

Lessons Learned

Designing an Online Graduate Program in Teacher Education

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This research is a narrative which explains the development of a fully online master's program in education at a major public university. It was established in 2014, more than 6 years prior to the COVID pandemic. We asked our teachers and online faculty team to describe the characteristics of a successful fully online graduate program. Teachers wanted a graduate program that was fully online, asynchronous, and rigorous. The program focused on diversity and social justice in schools integrating issues of social oppression such as racism, sexism, classism, ableism, homophobia, and needs of English learners. Educators appreciated having university faculty who cared and supported them in their studies. Also the graduate program described offered a master of arts in teaching in a full year. This made the degree achievable. The program provided courses in K–12 virtual teaching so that teachers could learn how to utilize remote education in their classes by participating in a fully online master's degree and developing virtual strategies that they utilized in their own classrooms.



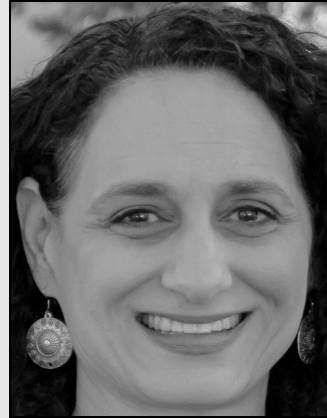
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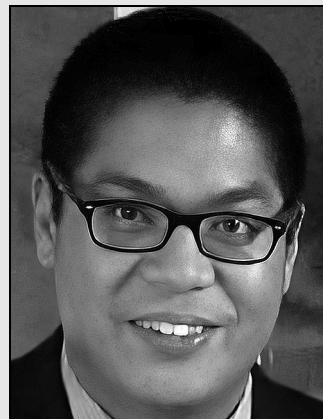
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INTRODUCTION

This descriptive study provides a narrative and chronology of the development of an online Master's program in education at a major public university.¹ The story that follows is replete with both advice and cautionary tales. We all make mistakes, so let us tell you about the ones we made and those we did not. Strangely, this story starts before the epidemic of 2020 but speaks to our new reality. We were in the right place at the right time.

A teacher's work is of paramount importance because it permeates our society. Thousands of teachers touch the lives of millions of children and adults. Typically, an aspiring teacher earns an undergraduate degree and then moves on to a graduate-level teacher education program. This move is not valid in all places

but is the case in various states. Many teachers will move on to graduate school to increase on the pay scale, and others to become better teachers who seek more knowledge and deepen their reflection on the profession.

Following is a description of one teacher education graduate program at a public university in California. We used three guiding questions:

1. How did the program develop?
2. What do teachers want from their online graduate program?
3. What characteristics made the program successful?

Our objective in writing this manuscript is to share information with other programs with a similar intent to improve practice in online education. In 2021 and

2022, our program was recognized by *U.S. News and World Report* as one of the best digital programs in education, and it is ranked number eight in the nation (*U.S. News and World Report*, 2021, 2022). Traditional graduate programs in teacher education reach teachers in local school districts, typically in large cities. Online programs, like the one described here, have a broader reach—around a city, a state, or a country. Scholars have described the importance of reaching underserved populations in rural areas that might not have been served with traditional face-to-face programs (Duesbery et al., 2019; Naranjo, 2018). An online asynchronous program like this can reach far and wide across time zones. Students do not need to arrive online at a particular time but instead, learn the material in week-long modules coupled with instructor feedback. This model is usually called asynchronous learning.

