempting to respond to the needs of persons called to ministry, even serving churches, who desire preparation but are unable to attend seminary. The CDE is committed to forming new and closer relationships with churches in an effort to enable the seminary to become a frontline resource for congregations. As a result, the BTSR School of Christian Ministry (SCM) will seek to prepare congregational leaders to answer their calling to serve God through the church and in their vocational settings.

Initially, the program will provide leadership training for youth ministers, preschool/children's ministers, and Hispanic ministers who have had little or no theological education. This training program and online resource center will utilize Web-based educational technologies which will allow instructors to focus on student learning rather than teaching, enable peer to peer discussion and learning, and facilitate peer interaction for idea exchange and problem solving. Participants will gain personal insight and perspectives from recognized authorities and noted scholars. This program will provide students flexibility, through the use of on-line educational technologies, while offering an introduction to leadership and ministry in the church.

The *BTSR School of Christian Ministry* will offer an Advanced Congregational Leadership Certificate that will provide people with an opportunity to better prepare themselves for Christian ministry in a congregational setting. The SCM will provide theological education to support the faith and commitment of congregational leaders and train them to express their faith through leadership in the church. Through study, peer interaction, and reflection participants can exercise the vocation of the church to continue the ministry of Christ in the world.

The BTSR School of Christian Ministry program involves information, formation, and critical reflection in four core courses–one each in the Biblical Basis for Ministry, Theological Reflection, Spiritual Formation and Calling, and Baptist Identity–and three concentration courses in a focused field of interest. Initially, three ministry training tracks will be offered in the SCM program: Youth Ministry; Preschool/Children's Ministry; and Hispanic Ministries. Each ministry track will consist of seven required courses: the four core course and the three specialized ministry concentration courses. The BTSR *Certificate of Advanced Congregational Leadership* will be awarded upon completion of the seven courses. However, anyone may take one or more courses in any specialized ministry area, including core courses, without declaring a particular specialized ministry concentration. The projected start-up date for this program is Fall 2003.

APPENDIX M: DOCUMENT REVIEW RESULTS

QOL Benchmarks	Evidence Found	Missing Benchmarks
Institutional Support		None
1. Documented technology plan		
2. Technology delivery system failsafe as possible.	1, 2, 3	
3. Centralized distance education infrastructure.		
Course Development		None
1. Guidelines regarding minimum standards, learning outcomes determine technology		
2. Instructional materials reviewed periodically	1, 2, 3	
3. Courses require students to engage in analysis, synthesis, and evaluation		
Teaching Learning		3.[a]
1. Student interaction with faculty and students is an essential characteristic facilitated through a variety of ways		
2. Feedback to students is constructive and a timely	1, 2	
3. Students are instructed in the proper methods of effective research.		
Course Structure		3.[b]
1. Beginning students advised about the program to determine self-motivation and commitment and if	1, 2	4.[b]

they have access to technology required by course

2. Students provided with course information

   (objectives, concepts, and learning outcomes.)

3. Students have access to sufficient library resources,

   (may be accessible through the internet)

4. Faculty and students agree upon expectations for

   assignment completion and faculty response.

Student Support	2.[a]
1. Students receive information about program details	4.[b]

and student support services.

2. Students provided with hands-on training and

   information for securing electronic material   1, 3

3. Students have access to technical assistance,

4. Structured system in place to answer questions and

   address student complaints

Faculty Support	None
1. Technical assistance in course development is	

   available to faculty

2. Faculty members are assisted in the transition from

   classroom teaching to online instruction and are   1, 2, 3, 4

   assessed during the process.

3. Instructor training and assistance

4. Faculty provided with written resources to deal with

student internet use issues	

Evaluation and Assessment	None
1. The program's educational effectiveness and teaching/learning process is assessed through an evaluation process that uses several methods and applies specific standards.	
2. Data on enrollment, costs, and successful/ innovative uses of technology are used to evaluate program effectiveness.	1, 2, 3
3. Intended learning outcomes are reviewed regularly to ensure clarity, utility, and appropriateness.	

[a] May not be appropriate for nature of program
[b] Found evidence in other sources

APPENDIX N: 2008-09 SCM EVALUATIONS: INTERACTION RESPONSES BY COURSE

Item	Course	*%*
Reported 6+ hours a week on the discussion board,		
	Church	36
	Biblical Basis	43
	Spiritual Formation	67
	Theological Reflection	NA
	All Courses	39
Indicated participation in discussion board "very much enhanced their learning experience"		
	Church	73
	Biblical Basis	79
	Spiritual Formation	100
	Theological Reflection	NA
	All Courses	69
Factor(s) influencing level of participation on the Discussion Board (Top 4)		
1. Amount of interaction among classmates		
	Church	55
	Biblical Basis	64
	Spiritual Formation	83

Theological Reflection	NA
All Courses	73

2. Amount of feedback from instructor

Church	64
Biblical Basis	43
Spiritual Formation	67
Theological Reflection	NA
All Courses	64

3. Type of feedback received from instructor

Church	55
Biblical Basis	[a]
Spiritual Formation	[a]
Theological Reflection	NA
All Courses	53

4. Type of response received from classmates

Church	[b]
Biblical Basis	57
Spiritual Formation	83
Theological Reflection	NA
All Courses	50

[a] Item 4 ranked 3rd
[b] Item 3 ranked 3rd

APPENDIX O: STUDENT SURVEY LESSONS LEARNED (QUESTION 5)

Respondent	What were some specific lessons or behaviors (content or methods) that you learned?
R1	-
R2	Spiritual formation always feed my soul--I built up my prayer life.
R3	How the church is made up of various personalities and even in a church there can be disagreement--the emphasis to remember is we can disagree WITHOUT being DISAGREEABLE! We need to learn to respond and not react.
R4	-
R6	I enjoy the discussion on the different types of callings from God...to understand that their [sic] isn't one simple "call" but rather a series, ranging from salvation to discipleship to service. It is important I think to understand that we all have a call, that this term is not some mysterious or special dispensation for a select few. Such knowledge empowers the non-vocational minister or lay leader to feel not only comfortable but even entitled to the notion of being called.
R7	It helped me reflect on the role ministry played in my life, and the way that God used me for ministry.
R8	There was information on church growth that involved identifying "passions" or personal important activities from members of the

congregation (or potential members) and then developing a ministry activity around those passions.

| R9 | Age appropriate ways for children to learn. |
| R10 | How relationships overlap. |

APPENDIX P: STUDENT SURVEY RESPONSES IMPLEMENTATION
DESCRIPTION (QUESTION 9)

Respondent	If you have implemented what you learned, briefly describe what you did and how it worked.
R1	
R2	We do daily devotions every day at work and I've incorporated some of what I learned into those.
R3	I have the opportunity at present to teach members 80+--that in itself can be a challenge. There are physical and mental issues that must be dealt with on a weekly basis. I have gently tried to bring them around to seeing that because a younger person proposes change/new ideas and what have you, that they are not out to "Take over." Some have come around, others are still looking with a jaundiced eye! We shall see!
R4	My focus is on children's ministry and I bring myself eye level with the children to speak to them. This really works as they don't feel so intimidated.
R6	In teaching the women's cell group that meets at my house, I used the information in this course to encourage a sense of expectancy, even obligation to relate to the notion of "calling" in all our lives.
R7	Mainly, trusting that God called me and equipped me for the call. So to have faith that God will provide and lead in that ministry.
R8	-

R9 Consulted with Sr. Minister and it was agreed upon to start a Children's Ministry Council. It made the church a much "healthier" environment for children. Physically we vastly improved the safety of the building.