This descriptive study tells the story of a *fully* online graduate program for teachers. It was established in 2014, more than 6 years prior to the COVID pandemic. This description evaluates multidimensional aspects of the program's effectiveness and its offerings (Berkel et al., 2011; Greene, 1994; Kulkarni et al., 2019).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND PRINCIPLES

This online master of arts in teaching (MAT) program is built on the foundation of three theories (Pang, 2005, 2018): Education for democracy as espoused by John Dewey (Dewey, 1916) with aspects of Paulo Freire's work (Freire, 1970; Grande, 2015), the sociocultural theory of learning as developed by Lev Vygotsky (Vygotsky, 1978), and the ethic of care as built by Nel Noddings (Noddings, 1992). The framework is called caring-centered education (Pang, 2005, 2018). All three theories support the importance of caring and compassion in education and center on culture as a significant factor in learning. Finally, all

three theories blend, focusing on building trust, creating collaborative communities, and teaching students to be active and thoughtful citizens in a democracy (Muriel & Singer, 2020; Nelson & Pang, 2014; Ross & Vinson, 2014).

THE EARLY STORY

In the beginning, our team developed five program outcomes. These were overarching themes that guided our instruction and course design. It should be noted that a critical member of our team was an instructional designer with expertise in online coursework. The degree outcomes were (and still are):

1. Teachers foster and create a culturally/linguistically diverse and inclusive community based on social justice and democratic values.
2. Teachers know the principles of inquiry education and can apply them in their classrooms.
3. Teachers apply educational research and theories building upon the knowledge of students and their families in the learning process.
4. Teachers demonstrate abilities in creating and implementing curriculum and instruction that focus on student development of critical thinking skills needed in a democracy.
5. Teachers learn the principles and practices of virtual learning for their teaching.

METHOD

A study like this needs to be grounded in a variety of sources of evidence. The diversity of evidence includes program documentation, records, discussions and meeting notes, open-ended questionnaires, direct observations, and participant observations (Lin, 1994).

For this research, we coded student and instructor data using a common theme

approach. In summarizing data, we looked for emergent themes and frequencies; we also drew inferences from those themes. For example, a faculty member reported, "When I have to stop and defend a faculty prerogative that was decided over 1½ years ago, it feels like administrative badgering and causes stress and wastes valuable faculty time." Furthermore, a student reported that the flexibility of online learning was instrumental. "I was able to listen to lectures and complete homework assignments without sacrificing my parental responsibilities." When these manifested across faculty and students, we knew there was a theme and coded responses.

Faculty members answered an open-ended questionnaire ($n = 8$).

1. What are the most important accomplishments of the program?
2. What were the most vital needs of teachers we addressed in the program?
3. What recommendations do you have for the program as it goes forward?
4. What surprises did you encounter in the program?

Teachers completed a different questionnaire ($n=54$).

1. What were the strengths of the program?
2. Would you recommend the program to other teachers? Why or why not?
3. What were the three most important skills/knowledge/concepts you learned in the program?
4. What would make the program stronger?

Student documentation also included responses to questions in their class modules, emails sent to faculty-team members, and projects they completed, like action-research assignments, videos for their

classrooms, and unit lessons. There was a variety of sources of evidence.

RESULTS: THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY

GUIDING QUESTION 1: HOW DID THE PROGRAM DEVELOP?

Several themes emerged from the examined artifacts and data: (a) Listening to teachers was key; (b) University support and services were important in creating an organization for the master of arts in teaching program, and (c) Department politics and the continual resistance to change from faculty and administrators was a factor that was addressed.

Listening to Teachers. Before the pandemic, our students taught between 30 (elementary) and 200 (middle/secondary) students daily. In 2013, we informally discussed the needs of teachers by talking with undergraduate, teacher credential students, and seasoned educators. This *listening* stage is essential when setting program goals. Teachers often reported they wanted to earn a master's degree, learn new educational strategies and develop robust lesson plans. Some had been teachers for as many as 20 years yet had not participated in a master's program. Many said they did not have the time because they had families and were involved with their children after school. Some were teaching in student-enrichment programs like chess or theater when the school day ended. They also explained how difficult it was for them to leave school on time to make it to the university during rush hour and find a parking space. Teachers also reported needing a program to do their coursework when they had time. Teachers asked for asynchronous classes. In this way, they could do their work as *pajama learning* at night or early in the morning when their children and partners were asleep in comfort. Teachers also told us that a 2-year or longer degree program would be difficult

to finish—so we moved to the 1-year intensive program.

One of our secondary teachers in the first cohort of our program wrote an unsolicited letter of gratitude to our team about how important the program was to him and why it worked,

I would not have been able to earn a graduate degree without it being online. It is important that [the university name] is providing this distance program because I could not go to [the university name] after work to attend face-to-face classes. In addition to being a full-time high school teacher, husband, and father of two young children, I am also the boys' varsity-head basketball coach at my school, and an advisor to two campus clubs, which requires me to work with students after school most days. I found out about the program from a family member and knew of Dr. X when I took her diversity class many years ago. (African American male, High School Social Studies Teacher, February 14, 2016)

University Support and Facilities. The underlying support structure for online instruction was initially minimal at our institution. We were groundbreakers. Within the broader context of online learning, participant observers noted that the university was slow to offer fully online classes and programs. Initially, online learning was used to improve student access to postsecondary education (Lee, 2017), and an Open University format was implemented to offer courses. In this way, online instruction was a method to bring higher education to a more significant number of workers cost-effectively and to increase their competitive advantage over other universities (Lee, 2017). With the expansion of access to the internet, virtual programs became more sophisticated than previous distance courses, and their ability to reach students commensurately expanded (Duesbery et al., 2019).

Our university established a unit to support the use of technology within the

university, as most higher education institutions have established. Originally, instructional technology services used technology specialists to train faculty in computerized assessment, specialized instructional tools, software integration, and solving problems with computers and other media equipment. As the years progressed, instructional technology services trained our faculty in online instruction and the use of the adopted learning management system, which was the foundation of our online programs (Klonoski, 2005). Likely unique to our program, we brought to our team an instructional designer with expertise in modern technologies, which was vital in developing coursework within a learning management system. While our instructors had context expertise, some needed support in using digital devices.

Departmental Politics and Resistance to Change. Program documentation of meeting agendas and summaries, email responses, and team summaries demonstrated that the college dean and department chair initially supported our proposal for a new fully online graduate program for teachers in the winter of 2014. Unfortunately, this changed when the department chair left for another university, and the new department chair did not support online instruction. The following is a sample of the Online MAT team's correspondence from the new department chair. We were to start the new program in 2015; the new chair told the online administrative team to stop their plans "until we discuss this with the faculty" (July 2014). Because of divisions in the department, the online team understood that "discuss with faculty" meant the new chair's intent was to use shared governance to block it. However, the program had already been given college authorization.

By May of 2015, the administrative team of the online program had met with this chair four times and the department faculty once discussing the online MAT pro-

gram. We wrote a memo to the chair in May 2015, just before the new teacher program started. The chair was still trying to keep the MAT from going forth, so the team sent her this email about being forward-thinking:

The [departmental] strategic leadership team identified transformation as one of the key areas we need to address. Transformation involves change and restructuring departmental efforts to ensure our programs are relevant and competitive in today's market. The fully Online MAT is an example of an innovative offering where sustainability and the use of technology are core elements ... it is time that the school, the college, and the university make the commitments in resources to ensure its success. (May 2015)

It is not unusual for educators to resist online instruction (Bollinger et al., 2019). When online-only universities first appeared on the landscape of higher education, many traditional institutions dismissed these organizations as conferring subpar degrees. As the popularity of these institutions grew along with their reputation, many traditional faculty continued to resist this pedagogical direction because of the perception that online instruction could not be as rigorous or effective as face-to-face instruction. Furthermore, faculty were not given extra time to develop online classes (Bollinger et al., 2019), leading to departmental faculty challenging online programs.

After almost 5 years of shifting leadership with four different department chairs, the teacher education department hired a new chair in July of 2018 with a great deal of experience in online teaching and supporting online programs. However, this was not part of the original job description or expectations. The new chair was surprised at a depth of resistance in the department toward online instruction. In her experience, online instruction provided much-needed access to education

that traditional course offerings could not deliver.