R10 -

APPENDIX Q: STUDENT SURVEY RESPONSES TRANSFER TO MINISTRY
SETTING (QUESTION 17)

Respondent	Please comment on how your experience in an SCM course was transferable to your ministry setting
R1	-
R2	Anytime I learn something new I look for ways in which to incorporate it into my life. I use what I've learned for examples in sermons, I turn what I've learned into workshops, I write devotions based on what I've learned.
R3	I was made aware of reaching out to "all" persons--to listen and think about what they have said, proposed and/or thought. To weigh all areas and context of a situation and after much prayer and listening to "The still small voice," do what would be the Godly way.
R4	I do our children's time sermon and have found a lot of what I learned useful. I have also held meetings with our Sunday school teachers to train them in working with our children.
R6	In my certification course work on "Small Group Leadership" I was able to use not only the generic course work on such topics as church history, theological reflection and faith development to increase my broader understanding of my desired outcomes within my ministry, but the specific coursework on "Small Group Dynamics", "Teaching Small

Groups" and others equipped me with specific teaching strategies and understanding of group dynamics that made my sessions much more powerful and effective. I believe earnestly that my participants learned much more with my increased skills. Although I am a professional educator, I still did not possess the types of group skills taught for this particular application, a group of adults. The combination of spiritual dynamics coupled with training on small group instruction was so wonderful and full of results. The intertwining of both studies made the instruction pointed and organized to the right conclusion.

R7 Through discussions on line and through readings I found many resources that have been quite useful. It was also a great way to discuss ideas and forment [sic] ministry opportunities.

R8 I was excited to see that problems we faced in a small country church were addressed in a class from the seminary. To see strategy to address real problems was encouraging, especially since they were do-able.

R9 I used all of the information - I set up a children's ministry in a Baptist Church that had been limping along. We started doing things in a more organized and healthy way. The ministry grew.

R10 -

APPENDIX R: FACULTY SURVEY BEST PRACTICES RESOURCES
(QUESTION 9)

Respondent	With what resources or guidelines about best practices did BTSR provide you as you developed this course?
FR1	BTSR provided 4 or 5 workshops in the spring of 2010 on online teaching, we also had a book (Galindo, 2009) to use and [the director] was always an available resource.
FR2	There was not much out there about theological reflection, and certainly that was solid theologically or designed for laity in mind. So, most of what I did came out of my brain, of my experience in the past, things that I thought would open and engage on the discussion board and give enough information that would not overwhelm the adult learner. BTSR did a good job of training me about some of the teaching options online, but content did not get lots of directives from the seminary. This is not a bad thing, as I think they were trusting my years of experience to fill in the gaps.
FR3	[AIR1] offered (and I attended) a workshop for online instructors on designing an online course. BTSR also provided a tutorial for instructors on using Blackboard. In additional, we received numerous electronic documents to assist us addressing all aspects - curriculum design, facilitating Blackboard discussion, etc. I also had immediate access via email and phone to SCM Director.

FR4 [a]

FR5 I don't remember specifics but [SCM Director] had a lot of in-service
training at the beginning and she was sharing on best practices from
conferences she had attended and from online. [AIR1] also offered
suggestions at times. [SCM Director] worked with me closely in setting
up the course online

[a] Did not ask, FR4 is also administrator and program developer.

APPENDIX S: STUDENT FOLLOW UP INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Hello

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview. I have enjoyed reading survey comments and doing an online observation of School of Christian Ministry courses. Today I would like to talk to you in particular about some aspects of your course, your experience in SCM courses, and broader issues of theological continuing education.

I and a team of researchers have looked at each of the core courses using a rubric from the University of Maryland University College to assess the implementation of some recommended best practices for online education. Most of those practices were evident in SCM courses, however there were a few items for which we could find little or no evidence. I would like to ask you a few questions about those elements in your course to see if we missed something that was present.

1. To what extent were your learning goals incorporated into your course?

2. Can you describe any assignments or learning activities, other than the discussion board, in your SCM course(s)? (For example: smaller groups or pairs, research or reflection papers, projects, quizzes)

3. How do you think new technology tools, multimedia, (e.g. video, wikis, podcasts, websites, online journals, social networking sites) could have been used in this short course format?

4. I'm also interested in what kind of student support was offered outside the online classroom. What kind of support was available for:
   enrollment and orientation?
   technology?
   and library or research assistance?
   Was it enough for this type of program?
   Did you take advantage of any those services?

5. Do you have any other thoughts on how your SCM course experience was put together?

Stepping back to look at the big picture, there is ongoing discussion as to whether this type of asynchronous course is appropriate to meeting the goals of theological education.

6. In what ways did you experience a sense of community or at least connection with your peers and instructor?

7. In what ways could you say that you experienced personal growth (character, convictions and conduct) as a result of this SCM course?

7b. Was that personal growth more or less than you expected?

8. How easy was it to apply what you learned in the course to your ministry setting?

8b. Why do you think that was so?

9. How has your experience with the SCM shaped your view of the effectiveness of this type of online course as a method for theological continuing education?

10. Any other observations about your experience with SCM?

APPENDIX T: FACULTY FOLLOW UP INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Hello
Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview. I enjoyed reading your survey comments and doing an online observation of your School of Christian Ministry course. Today I would like to talk to you in particular about some aspects of your course, your observations of the student experience in SCM courses, and broader issues of theological continuing education.

I and a team of researchers have looked at each of the core courses using a rubric from the University of Maryland University College to assess the implementation of some recommended best practices for online education. Most of those practices were evident in SCM courses, however there were a few items for which we could find little or no evidence. I would like to ask you a few questions about those elements in your course to see if we missed something that was present.

1. When students expressed a learning goal, were you able to incorporate that into the course content? If so, how? If not, why not?

2. How did you choose the methods you used to measure learning outcomes in the course?

3. Can you describe any assignments or learning activities, other than the discussion board, in your SCM course(s)? (For example: work in smaller groups or pairs, research or reflection papers, projects, quizzes)
4.   If chose not to use other assignments, could you tell me why?
5.   If Yes, how well did that work in the course?

6. To what extent do you think new technology tools, multimedia, (e.g. video, wikis, podcasts, websites, online journals, social networking sites) could have been used in this short course format?

7. I'm also interested in what kinds of student support were available outside the online classroom. What kind of support was available for:
   enrollment and orientation,
   technology,
   and library or research assistance?
Was it sufficient for this type of program?

8. Do you have any other thoughts regarding the mechanics or design of your SCM course experience?

Stepping back to look at the big picture, there is ongoing discussion as to whether this type of asynchronous course is appropriate to meeting the goals of theological education.

9. In what ways did you observe students experiencing the relational aspects of theological education in their SCM courses?

10. Spiritual formation and transformational learning is also central to the experience of theological education. In what ways did you observe personal growth, in terms of character, convictions and conduct, among your students?

11. Do you feel transformational learning is a realistic expectation for a short continuing education course? Why?

12. Continuing Education is especially oriented to application, the transfer of learning from the class to the field. What evidence did you observe that students were finding ways to use what they were learning in their ministry settings?

13. How has your experience with the SCM shaped your view of the effectiveness of this type of online course as a method for theological continuing education?

14. Any other observations about your experience with SCM?

APPENDIX U: ADMINISTRATIVE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Hello
Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview.
I and a team of researchers have looked at four School of Christian Ministry (SCM) core courses using a rubric from the University of Maryland University College (UMUC) to assess the implementation of best practices for online education. There was evidence of attention to most of the best practices in these courses. For the practices for which we found little evidence in the courses themselves, I was able to determine from surveys and interviews that they were in fact present. I also used the *Quality on the Line* rubric for evaluating the program as a whole.

I would like to get your feedback and reflections on several items as I close out this stage of my research.

1. How well does the UMUC rubric measure what you were trying to accomplish with instruction in the SCM?

2. How did you and other key leaders determine what the "best practices" for the SCM would be?

3. What particular educational philosophy/perspective might have shaped the vision for how instructors were to design and teach SCM courses?

4. How effective were efforts at training SCM instructors? Why?

5. What was the most difficult aspect of establishing the SCM?

6. I know it was a conscious choice to go low tech with the SCM courses. Looking back, to what extent do you think new technology tools, multimedia, (e.g. video, wikis, podcasts, websites, online journals, social networking sites) could have been used in this short course format?

7. I found varying degrees of evidence (mostly informal) of consideration for the learning goals and styles of the SCM students. Why do you think that might be so?

Stepping back to look at the big picture, there is ongoing discussion as to whether this type of asynchronous course is appropriate to meeting the goals of theological education.

8. To what extent do you think that this model of continuing education addresses the relational aspects of theological education? Why?

9. Spiritual formation and transformational learning is also central to the experience of theological education. Do you feel transformational learning is a realistic expectation for a short continuing education course? Why?

10. Continuing education is especially oriented to application, the transfer of learning from the class to the field. How well suited to this goal was the SCM model?

11. How has your experience with the SCM shaped your view of the effectiveness of this type of online course as a method for theological continuing education?

12. Looking back, what do you think were some key lessons learned from your experience with the SCM?

APPENDIX V: STUDENT INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Student Interview Respondent 1

Course: Church System of Relationships

Location: Virginia, Baptist

1. learning goals incorporated into your course?

Didn't really have goals, wondered "what are they going to teach?" Church was in time of

uncertainty with pastor retiring, maybe something in this class will help especially with

older ladies classes I teach. Perhaps ease their anxiety Yes did incorporate I was

impressed with instructors get back with you to answer a question much faster than on a

campus when you had to deal with office hours

2. Other assignments or learning activities

Can't remember… interacted one on one on discussion board, people were good about

responding to each other… could disagree without condemning each other

3. new technology tools

no, I'm not of computer generation, it was a real experience using Blackboard sometimes

frustrating

4. student support enrollment and orientation?

I realized what was involved

4b. student support Technology?

could call SCM # and talk to someone, (also had nephew in IT), they were good to get

back to me when they were available

4c. student support library or research assistance?

not much call for it and that was good because may were in remote geographical areas

4d Was student support enough for this type of program?

yes, any time I made a call down there someone would respond

4e Did you take advantage of any those services?

yes on tech support

5. Do you have any other thoughts on how your SCM course experience was put

together?

thought structure was good, covered the needs of all geographical areas

6. sense of community

yes most every course there was interaction between instructor and student

I really liked online learning. Had gone to college and university but this was more

satisfying than sitting in a classroom

7. experienced personal growth (character, convictions and conduct)

I felt like I grew as an individual and as a Christian through the interaction and the way

the questions were presented The Holy Spirit has a chance to get my attention

7b. Was that personal growth more or less than you expected?

more, much more

8. How easy was it to apply what you learned in the course to your ministry setting?

Application was easy but acceptance by others... I realized we can just present something… it takes a while to catch on. they don't like change much, you have to be gentle... taking these courses helped me to be more tolerant and to try to understand where others are coming from and to listen to them and then take what I learned and maybe say "have you considered so and so" from whatever class I had

8b. Why do you think that was so?

see above

9. effectiveness of this type of online course for theological continuing education?

I was very impressed, the first class I entered with fear and trepidation. I know I don't know the computer very well "How stimulating is looking at something on a screen going to be?" but I found it very stimulating,, very reasonably priced course something someone in my position, alone and paying my own way, could do to further prepare to further the kingdom of God .

10. Any other observations about your experience with SCM?

Sorry that it is no longer, Thoroughly enjoyed… I think the about the lives that were enriched through those classes throughout the world... those of us that took them will take

what we learned and share, it's an investment rather than a liability I haven't taken

anything else anywhere else since then.

I've always enjoyed learning. What I learn no one can take away from me

Even if they had classes right here in (Hometown) where I could go at a church, I

wouldn't do it. I prefer going online at my own leisure.

Student Interview Respondent 2

Course: Spiritual Formation and Calling

Location: Georgia, Lay leader, professional educator will be retiring next spring

1. learning goals incorporated into your course?

Absolutely, that was one of the things I liked about all seven courses they were laid out

well. As an educator I enjoyed seeing they used best practices in all classes, always knew

what the learning outcome was

2. Other assignments or learning activities

After doing readings from online, wrote personal theological statement and posted it on

website. Had discussion board assignments. Had to pick one doctrinal area and share

beliefs, reflection papers. We were bound by time so couldn't do long papers

3. new technology tools?

No, time was so limited. Instructor maximized use of technology that we had. I felt very

engaged competent and challenged by material felt potent in ability to deal with it but

never felt abandoned or isolated…I'm almost 60 I'm not a techie, I'm an older student

and would not benefit from more tech would have found them off-putting

4. student support enrollment and orientation?

SOP After I completed the paper application I was contacted by email by instructor who

gave instructions how to sign in and find the class, passwords then did personal intros on

the discussion board could read about everyone else. As course went along people would

continue discussions beyond assignments…continue dialogue... loved networking and

sharing resources by email some met outside of class camaraderie was delightful

4b. student support Technology?

Given directions and BTSR link on BB I only 1 time had a tech need and I emailed the

instructor and he responded with directions. Was never stymied, never had a negative

experience, never frustrated. Experience was amazingly rich. I was heartbroken when it

was discontinued; I was halfway through a second certificate program. It was a powerful

tool I was amazed at what I learned

How would you compare this experience with other continuing education experiences?

Most in seminars have done a few online seminars Hard to compare. They are short and

pointed with pre and post tests This was so much richer and concentrated This was nice

middle between continuing education and a full academic course. Now I'm working on an

online MA at Sioux Falls Seminary and it's just more depth and requires a lot more

performing assignments, but in terms of quality they are of the same caliber

4c. student support library or research assistance?

got books from BTSR bookstore

4d Was student support enough for this type of program?

yes

4e Did you take advantage of any those services?

see above

5. Do you have any other thoughts on how your SCM course experience was put together?   clear cut, well written, well executed, and consistent. Every class worked the same way always ready to go again for the next class

6. sense of community

The fact is that technology has both allowed and required us to move forward in ways we accomplish education. We are obligated to respect the fact that this is another way we have to learn. As pro educator I have high expectations, I would not participate in something that was second rate. We have to be very careful of two things; we have to be conscientious that we have to accommodate that this will be an online experience with a different type of community 2ndly we have to be clear what we want to accomplish. Wouldn't like completely online M.Div. because you can't observe the fruit. SCM was very clear and honest about what it was accomplishing it offered a certificate of merit that indicated a level of competence in very specific body of knowledge. I experienced a high degree of community and accountability community is very different... we have to accept that people do bond electronically We became a very viable community, we were

important to each other. Level of intimacy grew as course went on. Maybe to some degree that can be attributed to the fact that this is a spiritual experience and if you have men and women who are driven to take on these classes, you automatically have collection of people who are going to want community, looking to encourage each other who are spirit acclimated. In professional conferences I have gone with sole desire to get credit and get home. This was not that way. Many times it was more like church. Even in our learning dialogues, at end of reply we shared prayer requests. There were no walls.

7. experienced personal growth (character, convictions and conduct)

A lot of affirmation as a lay leader in my church, this was 2nd foray into formal ministry training Also tried night classes at MacAfee, but that dried up. I was looking for something else to do before retirement. This affirmed my abilities, affirmation that I was on the right track. Going back to academic environment after masters 25 years ago. I found acceptance and rediscovered my academic nature, being able to do those assignments, it gave me confidence It wasn't intimidating because it was short. It enabled me to go ahead and pursue seminary

7b. Was that personal growth more or less than you expected?

It was in the course "Baptist Identity" that I experienced the most growth, had never had that much depth in this area BTSR focused on outcome not indoctrination but finding who I was. Reading Baptist confessions was enlightening.

8. How easy was it to apply what you learned in the course to your ministry setting?

Outstanding. The small group ministry certificate just jumped out at me when I

started. I was leading a small group. That was an area I needed to grow. Material was

hugely useful. I turned around and used it in cell group every week (e.g.: redirecting

people who derail small group)

8b. Why do you think that was so?

able to connect lay ministry to program directly

9. effectiveness of this type of online course for theological continuing education?