This new chair not only supported the Online MAT but later agreed to an expansion of the program in 2019. The program then became two cohorts of about 30 teachers instead of one. Though there were individual administrators who objected to online instruction, we had a solid collaborative purpose and did not engage in blatant judgmentalism (Fullan, 2008). The Online MAT team began to act as more of a group or system which supported identified values and goals. We kept moving forward with a firm purpose of providing a high-quality online program for teachers.

We adopted the college of education's vision:

The college of education produces effective professionals, new knowledge through research and inquiry, and partnerships with the field of practice that makes a difference in the lives of clients served."

We also selected five college of education tenets: excellence in teaching, access to quality public education, diversity, technology, and creation of a community of learners.

GUIDING QUESTION 2: WHAT DO TEACHERS WANT FROM THEIR ONLINE GRADUATE PROGRAM?

The theme that arose in the research of the program was the importance of professional development in issues of diversity and equity. These themes arose from the data and artifacts.

Professional Development in Equity and Diversity Issues. The program focuses on issues of equity and diversity throughout. Most educators are aware of racism but may not always see it in schools. For example, in the advanced curriculum class, teachers were asked to think critically

about an African American high school female's poem about how her science teacher humiliated her when she earned the top grade in the class. The teacher berated her White classmates, asking how they could let a Black student academically do better. This example demonstrates how teacher racism can lead to lower student expectations and extreme bias.

One teacher in the Online MAT was upset by the poem; the student identified how the science teacher was prejudiced against her because she was Black and a female. The educator in the MAT program saw how racism is destructive to all people. He wrote the following poem about his views on racism; this was not an assignment, and he wanted to express his frustrations with racism. He is a Chinese American middle-school math teacher.

*If you're Asian like me
You might feel like you're relegated to the sidelines in conversations about race
Set up as a model for other minorities, told that we have to be good at school
and expected to be
Successful in math and science and to exceed our immigrant parents' standards
Raised from birth and taught by schools that racism is no longer a thing
Because everything was solved by
Dr. Martin Luther King
Racism against Asians, how can that be?
We've given you everything.
Money, status, exotic looks
We even have written about you in
Dr. Seuss's books
So just be complacent and accept your place
Rest assured, nothing is being done against your race.
(The teacher gave us permission to share his poem.)*

The MAT program also included an advanced diversity class that focused on

developing culturally relevant education in the classroom. The graduate program was built to enhance the skills of teachers so they could more effectively address the needs of an increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse student population in a quickly changing technological society. We focused on integrating social justice issues through the course of study. A Latinx high school teacher shared with his small-discussion group of educators that many prejudiced views were floating around among his Latinx students. He said:

There are many Hispanic students who falsely believed that the COVID-19 pandemic was started due to Chinese citizens eating a bat soup. A student said, "That's a lesson to the Chinese not to eat bats, it is all their fault we have to deal with this (COVID)." The statement clearly highlights the growing prejudice and hatred towards people of Asian descent. Most recently with the killing of Asian Americans [In Atlanta at three Asian spas, six Asian American women of eight people were murdered in a hate crime.] is completely unacceptable. I asked the student why he believed that and he said he learned it from his dad and uncle. Combating racist/prejudicial viewpoints is a big challenge in all our schools and it is time for us [classroom teachers] to become leaders of change in our classroom. (Latinx, male, global studies, high school teacher)

The classroom teacher told his students that this was not true and that they should not promote racist views. Even though he taught global studies, he made sure that his students thought about how racism impacts everyone.

Teachers know racism is a problem in school and want to make a difference in the education of all of their students. In several courses, they considered how to address racism in their students and identified strategies and materials to use in discussions. To eliminate racism and other types of social oppression, teachers knew

they must take a systems approach and encourage their schools to address discrimination and prejudice throughout the year and in all classes.