See 6 Not for everything. Supervised Ministry Experience for MDIV can't be duplicated

online. For persons who are candidates for ordination maybe could not achieve all online.

2/3 of my MA is online and 1/3 is on campus for part that needs hands on time. I am a

strong proponent of this mode for continuing education. I can't see any roadblocks to an

agency that is ethical and honest about what they offer and can give real time

interpretation in your ministry. It is highly appropriate. I hope it will become more

popular. It fills a real void. I drove 2 hours one way to get to (a seminary) for night

classes. This model is especially for people in career transition and bivocational

ministers. This kind of option is perfect. We have sensitive to what we can and ought to

accomplish. We do the kingdom and ministers a disservice given the world we live in, if

we don't embrace the technology and use it especially where there is not easy access.

10. Any other observations about your experience with SCM?

Saw that SCM was following same best practices as were indicated in my professional

reading, All of staff were so accommodating and affirming through the process. I was

referring others who were exploring ministry to get involved with this as a way to explore at such low price get a structured experience in learning about your calling.

S Respondent 3

Course Biblical Basis

Location ?

Written responses via email.

1. To what extent were your learning goals incorporated into your course?

My own learning goals were vague. I was taking the classes just to explore some things.

2. Can you describe any assignments or learning activities, other than the discussion board, in your SCM course(s)? (For example: smaller groups or pairs, research or reflection papers, projects, quizzes)

The only activity I remember other than the discussion board was the use of reflection papers. I appreciated the activity of applying material read to my own spiritual life and experience.

3. How do you think new technology tools, multimedia, (e.g. video, wikis, podcasts, websites, online journals, social networking sites) could have been used in this short course format?

The SCM class experience was my first time doing online education. I am relatively new to using technology so sometimes using all the new tools is frustrating.

4. I'm also interested in what kind of student support was offered outside the online classroom. What kind of support was available for:

enrollment and orientation? There was a contact at the school that helped me with the enrollment process any time I had any issues.

technology? The very first time I took a class I also did the tutorial on how to use the Blackboard, make posts, do attachments, etc.

and library or research assistance?

Was it enough for this type of program? I felt the tutorial covered the needed areas.

Did you take advantage of any those services? Yes.

5. Do you have any other thoughts on how your SCM course experience was put together?

Stepping back to look at the big picture, there is ongoing discussion as to whether this type of asynchronous course is appropriate to meeting the goals of theological education.

6. In what ways did you experience a sense of community or at least connection with your peers and instructor? In each class that I took I recall looking forward to reading the posts of peers and receiving further questions from the instructors that made me think. After taking a few classes, the same names would pop up and it was like meeting an old friend.

7. In what ways could you say that you experienced personal growth (character, convictions and conduct) as a result of this SCM course? The course gave me more confidence to speak my beliefs in small group settings and in committee meetings at my home church.

7b. Was that personal growth more or less than you expected? More than I expected.

8. How easy was it to apply what you learned in the course to your ministry setting? Though I was the only one in the class from my own denomination, the material learned from the readings and from my peers was easily applied.

8b. Why do you think that was so? I think it was because for the most part everyone in the class was already operating in various ministries and had much to share from their life and spiritual experiences that was "hands on" stuff.

9. How has your experience with the SCM shaped your view of the effectiveness of this type of online course as a method for theological continuing education? If SCM was still offering these online classes, I would be enrolling in them. They fit my time schedule and were useful in my ministry.

10. Any other observations about your experience with SCM? I was saddened when this opportunity ended. The core classes and the variety of other classes added to my own spiritual formation.

APPENDIX W: FACULTY INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS.

S# = Survey questions incorporated into interview
A# = Administrator questions incorporated into interview

FIR1
1. learning goals incorporated into your course?

I did this course five times when we moved to new BB platform I had to take out some things and sharpen the focus From my understanding and my training I was trying to be clear about what I wanted them to learn, them telling me what they wanted to learn was not in my head.. Started out nervous dealing with a wide array of students: Denom. Theol. and educational, from not able to put a sentence together to PhD, It ended up being that the goals I had for them, to learn theological reflection basically applying Whitehead approach then moved quickly to application to their context focused on their goals Those were the key things.

Sometimes highly invested students on the discussion board initiated conversation and were going to level that was not where rest of class was. I met one on one, tried to respond to where students were. Was easier with 12 than 28. 12-16 best. Often shocked by level of vulnerability, un-nerving at times .this was not therapy. I didn't see my role as looking for what they wanted to get out of class but for them to understand what I wanted them to get out of class. If other things evolved from that, great... we only had 4-5 weeks. I was overzealous at first, forgot not all masters level students, but most were highly motivated, have more problems with current (on campus M.Div.) students can be lazy , never had to tell SCM students "you're late"

2. how did you choose methods to measure learning outcomes?

at first asked each to write a little piece on each key theol. concept..., not research just interested in where they were, that overwhelmed them, later asked each to choose one and that was more effective, greater comfort level, helped focus, writing was better was less stressed. They did discussion board, level of investment = # of posts

3. describe other assignments

Discussion board number of posts, not count "I liked that," has to engage, didn't find poor netiquette, quality of posts, checked every day, would go back and check older threads for new posts, realized adults at own schedule, think Instructors who remain distant and only occasionally pop into conversations are not as effective   If conversations are not worth typing up and printing out then I have to crank it up a bit. Case study actual event from setting, apply theol. reflection model and ask process questions and make recommendations. Then asked them to take something they learned from theol. paper and case study and share on discussion board.

4. Did you consider small groups etc?

Students scattered across the country, that would have been unrealistic. normally effective in classroom setting (describes bad experience in on campus practicum course) time limited could have tried to but really didn't consider dyads etc in 4 week course more interested in getting them to jump in and engage with each other

5. yes, how did it work   see above

6. new technology tools

Tried quizzes and podcast in early form of class, not afraid of using it but with time limitations on finding materials (Works full time and commutes) chose not to. Also

students not all as comfortable with tech (one was close to 90, worked with her as much on comfort with tech as on content)

7. student support enrollment and orientation?

BB resources on tech and on netiquette not a lot of material on this topic, went to training with Assoc of Theol. Field educators that was helpful in supplementing instruction with tech even in congregational setting

7b. student support Technology?   Did not ask

7c. student support library or research assistance?

Students did not complain of not having enough material, more focus on their experience rather than on content Gave them a short bibliog. very attentive to not overwhelm Although some went on to Mdiv program from this, nice taste w/o demands of masters work

7d Was student support enough for this type of program?   yes

8. Do you have any other thoughts on how your SCM course experience was put together?   *did not ask*

9. sense of community

Students connected very well with me, only one volatile conversation, used humor, I was able to push back without shutting students down didn't need to be right but did need respect, never problem I struggle with tension of what I think happens in a classroom when you can see them and have different accountability that way, lurkers are

the same in both settings, but something makes me feel more effective in face to face

setting I do see something in hybrid classes and supplementation online, go read this and

email me your thoughts with student who has problems in class, I can shift and

supplement and use that resource, I can get there but it will take me longer I'm not where

[AIR1] is but I appreciate that viewpoint and challenge I often think how about the way

I pastor is changed by people who spend an hour on facebook each day

10. experienced personal growth (character, convictions and conduct)

        Couldn't observe a lot of that. I could observe I their responses thoughtfulness

and vulnerability often expressed honest self awareness, could see maturity develop,

asking questions they had not asked before

11. transformational learning a realistic expectation for short course?