Learning How to Teach Virtually. The pandemic of 2020 revealed a gap in teacher education; teachers needed to be prepared for K–12 online teaching. Literally, over 1 weekend, teachers were required to provide online instruction to all of their students, regardless of age or access. Teachers with decades of effectively educating young learners were overnight rendered ill-equipped for something no educator, administrator, or even family could ever imagine. There were some outliers, however. Some K–12 online schools, both public and private, had already implemented virtual pedagogies (Picciano et al., 2012).

Before the COVID-19 pandemic catapulted K–12 teachers into teaching online with little to no training, the Online MAT was already fully online and asynchronous. These were aspects of the program that teachers wanted. A secondary teacher wrote that one of the strengths of the program was the virtual teaching classes:

The instructional techniques and pedagogy regarding technology in the classroom were a strength in the program.

In addition, since the beginning of the graduate program, teachers have also asked for more modeling of online instruction. A consequence of the pandemic was to **move up** the program's focus on preparing K–12 teachers for virtual teaching.

Three Courses: Pedagogy for Online Teaching. The pandemic was life-altering and devastating for many teachers and their students. However, we believed in adding more online pedagogy courses to the program. The first class we had already included in our program was a course about teaching critical thinking skills using technology. This class provided teachers with pedagogy identifying critical thinking skills such as analysis, synthesis, evalua-

tion, creativity, and the ability to ask open-ended questions. One of the issues we tackled in the class was to have teachers apply these skills to teach students how to identify fake news. This topic is extremely important since there is so much misinformation on the web, and students need tools to identify fabrications.

We added a second educational technology class focused on virtual K–12 teaching in 2018. The team organized the content around teachers needing three levels of knowledge and skills. First, teachers require competence in using instructional technology tools and the ability to create a digital workflow. For many educators, the systems of practice they used in a face-to-face classroom over years of teaching simply do not translate to an online setting. Second, educators must understand which tools best promote different online learning platforms. Finally, they also need to know how to embed supports in the learning process that benefits all levels of K–12 students (Hall et al., 2012). While the ideal approach blends all three skill levels, teachers must have time to build up the abilities necessary to develop empowering and academically inclusive learning experiences skillfully. There is no shortage of web-based and app-based tools. Examples we used included Flipgrid, where students can respond to a prompt in a short video; Peardeck, where teachers build synchronous or asynchronous slide-based presentations with embedded questions and other interactives; Google Docs, where students work collaboratively in real-time; and Adobe Spark, where students demonstrated their creativity by producing short videos or well-designed web content.

Our third class is dedicated to teaching educators about equity in technology. Since our program focuses on diversity and equity, the team raised issues of inequality that are evident in technology. Digital divides among students have proven difficult for many students who are from low-income families and are of color.

For example, many students may not have a computer or learning device and may not have consistent access to the internet. Lacking these tools restricts accessibility to their education and adds to the digital divide.

GUIDING QUESTION 3:
WHAT CHARACTERISTICS
MADE THE PROGRAM SUCCESSFUL?

We knew that online faculty had vital virtual teaching skills to teach in the program. The data demonstrated the following three themes: Online faculty must be flexible and supportive of teachers; Online faculty must also be collaborative and believe in online teaching, and faculty use a collective template presenting modules in the same format throughout the classes.

Flexibility and Supportive Faculty Were Strengths of the Program. Flexibility was vital because teachers could do their coursework when they had time. The program was also asynchronous; teachers liked that they could complete modules in the middle of the night or early in the morning. They also liked that faculty would give them choices so assignments could be tailored to their subject and grade levels, which made the academic work more applicable to their own teaching. Two teachers commented about these strengths of the program:

The program provided useful information and knowledge that applied to my teaching practices right away. (Asian American female, elementary)

I would 100% recommend the program to other teachers. The program provided useful information and knowledge that applied to my teaching practices right away. The professors were outstanding and the community the program established is something that I believe you cannot get anywhere else. (White American, high school physical education teacher)

Six months after the cohort of teachers who graduated in May of 2021, we sent out a questionnaire to 54 of them to gather data about their experiences. We only had their university email addresses, and many teachers did not use them any longer. However, 22 teachers did respond.