        Yes I do. Some people can't take much more than that. its not moral judgment or

assessment of character its how people learn, all they are juggling, people who are

working full time, with families, busy people ....sometimes they have a computer

blowing up .. their personal lives ...they are trying to maintain a learning experience

knowing that there is a definite beginning and end to it but also knowing there is another

opportunity that will come...most people are not like me and thinking about these things a

lot ... (faded out) need to be able to dialogue with those ewe disagree with we don't see a

lot of maturity in discussing theology   so the practicing of that for four weeks is helpful

12 Students finding ways to use what they were learning?

Yes case study assignment goal: also ask better questions to make better decisions (See above) many times whether they were aware of it or not , they jumped back and forth, realizing that in church situations that there was some things going on that were systemic, or emotional problems in home life marriages relationships kids parents, they could slow down and think more broadly and realize that people are shaped by the variety of life experiences and you are much better in ministry if you listen to people rather than talk at them. That was the whole goal of the class to look for better decision-making that came out of skills of reflecting theologically

13. effectiveness of this type of online course for theological continuing education?

see above

14. Any other observations about your experience with SCM?

Enjoyed it thought it was innovative idea, regret that it was not able to sustain itself, ...it was a challenge wasn't sure that I would do well at first ended up doing ok learning experience for me most of the time I got good feedback, they thought it was worth their time. if they can find another format and platform and home it would be a benefit I like the ecumenical feel at times it will make education more accessible and affordable to a lot of folks who have to juggle work and theol. education

Have you thought about how people in your church might take advantage of something like this or how you might use it?

I have thought about it because I have whole slew of people who worship but do not participate in Sunday morning Bible study, smaller groups on Wednesday noon

committee and wed night shorter intergenerational format…I have wondered how that might work and how I might structure some kind of BB conversation, weekly I might enjoy that and I could do it well enough with congregants Internet is used a great deal People engage with me through our website, people who don't know me at all with all kinds of things that I just think good God I am always maze at the risk taking and the vulnerability I think there is some real viability as a pastor and teaching pastor to use this format.

FIR2

1. learning goals incorporated into your course?

Not sure if I could say they did, I don't remember if they were asked about learning

goals. That was one of the first courses I taught. A good question to ask, but don't know if

it was. Previous instructor had done such a good job structuring I didn't make many

changes

2. how did you choose methods to measure learning outcomes?

combination of written work and discussion board. They are having to put their thoughts

together. One of down sides is lack of face to face. Can't read body language. Pleasantly

surprised at level of engagement and how well it worked…may have been engaged at a

deeper level than face to face. Did some one-on-one as I chose to deal with through email

on issues better handled privately. thought it was a good mix

3. describe other assignments see above essays

4. *no, why choose not to use other assignments small groups etc*

5. yes, how did it work?

worked well, those who engaged online on deeper level also took written work

seriously, That was my responsibility to push back and say "go to a deeper level" in One

case I worked with great deal until she satisfied enough requirements to pass the course

6. new technology tools?

Would have been great to put in video clips of movies or presentations by people

like Henry Nouwen and Bob Mulholland on Christian formation I could have asked them

to respond and engage... It would have enriched it.

7. student support enrollment and orientation?

I was available via phone and email and they could deal with me.

7b. student support Technology?

Instructor often served in this capacity, Some older students were not comfortable with computers and needed individual help. Kim Siegenthaler incredibly supportive and always available for me and students

7c. student support library or research assistance?

don't think they had direct access to library.

7d Was student support enough for this type of program?

see above (yes)

8. Do you have any other thoughts on how your SCM course experience was put together?

Grateful at first to get through it. But heard good things from students. Late at night was more reflective time for me. often heard from students late at night, tech allowed you to engage at a more reflective time of day….I am more a big picture person so tech details were not as important to me, it worked for me once I learned it.

9. sense of community

I was taken with the level of caring and interaction, that I didn't always experience in the classroom setting. In small group with practicum groups (6-10 students) I have lead over 10 years on campus. They become a group in the second semester, people begin to share at deeper level. I was amazed at online how quickly people were able to share at pretty deep level They were connecting to in their own history and journey it was related

to what we were talking about. I really would have never dreamed that I would think this, there is a side of online teaching that allows people emotional safety by not seeing that person not knowing if they will ever see that person they decide to engage, not true for everybody but for some it fast forwards it I want to believe that my willingness to offer from my experience helps. how I respond and invite others to respond. Instructor has to model without becoming the focus or shift to his agenda; allow them to see "This guy is being real so I can be real". Then asking good questions to push to the next level. AIR1 did a lot in coaching us in this. My own work with Bowen systems theory helped me in this as well as the whole approach of theol. reflection.

10. experienced personal growth (character, convictions and conduct)

Only thing we have to judge is what they are reporting back as to insights tone of writing, you don't get to see their behavior , you have to take them as face value expressing gratitude That is one of the downsides you don't get to observe body language or acts of kindness in and out of class. I think I did observe if I could trust their reporting, In some cases I could see shifts from the front end especially in their insights and reflections and what they began to self disclose are the most prominent evidence of transformative processes

11. transformational learning a realistic expectation for short course?

If you can include in transformational learning the beginnings of awareness of self, of things they hadn't had before…one order is: awareness, thinking reflection then behavior. [Refers to emotional IQ Bowen systems theory, Merton…,] behavior has to

flow out of awareness to stimulate thinking and reflection If I sense greater awareness of self, and they are able to articulate that some way without just regurgitating from content...and really engaging own life experiences on this big questions these concepts of spiritual formation, and they talk about where they see that happening in their lives to me you are on the road to transformational learning why wouldn't that be as important as the behavior you might see if you were with them and operating with them [face to face] I think in a way you have this opportunity to see heightened sense of self awareness and theol. awareness in a context where they feel pretty emotionally safe, that may be something you would not see in a classroom. Even though you might get a behavior that looks right. I don't know… I'm not trying to make a big case for the fact that we ought to go this way but I don't think we are losing as much with this sometimes we might think we are online, disconnected learning, I mean disconnected from bodily. ..If I had my druthers I would love to see a mix and not just one or the other. I have been convinced that you can go places with the online work that you cannot with the other and there are things that you can do in a classroom that you cannot do online.....The reality is my facilitation of theological ed. has been in small groups, I wouldn't know what to do in a large class, it's like preaching a sermon, what do you know other than what they tell you when they walk out?

11b. Why?   see above

12 Students finding ways to use what they were learning?

I remember that those in ministry roles (and most were) shared concrete examples from their settings in their reflections. They were seeing this rethinking and reforming their thoughts around calling and formation as ongoing process and let that interact with

experiences with other people and teaching of classes and one on one conversations with other people

13. effectiveness of this type of online course for theological continuing education?

See 11

14. Any other observations about your experience with SCM?

I was grieved that it would not continue. Even with a very small school we had incredibly top notch people in leadership; [AIR1, FR3 and Director]. I could go to them any day of the week. They were confident and clear. Boundaries were set well, great coaching, encouraging, permission to work within my strengths with what I could bring to the situation was so positive. Got great feedback, reaction, responses from students. After doing a couple of stories I can really support this online thing. [Previously] I was thinking "you've got to be kidding, you're going to have people that come out of seminary, what will they do with it?[minister] straight online? " I still think something missing if no face to face. Nothing to replace being with people one on one. But I don't for a minute think they can't have a very strong theological education experience online. I would still advocate for both.

FIR3 / AIR 1

Interviews 12/9/11 and 12/14/11

1. When students expressed a learning goal, (in introductory comments) were you able to incorporate that into the course content? If so, how?

Yes not all of them, not all of their expressed learning objectives were, I thought, essential. Also a lot of them were not sure what they wanted to take away.

But when I saw that they had a particular interest or particular question I tried to deal with them directly, usually through the discussion board

2. How did you choose the methods you used to measure learning outcomes in the course?

Can you describe any assignments or learning activities, other than the discussion board, in your SCM course(s)?

I had a number of learning activities. I required a project; the project was always focused on trying to enable students to focus on one aspect of leadership in ministry that would be important. I gave them usually 4-5 options. I forced them to incorporate their learning in their project

3. If Yes, how well did that work in the course?

It worked well for most projects. One option was to create church administration manual, if their church did not have one. That was not a good learning tool because people were able to basically hijack existing church administration manual and adapt to their situation. There were a few that created something from scratch that was

really focused on their congregations but many gave me something that they had

"found" so I dropped that option.

4. I know it was a conscious choice to go low tech with the SCM Courses. Looking back, to what extent do you think new technology tools, multimedia, (e.g. video, wikis, podcasts, websites, online journals, social networking sites) could have been used in this short course format?

I think there is no doubt that when we started this project those other media possibilities were non existent or just emerging. We could have incorporated them but still, they were not as prevalent as they are now. I think we could have made good use of wiki for example, but I would have to do more research myself to see what other media could be beneficial to the learner.

5. Do you have any other thoughts regarding the mechanics or design of your SCM course experience? Perhaps "We could have done it differently" or "this way we designed didn't work out as we thought."

No, if I was still teaching it today I might do it differently. But it seemed to work. That is why I stuck to the design as I had it. I got consistent feedback form participants who said that experiences were changing, and really changed their understanding. I taught 3-4 courses for SCM so at this point they blend together in one big mass. I will tell you that I probably had 4-5 SCM students who ended up enrolling in the seminary MDIV

program, a lot came out of the systems class. One student in my last systems class went

on to take online Mdiv courses and I just learned is now moving to Richmond to enroll

full time.

S 6 Describe your previous experience in teaching continuing education classes**.**

Before I came to BTSR in 1999 I directed degree completion program at

Bluefield College, a bachelor of Christian ministry degree that was done face to face but

in distance sites. We did not use online technology at that time because it was not

available. That is how I started teaching continuing education courses

When I became director of continuing education at BTSR in 1999 it became evident after

6 months that we had a lot of work to do with faculty to get them to consider teaching

online. That was when [AIR1] and I realized that if we don't get faculty online then we

have a tool here that we can take directly to the churches. That was how the whole idea

started to develop continuing education program to deliver to congregations online.

S7 Describe your previous experience in developing/teaching an online course.

I developed and taught online courses in early 2000 teaching in M.Div. level

program. Taught a church admin course Fall 2000. Those experiences let me branch off

and start the continuing education program. I used that course as a source and broke it

apart for some of those SCM courses.

S9 Describe your process of developing the Church Systems course

That course came out of my own experiences with coming to understand systems theory. Twice a year I attended systems theory conferences and this came out of my reading and my desire to teach systems theory to congregational leaders.

S10 What were some key elements that you sought to include in the course?

We wanted to deal with the idea of self-differentiation, Bowen's systems theory, how a family system is much like a congregational system. So course was built to get people in touch with literature on Bowen family systems theory… I wanted to get the literature in front of them to introduce basic concepts so that if they chose to do so they could continue their own process of better understanding their family of origin and then briefly enable them to see how understanding of family systems is beneficial if you overlay it on understanding a congregational system.

S12 Describe your experience of teaching the course.
Always enjoyable for me because so many students had so many "aha" moments in the course. Enjoyable for people to realize that they could change their systems by changing themselves.

S13 Describe student participation in the course.
Usually students were fully engaged, always a person or two who would never fully engage

S14 What aspect of the course was most effective?

The connecting of the readings to the discussion board. Those two elements and how they worked together led to exchanges about concepts on the discussion board that enabled students to assimilate what they were reading

S15 What aspect of the course was least effective?

Probably some of the projects (not all)

[Broke for time, Agreed to call again on Wednesday Dec 14 at 9:30 am]

Stepping back to look at the big picture, there is ongoing discussion as to whether this type of asynchronous course is appropriate to meeting the goals of theological education.

6. In what ways did you observe students experiencing the relational aspects of theological education in their SCM courses?

I did not see any barriers to this whatsoever. I saw a deep level of engagement and exchange of very personal information from the very beginning in the fall of 2000. I've seen that level of intimacy and engagement, if anything, increase over the years as students became more familiar with the online platform.

7. Spiritual formation/transformational learning is also central to the experience of theological education. In what ways did you observe personal growth, in terms of character, convictions and conduct, among your students?

 I think primarily it had to do with observing students making connections and then stating online how a specific course or bit of learning changed how they thought and/or how they were going to change their behavior

8. Do you feel transformational learning is a realistic expectation for a short continuing education course? Why?

Absolutely, [see above]

9. Continuing Education is especially oriented to application, the transfer of learning from the class to the field. What evidence did you observe that students were finding ways to use what they were learning in their ministry settings?

Again based on students expressing consistently how they came to a deeper understanding of how congregational systems function and they then got clear how they should function in a congregational system.

10. How has your experience with the SCM shaped your view of the effectiveness of this type of online course as a method for theological continuing education?

For one thing it made it available to people who would not ordinarily be able to receive additional training for congregational leadership or theological instruction.

Then it helped especially lay leaders understand some aspects of congregational life that are not automatically evident to church members as compared to church staff members.

Example?

Student with long history in her church enrolled in SCM, on basis of recommendation

from full time staff member to look at church systems course at same time she was

starting as a part church staff member. Even though she had lots of experience she was

new as staff member and felt some insecurities related to that. She had some "aha"

moments in getting better understanding of how a congregation functions that she was

not aware of. And she also had some insight into how the experience is much different

for congregational leader than it is for a lay person, even a highly involved lay person,

because of the expectations that come from lay people towards their staff about what they

should be doing or not doing. She was able to experience this interesting dissonance

about being a church staff member while at the same time she was learning from studying

systems theory about ways to function in congregations that are healthier.

A1 How did you and other key leaders determine what the "best practices" for the
SCM would be?

[AIR1] really is one of the pioneers in understanding how to incorporate good

educational process and practice in the online platform. He and I worked together

closely…one of his primary functions was to be the faculty advisor for distance

education, as we began to explore how we were going to live into this Lily grant. We

started studying early on about good educational process and practice in the online

platform. I went to numerous training sessions… as well as sessions that [AIR1]

developed on good practices.

A2 What particular educational philosophy/perspective might have shaped the vision for how instructors were to design and teach SCM courses?

Yes we had a whole process laid out that [Director] came in and refined… various tutorials that enabled them to learn how to create a course, understand the value of good course design and the importance of good instructional management of the course.

A3 How effective were efforts at training SCM instructors? Why?

Very much so. We also discovered that we had to build in accountability for all instructors in delivering the kind of courses that we needed to offer. Accountability process reminded them what was going on and what was not going on.

A4 What was the most difficult aspect of establishing the SCM?

Making it known in the general population; getting information in hands of decision makers in congregations. Obstacles include financial resources in getting that job done. We could have spent as much as $300,000 in marketing over seven years, largely funded through grants. We advertised in print and online publications. Email blasts, although inexpensive, require database management to keep lists accurate.

A5 Looking back, what do you think were some key lessons learned from your experience with SCM?

1st there is a market and a need for this in congregational life

2nd It was very difficult for the program to be self sustaining. We think it could have gotten there in time. But most all educational enterprises are not self sustaining, that can operate on tuition alone. We as a theological institution are not self sustaining on tuition alone, only 24-25% of our revenues is from tuition. That's a major challenge.

3rd Early on, a challenge was robust internet connectivity, but that became less and less of an issue as we moved forward with high speed data connections

4th Practitioners make very good course facilitators and instructors. They are able to work out of their own knowledge base.

Any other thoughts?

We were just about to really "figure it out". We had a very solid course offering and regret that we could not continue it.

FIR 4

S3. Which course(s) did you teach in the SCM Program? (If more than one, please specify on which course you are focusing your responses)

Biblical Basis for Ministry

S5. How many times did you teach this course(s)

 4-5 times

S6 Describe your previous experience in teaching continuing education classes.

First time taught online, had taught for the Navy prior to this and taught in an alternative high school also, first time I had taught continuing education at this level

S7 Describe your previous experience in developing/teaching an online course.