We asked, "Would you recommend the online MAT program to your colleagues?" All 22 teachers answer yes. No one answered no.

The second question asked, "What were the strengths of the program?" This question was open-ended, so teachers could write as many reasons as they chose to. Teachers liked the supportive nature of teachers who were knowledgeable and caring. Twelve teachers noted this. The second most important strength that nine teachers wrote about was the flexibility of the program. Six teachers liked that the program was online and self-paced. Other teachers wrote that they liked instruction on culturally responsive teaching and virtual teaching. Table 1 summarizes teacher comments about the strengths of the program.

Collaborative Faculty Who Believe in Virtual Instruction. One of the most difficult yet vital issues the team dealt with was identifying qualified and effective instructors for online instruction who believed in providing high-quality instruction for teachers. When the Online MAT began in 2015, most department faculty had never taught a virtual class; however, some thought it would be easy to take their in-person teaching experience and quickly transfer to online instruction. One of the original faculty in the online program told us he knew how to teach virtually but did not. Almost half of the teachers petitioned to have him removed in the first cohort, which was a difficult issue to address. We found that university faculty needed professional development in virtual teaching. The main issue (and even now the most significant issue with faculty forced to teach online) is the misunderstanding that

Table 1. Strengths of the Program (N = 22)

Qualitative Results	Frequency
Professors were supportive, knowledgeable, and caring	12
Flexibility of the program	9
Program was online	6
Program was self-paced	6
Instruction in culturally relevant teaching	4
Instruction on virtual teaching	4
Assignments connected to our teaching	3
Can maintain teaching while being in program	3
Timing and scheduling of program through the year	3
Time for reflection on my personal teaching	2
Instruction on problem-based learning	2
Program financially affordable	1
Instruction in multilingual education	1
Instruction in project-based learning	1

their methods could easily transfer directly into the online format.

Teaching online is not easy; it is a complex process (Lee, 2017). One of the original founders of this program is an instructional designer who has been instrumental in our program's success. The instructional designer helped the team identify programmatic goals, standards, and ways to address their virtual teaching. Faculty were trained to use a wide range of digital strategies to create effective learning experiences.

To design a strong course, it is fundamental to consider students' and teachers' points of view (Smith, 2008). Within that perspective, the team identified necessary curriculum standards and technological standards for the class (Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2015; 2016). Then the team identified instructional objectives for the course and formed modules which are large curricular units for the class. In addition, the team believed relationship building was critical to many of the teachers, so small group discussions and collab-

orative projects were integrated into each course.

Teachers in the Online MAT program valued their virtual instruction. When asked about the most important skills they learned, 13 teachers out of the 22 who answered our questionnaire identified innovative technological instruction as essential in their learning. See Table 2 for all of their answers.

When developing modules for courses, the team used several guidelines. First, there was to be consistency in language and structure. For example, a module began with a brief introduction, text, and a video. Each module included instructional objectives, learning outcomes, and rubrics for projects. Next, the content was presented, whether video, audio, or textual. A module also provided an opportunity for student interaction. Some instructors used a discussion board or small-breakout group meetings. Finally, each module had an opportunity for evaluation or feedback.