(None)

S8 With what resources or guidelines about best practices did BTSR provide as you developed this course?

I don't remember specifics but [Director] had a lot of in-service training at the beginning and she was sharing on best practices from conferences she had attended and from online, [AIR1] also offered suggestions at times. She worked with me closely in setting up the course online.

S9 Describe your process of developing the course

It wasn't complicated. The mentoring that I got was effective. I wasn't anxious or anything. There wasn't anything that I didn't understand, although I guess that some of the terminology was new to me

S10 What were some key elements that you sought to include in the course?

One of my concerns is this idea that people do ministry but never think about why they do it, and secondly there are lot of biblical discussions, whether we are talking about texts or concepts, that sometimes becomes a part of the dialogue and nobody knows were it comes from, where it originated. That people taking the class would 1. Think about why they actually do ministry and then 2. to be able to identify whether their concepts came from scripture, how closely they came from scripture or what theologian or practitioner developed those concepts.

3 Can you describe any assignments or learning activities, other than the discussion board, in your SCM course(s)?

Mostly discussion board, in some instances the students would search for information themselves I gave them from a pool of things to look at.

Sometimes there would be an application piece I would have them relate information form class to their context Most of the connection was through discussion board

4 If no why

5 If yes, how well did that work in the course?

Worked well, there were times I had to have discussions offline about things they did not want to talk about in class, but seems that when they accessed information from list I gave them they did not seem to have problems accessing that

6 It was a conscious choice to go low tech with the SCM Courses. Looking back, to what extent do you think new technology tools, multimedia, (e.g. video, wikis, podcasts, websites, online journals, social networking sites) could have been used in this short course format?

At that time probably not. Those of that were teaching had different types of experiences some of the student that we dealt with initially were challenged with format that we had. Some of those who really benefited the most were not in the loop when they started and not that technically savvy and sometimes it took all they had to make BB work. Maybe later on with population we have now it would be more effective, but not then

8 Do you have any other thoughts regarding the mechanics or design of your SCM course experience?

Not really. One of the benefits I saw in the course using BB was fact that some students seemed to be a little more candid. Not sure why. There were some things we discussed on BB that I had not discussed in courses sitting in class with people. For some people it gave them a freedom, maybe although we knew them online, because we didn't know them personally, they felt they could investigate things deeper

S12 Describe your experience of teaching the course.

It was interesting, the greatest challenge I had was knowing when to get into the discussion. That was always a challenge for me. I had people coming from different places and at different times. This teaching was new to me wasn't always sure when I should to jump in , when I was going to enhance the discussion as opposed to coming in and stopping it. It was enjoyable for me. I learned a lot, because all the people coming from different regions and with different experiences.

S13 Describe level of student participation/engagement

What was interesting was that there was a difference, because I was teaching one of the core courses, there was a difference in the participation depending on whether they took me first or last. IF they took me last they had already gone through the routine, they were always responding and responding in depth if they took me first I had to spend a lot of time making people comfortable with the process. One year I ended up with a group that had gone through together and I hardly had to speak.

S 1When students expressed a learning goal, (in introductory comments) were you able to incorporate that into the course content? If so, how?

Yes it was relatively easy because that was the first thing that they posted. Sometime before the course was over I tried to address that. I don't think it was ever a goal that was stated for the class, not sure if I did it to the satisfaction of the class but I tried.

S14 What aspect of the course was most effective?

That changed form class to class. The readings were from the Bible and the text and depending on the group that was fine or it wasn't fine. I still think the discussion board was the most helpful. Students would read something from somebody from different region and say "Wow I can use that"

S15 What aspect of the course was least effective?

Not in this course, but I can tell you something from another course that ran only once. It's knowing how long the course should run. It seems if a four week course seemed short, a six week class seemed to be too long. Because I was in classes that were 12 weeks long I would think 6 weeks wasn't long. But it seems like four weeks was just about all the time that people could get together. Sometimes they thought the course went too fast

One time I went for 6 weeks, and after fifth week I lost everybody. We want more class time but when we have more class we don't have the time to really do more. So I found the short course format beneficial. When the class was over everybody wanted more but I like that better than when people go "whoosh" out the door. I tried throughout the class to suggest more resources as did others I got the impression that when the course was over they had things to do. Maybe to go back and read. Hopefully they had energy for that.

Stepping back to look at the big picture, there is ongoing discussion as to whether this type of asynchronous course is appropriate to meeting the goals of theological education.

9 In what ways did you observe students experiencing the relational aspects of theological education in their SCM courses?

There were people that would group in the course, like people in youth ministry, in various stages, seemed from postings that they had connected outside the course, in that sense there was type of community formation people tended to gravitate to people who had or were going through the same thing they were, Also noticed that the people who may be out of the loop at their own churches tended to group together. I guess they still communicate.

10 Spiritual formation and transformational learning is also central to the experience of theological education. In what ways did you observe personal growth, in terms of character, convictions and conduct, among your students?

There were times when I did the final grade and looked at all their postings and I could see that the person was in a different place than when they started. They were more confident or they had changed their opinion on something or their conversation was a little more in depth. Even in that short time you could detect a change.

11 Do you feel transformational learning is a realistic expectation for a short continuing education course? Why?

Probably not if you're looking for completion, but in terms of jump starting a process, yes, you could. I think what happens in planning and implementing a short term course you have to have in mind that you are giving them things that they will probably complete in processing after the course was over. You have to have that in mind.

12 Continuing Education is especially oriented to application, the transfer of learning from the class to the field. What evidence did you observe that students were finding ways to use what they were learning in their ministry settings?

Sometimes on the discussion board they would say "I tried [something we had talked about] and this is what I found. That happened a lot particularly with the youth ministry people, who tended to be more creative and willing to try things. At the end of the course people would say "I am going to try something we talked about and I'll let you know how it works."

13 How has your experience with the SCM shaped your view of the effectiveness of this type of online course as a method for theological continuing education?

One of the things I learned, because I'm a seminary student and I'm learning in this context, I learned there are people who want to do more with education and don't have the time to go to a place. I commute 1 ½ hours but so many people are grateful to be able to engage the texts and learn but not able to leave their jobs homes families etc. I imagine

as we go on particularly with finances being what they are maybe this could be even more beneficial in the future than in the past. I just wasn't aware of how many people there were out there who also wanted to learn and just couldn't get to school.

Able to use this in your church?

Yes, I don't know what the offerings are in this area but there are people in my church who are in that same situation who would like to learn but just aren't able to move from one place to another who could go all the way through a certification process, maybe even within the church, that could be supplemented by online learning.

APPENDIX X: ADMINISTRATIVE INTERVIEW RESPONSES

Question	AIR1 Response
1. How well does the UMUC rubric measure what you were trying to accomplish with instruction in the SCM?	To a varied extent. The UMUC rubric represents a comprehensive external rubric that risks looking to measure things that were not present in the course by design. A more valid and rigorous model would be to use the design and programmatic rubric of the SCM itself to assess what it intended to do by design. Of course, we did not have a [Asked for Clarification] I think what I was noting is that we did not have the UMUC rubric at the outset of the program design so it's a bit iffy to assess the program on the basis of that instrument. If it were a rubric that is universally applied to programs across the board (industry standard) the use of the UMUC rubric as a framework for assessing the SCM program would have more validity. As it is, using it as an assessment instrument risks imposing assumptions, practices, and standards from one particular contextual program to another that does not work out of the same.
2. How did you and other key leaders determine what the "best practices" for the SCM	Material was used from a study of best practices of online learning in the field of education and training. We developed several rubrics and checklists for course development. We developed a "template" model for courses developed by a

would be?	professor and applied to most courses in the SCM certificate programs.
3. Educational philosophy /perspective that might have shaped the vision for how instructors were to design and teach SCM courses?	Two guiding frames of references were Andragogy related to adult learners and Constructivism. The online format also emphasized dialog, concepts attainment, and application of learning.
4. How effective were efforts at training SCM instructors? Why?	Very effective. SCM instructors were highly motivated and committed to the program. We offered several levels and modes of training, including online, classroom, and coaching.
5. What was the most difficult aspect of establishing the SCM?	Not much more than the usual program start-up challenges. Start up was made more challenging in that this venture in continuing education on a comprehensive scale using instructional online technologies was new for the institution.