To summarize, every module had a similar structure. Here are the five major components of modules: (1) *introduction*,

Table 2. Most Important Skills/Constructs Teachers Learned ($N = 22$)

Qualitative Results	Frequency
Innovative technology instruction	13
Culturally responsive pedagogy	10
Action-research and assessment strategies	9
Problem-based learning	4
Instructional strategies	2
Connecting research to teaching	2
Equity	1
Caring-centered education	1
Classroom management	1
Inequities in EL programs	1
Funds of knowledge	1
Establish a community in deep learning	1
How to create a literature review	1
Reflecting on my own practice	1
Social justice	1

(2) *content/learning material*, (3) *opportunity to interact with peers*, (4) *individual or group activities*, and (5) *evaluation and feedback*. Providing teachers with organized modules to enhance virtual learning gave them opportunities to think about how to plan and design their classroom units.

Feedback on class evaluations reinforced the high-quality instruction and importance of faculty feedback. Also, feedback can lower teacher stress while increasing teacher confidence in virtual learning (Reinking, 2021). Here is a student response about the course on teaching critical thinking using technology:

I loved the course content and how it was organized! I feel like each assignment was meaningful and allowed us to really explore critical thinking strategies that we can implement in our classrooms. Professor X was super helpful and responded promptly to my emails with detailed answers to questions. She also provides helpful feedback that shows she takes time to look carefully through our work. I

enjoyed this course. (Anonymous, summer 2021)

A comprehensive summary of teacher-identified skills they learned is found in Table 2.

Creating Communities of Teachers/Learners. Humanizing virtual classroom spaces filled with interactive activities that utilize both voice and student-created video is essential in building community (Pacasky-Brock, et al., 2020). Some online master's candidates live outside the time zone as far as Spain and Japan. Beginning with the first-summer session of the online MAT, a primary program objective was to build dynamic learning communities within an asynchronous format. The faculty adopted user-friendly digital tools so teachers could participate easily using screencasting and virtual meeting software like Zoom or Teams. The faculty wanted to make the courses as personable as possible. In addition, instructors often used Flipgrid. This software allowed faculty and their

students to create short videos of up to 10 minutes about themselves. Flipgrids gave everyone the chance to see each other; it is more interesting than having teachers write a paragraph about themselves. Each teacher also received a specific adviser to ensure progress throughout the program. The adviser-cohort model led to a 100% graduation rate for the program's first 3 years. As the program enlarged, the graduation rate was about 94%. One teacher wrote about her experiences with the faculty:

I loved how ALL of the professors were so warm and kind. You could tell that they wanted their students to succeed. They were always open and responsive to emails. I can't give enough praise for this program and how better prepared I feel for the teaching field. Thank you again! (White American female, elementary grade)

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAM STABILITY AND ENHANCEMENT

This program description examined the process of designing and implementing a fully online graduate program for teachers. We believe having a clear mission with identified theoretical frameworks, vision, instructional outcomes, standards, alignment of courses, and understanding of teacher needs is essential. The team worked to create an effective program that addressed current issues of diversity, social justice, technology, inquiry, and democratic education. Here are key recommendations based on evidence. We examined these aspects of instruction for teachers: What teachers wanted, what worked best for them, and what they learned. We also reflected upon our curriculum and practices and how they addressed teacher growth and success. Using teacher and faculty questionnaires, these are common themes and insights that we learned along our journey:

- Teachers want an effective online program that is asynchronous because this flexibility makes it possible for them to attend class and complete their coursework when it is convenient for them.
- Teachers want to learn how to integrate values of social justice, equity, and inclusion issues throughout their curriculum and delivery methods and establish a collaborative community of learners.
- Teachers learn that virtual teaching is not simply placing face-to-face instruction online but carefully organizing their curriculum with support for students.
- Teachers need an identified personal, graduate adviser to assist them in finishing all classes, taking appropriate exams, filling out appropriate university forms, and making sure he/she graduates.
- Teachers learn by having strong instructional examples and aspire to teach effectively online. Many teachers want to "see" the program's workflow, content, delivery, and assignments to envision what they could do in their classrooms.
- Teachers appreciate collaborative faculty who create an aligned, high-quality program.
- Teachers need an attainable graduation timeline. One year is recommended, so teachers do not get fatigued and drop out.