6 I know it was a conscious choice to go low tech with the SCM courses To what extent do you think new technology tools, multimedia, (e.g. video, wikis, podcasts, websites, online journals, social networking sites) could have been used in this short course format?	I'm not sure how online courses qualify for "low tech." And I'm not sure I'd categorize the list of instructional technologies listed in the question as "new." To some extent or another some of those technologies and media could have been used to good effect. But that would have been a product of emerging developments in the program and pedagogical choices related to program goals and learning outcomes. In and of themselves any of those mediums and technologies is not de facto more effective not will result in increased level of learning apart from appropriate application.
7. I found varying degrees of evidence (mostly informal) of consideration for the learning goals and styles of the SCM students. Why do you think that might be so?	Not sure what you're asking here. An intentional attention to Andragogy, which was an informing framework, alone would explain attention to learner-directed goals and learning styles (though the concept of "learning styles" is not necessarily something we'd be overly concerned about).

8. To what extent do you think that this model of continuing education addresses the relational aspects of theological education? Why?	This is a moot issue as far as I'm concerned. Relationship happens when people get connected merely as a consequence—the medium for connection is secondary, though it of course influences the capacity of relationship development. But in and of itself, the medium, whether classroom or online, does not mitigate whether a "relationship" happens. The quality, type, and definition of what constitutes "relational" is a product of the connection, context, and enterprise people engage in. Not all relationships need to be the same for everyone in the same way at the same time.
9. Is transformational learning a realistic expectation for short course?	The nature of ANY educational enterprise is that it is formative to some extent or another. The extent is more a product of sound pedagogical design and teacher interventions than it is of the medium.
10. How well suited to transfer of learning from the class to the field was the SCM model?	Ideally suited, SCM had a distinct pragmatic orientation to its programs of study.

11. How has your experience with the SCM shaped your view of the effectiveness of this type of online course for theological continuing education?	SCM merely confirmed for us the effectiveness and appropriateness of online learning to continuing education and theological education.
12. Looking back, what do you think were some key lessons learned from your experience with the SCM?	There were several, but one key lesson I share often is about the economics of continuing education programs of the SCM type. SCM was an "enrichment" continuing education program directed at developing lay persons and untrained (non-seminary graduate) church staff. As such students gained a lot of learning, and a certificate, but derived no direct financial benefit or professional advancement benefit beyond that. Continuing education programs of this type face considerable challenges in sustainability, especially during difficult economic times. That type of program is in contrast to more professional development continuing education programs where completion and/or certificate leads to direct financial benefit, like a raise, a promotion, a qualification for a higher or different position in the workplace.

That insight provides a backdrop to my statement that if any program SHOULD have succeeded because we did everything right, it was SCM. Yet, we could not overcome the reality of the challenges of the economic model of this type of enrichment continuing education program.

Question	AIR 2 Response
1. How well does the UMUC rubric measure what you were trying to accomplish with instruction in the SCM?	Overall, I would say pretty well. The major differences between the length of the term, continuing education vs. for credit (no tests or formal assessments), no college services available at BTSR for anyone.
2. How did you and other key leaders determine what the "best practices" for the SCM would be?	Reading the current literature, discussing the goals of the program to determine what was applicable.
3. educational philosophy /perspective that shaped the vision for how instructors were to	Constructivism

design and teach SCM courses?	
4. How effective were efforts at training SCM instructors? Why?	We got better at it as we went along. It was as new to us as it was to the instructors we were trying to train. Effectiveness depended greatly on their passion to provide continuing theological education, to teach online, commitment to do the work, comfort with technology, willingness to learn, etc. Some efforts were very successful; others were dismal failures.
5. What was the most difficult aspect of establishing the SCM?	Funding initially. The most difficult ongoing challenge was making contact with the audience that wanted this kind of education. Email databases were virtually nil in churches and organizations. Where they did exist, they were guarded carefully and there was often little interest in helping us communicate information about SCM offerings.

6. new technology tools	a. No doubt they could have enhanced the learning experience. Most of our instructors worked at least full-time in other jobs. They taught 1-2 courses for us a year. Understanding what the options are and how to use them in a way that supports the pedagogy rather than supplants it isn't acquired in a half-day training session. We lacked the resources to build courses for instructors that incorporated these tools.
7. I found varying degrees of evidence (mostly informal) of consideration for the learning goals and styles of the SCM students. Why do you think that might be so?	Few of the instructors were trained as educators. They struggled to develop measurable learning objectives, learning activities, and engaging discussion questions. We focused on achieving these.
8. To what extent do you think that this model of continuing education addresses the relational aspects of theological education? Why?	Based on feedback from instructors and participants it can do this very well. People developed strong connections with others in their courses – particularly when they progressed together through multiple courses. Certainly the degree to which this happened varied by individual, group dynamics within each course, quality of discussion questions, and the instructor's ability to facilitate rich discussion.

9. transformational learning a realistic expectation for short course?	Yes. Feedback from participants indicated that their experience was transformational. I don't think transformational learning is time-bound.
10. Continuing education is especially oriented to application, the transfer of learning from the class to the field. How well suited to this goal was the SCM model?	It was intended as a core component. I think it was well suited to the model.
11. effectiveness of this type of online course for theological continuing education?	I think it has the potential to be very effective. The model is sound; the execution determines effectiveness.
12. Looking back, what do you think were some key lessons learned from your experience with the SCM?	a. Offering resources to meet an identified need does not insure sufficient participation to sustain the program. Same line as 'you can lead a horse to water . . . b. Never underestimate the pettiness and rigidity of denominational boundaries. c. Not all clergy want laity in their congregation to be equipped for ministry.

Question	FR3

1. UMUC rubric	Didn't ask.
2. How did you and other key leaders determine what the "best practices" for the SCM would be?	AIR1 really is one of the pioneers in understanding how to incorporate good educational process and practice in the online platform. He and I worked together closely…one of his primary functions was to be the faculty advisor for distance education, as we began to explore how we were going to live into this Lily grant. We started studying early on about good educational process and practice in the online platform. I went to numerous training sessions… as well as sessions that AIR1 developed on good practices.
3. What particular educational philosophy/perspective might have shaped the vision for how instructors were to design and teach SCM courses?	Yes we had a whole process laid out that [Director] came in and refined… various tutorials that enabled them to learn how to create a course, understand the value of good course design and the importance of good instructional management of the course.

4. How effective were efforts at training SCM instructors? Why?	Very much so. We also discovered that we had to build in accountability for all instructors in delivering the kind of courses that we needed to offer. Accountability process reminded them what was going on and what was not going on.
5. What was the most difficult aspect of establishing the SCM?	Making it known in the general population; getting information in hands of decision makers in congregations. Obstacles include financial resources in getting that job done. We could have spent as much as $300,000 in marketing over seven years, largely funded through grants. We advertised in print and online publications. Email blasts, although inexpensive, require database management to keep lists accurate.
Questions 6-11	See FR3 Faculty Interview

| 12. Looking back, what do you think were some key lessons learned from your experience with the SCM? | 1st there is a market and a need for this in congregational life

2nd It was very difficult for the program to be self sustaining. We think it could have gotten there in time. But most all educational enterprises are not self sustaining, that can operate on tuition alone. We as a theological institution are not self sustaining on tuition alone, only 24-25% of our revenues is from tuition. That's a major challenge.

3rd Early on, a challenge was robust internet connectivity, but that became less and less of an issue as we moved forward with high speed data connections

4th Practitioners make very good course facilitators and instructors. They are able to work out of their own knowledge base. |