All teachers who answered the questionnaire recommended the program. The following are sample comments that explain their viewpoints.

I would definitely recommend it [the online MAT program] to other teachers because of the rigorous yet relevant instruction and curriculum. It allows new and seasoned teachers to reflect on instructional approaches as well as apply methods as you learn. (Latinx, high school teacher, English language arts, summer 2021)

I would definitely recommend this [Online MAT] program to other teachers. First off, I can't stress the fact that it is a most thorough online program. The convenience of doing everything from your home is most beneficial! The material covers so many elements. Being aware of cultural diversity in the classroom, learning all about technology and how to create/use online resources for your class, and understanding the benefits of action research were only a few items covered. The range and depth were satisfying as well. (White American female, elementary, summer 2021)

WHAT WE LEARNED ABOUT OURSELVES

Teacher educators must plan high-quality, online graduate programs. The faculty surveys gave us the opportunity to evaluate and examine our program and participation in it. The scientific community will address the COVID-19 pandemic; however, educators must realize that education is forever changed partly because of it. We must be able to deliver professional development to teachers in ways that utilize digital processes that humanize instruction (Pacansky-Brock et al., 2020). We believe that most teachers are willing to learn how to teach virtually and engage their students within a compassionate environment (Ransom, 2020). However, Colleges of Education must be ready to support this educational direction.

The faculty team noted that placing individual courses online is not sufficient. We, teacher educators, must be willing to build innovative, aligned programs that infuse both digital content and delivery. The Online MAT team realized that pooled trust is a strong graduate program's core element. If we work well together and share a common purpose, the team will stay with the program over time, resulting in continuity and consistency (Fullan, 2008). Though this was hard to learn, we recognize that a department will always have politics. However, we had to focus on providing teachers with high-quality

instruction (Pacansky-Brock, 2020). Though there were times when the politics were difficult because it felt as if we were being personally attacked, we learned to keep working collaboratively and supporting each other.

The following comments come from the questionnaire submitted by the Online MAT faculty. They identified the importance of working as a collaborative group with a collective mission. We are also happy to have created a fully online program that is growing. Here are some of those comments:

The level of cooperation within the administrative team is something I have never had. Usually classes are silos, but not with us. (Tenured faculty member, summer 2021)

Heck, we are very successful despite an uphill political battle for several years. Several department chairs and some of our colleagues wanted us to fail... Nice surprise to be nationally ranked too and the biggest graduate program of our department. (Tenured faculty, summer 2021)

The fact that it [the online MAT] has grown to three cohorts means that it meets the needs of nontraditional students who cannot attend class at 4 P.M. The program would not have grown so quickly if it did not meet those needs. The university system was built to teach the working class, and I think this program fits that intention. (Lecturer, summer 2021)

There is an old saying in education, "before you get to Bloom, you have to go through Maslow." If you are not meeting the needs of your students, are you an educator? (Lecturer, summer 2021)

In the summer of 2021, the Online MAT team reflected on their accomplishment of expanding the program to three cohorts of approximately 90 teachers, three times as many educators as our original cohort in

the graduate degree in 2015. Expanding the program came about because we listened to teachers and addressed many of their needs. At the same time, the team developed a program focused on diversity and included instruction in culturally responsive teaching, critical thinking, and virtual teaching. We believe one of the most important goals we shared was to monitor each teacher's progress to ensure that every teacher is successful. This statement means that faculty contacts and communicates with teachers who fall behind in their coursework.

Our research found that in today's world, teacher education faculty must teach technology skills as well as content that instructs educators in how to integrate diversity, equity, linguistic, cultural, and inclusion concerns into high, quality caring classrooms where democratic values are at its core (Muriel & Singer, 2020; Pang, 2018; Ross & Vinson, 2014). These are key skills teachers must attain to mentor students who become critical thinkers and active participants in a compassionate and collaborative democracy.

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NOTE

1. The program studied is part of a public university located in California.

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