Preparing Distance Learning Graduate Students: Effects of an Innovative Online Orientation Program

University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB) – Galveston School of Nursing

AACN Transform 2022

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Disclosure

Presenter has no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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Presentation Objectives

❖ Why an online orientation for graduate nursing students?

❖ What does an online orientation program look like?

❖ Are outcomes of the program as expected?

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Background

- The U.S. Affordable Care Act (2012) increased the demand for APRNs
  ➢ Projected growth rate = 31% (2016-2026)

- UTMB SON online graduate program seeking to reduce attrition rate (~12%)
  ➢ Students ill-prepared for demands of online program
  ➢ Lacking research/writing competencies expected of graduate-level student
  ➢ First 2-3 weeks of first semester fraught with students overcoming online education shortcomings
    ▪ Technology
    ▪ Autonomous learning
    ▪ Socialization

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MORE Program

In response, SON faculty & Director of Education Technology developed and implemented the MSN Online orientation for Retention Excellence (MORE) Program in Fall 2016.

MORE's curriculum focuses on the four (4) key areas identified by online graduate students as hurdles to their successful completion of an online program:

- Technology
- Resources
- Being prepared
- Socialization

Gilmore & Lyons (2012); Carruth, Broussard, Waldmeier, Gauthier & Mixon (2010); Gazza & Hunker (2014); Kreideweis (2005)

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Overview of MORE Program

- 4-week program = 4-6 hrs/week
- Simulated online classroom environment
- 4 modules focus on primary predictors of attrition from online programs
- Program Coordinator
- Module Facilitators
- Subject Matter Experts
- Pre-/Post- Program Survey (MEBIR scale)
- Post Module Surveys

Sometimes life doesn't give you something you want, not because you don't deserve it, but because you deserve

More

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Modules Overview

Module 1: Technology

- LMS skills check
- Use of recorded presentations
- Discussion Board exercises
- Scavenger hunt

Module 2: Research & Writing Resources

- How To videos
- Learning APA
- Library research exercise
- Writing exercise

Module 3: Tools for Success

- Self Assessments
- Exercises with Academic Advisor
- Online quiz

Module 4: Socialization

- Track-specific groups
- Group Assignment
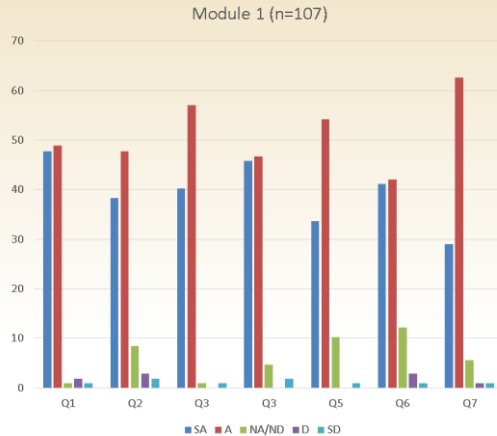- APA writing exercises

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Project Aim

The success of UTMB School of Nursing's (SON) MSN Online Orientation for Retention Excellence (MORE) Program will be measured by more than 75% of students self-reporting Agree or Strongly Agree that participation in each MORE Program module better prepares them for the SON MSN's online program. In addition, it is projected that graduation rates and withdrawal rates of MORE participants will be positively impacted.

Module 1: Computer Competencies

1. Computer Competency Skills Check provided me with skills that will be useful in my MSN Online program.

2. I learned where to find useful resources during the Scavenger Hunt assignment.

3. The information provided in the Student Guide to Success presentation will help me to be successful in the MSN online program.

4. I find the task of uploading my work into the Assignment Dropbox less intimidating now that I've completed this orientation.

5. The Blackboard training has adequately prepared me for my first UTMB SON MSN online course.

6. I found the VoiceThread presentations both interesting (topic) and useful (learning how to use the software).

7. The amount of time required to review the information/participate in Module 1 was about right.

Module 1 (n=107)

[Bar chart with categories Q1, Q2, Q3, Q3, Q5, Q6, Q7; legend: SA, A, NA/ND, D, SD; y-axis 0 to 70]

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Module 1: Student Feedback

"I was able to test my competency skill and realized where my weaknesses are and address them before the start of the MSN program."

"I am extremely glad this course was offered…as they say practice makes perfect."

"Having this course has helped me prepare for the online courses."

"I am fortunate to be part of this exciting program."

"Encouraged that UTMB is motivated to help me succeed."

"This [program] has definitely alleviated some of my anxiety about going back to school."

"It was difficult to find the answers in the scavenger hunt."

"I personally had a hard time connecting to the website."

"This first week was a little frustrating and discouraging trying to catch up since I had a late start. The invite was sent to me not on my UTMB email but on one of my personal emails which I sometimes check."

"There are some things that are not clearly explained."

"Some computer competency assignments are duplicated in both courses and it is not clear whether one needs to post the same assignments on the DB of both courses."

"I feel that I will forget some of the topics we went over in this module by the time school starts."

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Module 2: Library Research & APA Resources

1. The How to Approach a Search video series provided me with skills that will be useful in my MSN online program.

2. The information provided in the CINAHL Tutorial videos will help me to be successful in the MSN online program.

3. The presentation EndNote Basic will be useful to me in my MSN online program.

4. The Citation Help videos provided me with useful information that will benefit me in the MSN online program.

5. The Search Exercise has adequately prepared me for my first literature search that I will perform in the MSN online program.

6. I learned useful information about APA formatting from the APA Documentation Exercise.

7. The amount of time required to review the information/participate in Module 2 was about right.

Module 2 (n=94)

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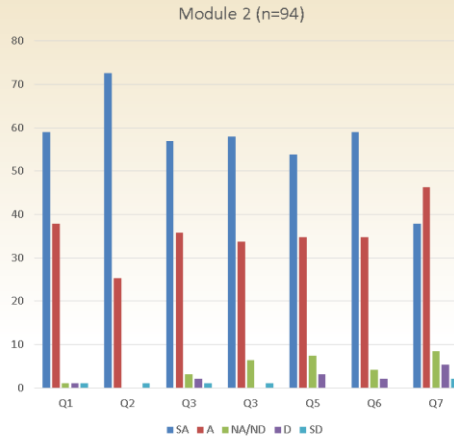
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Module 2: Student Feedback

"This was a good review of APA and search skills that I will need to brush up on more for the MSN program."

"I thought module 2 was a great refresher into APA and how to search for an article."

"Module 2 Presentations were really informative especially for the students who do their first time online course."

"This week's modules were very helpful."

"This was very helpful and I'll definitely be using the skills throughout my graduate education!"

"The library search video was very helpful in finding out appropriate articles for the given assignment."

"The module was much more time consuming that the first. It made me feel a little overwhelmed because it was so much more intensive than the first week."

"This module was a bit challenging for me, as I'm a do-er."

"The assignments this week were not easy for me."

"I need more time in practicing the EndNote Basic searches. It would have been helpful if it had some sort of practice assignment on that video."

"I have to admit it [this module] was a little overwhelming for me."

"[Module 2] almost needs 2 weeks to complete."

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Module 3: Tools for Success

1. The information presented on time management techniques provided me with skills that will be useful in my MSN online program.

2. The information provided on the topics of prioritization and procrastination will help me to be successful in the MSN online program.

3. Identifying my learning style, along with suggestions on how to reinforce that style, will be useful to me in my MSN online program.

4. The section of Effective Note Taking provided me with useful information that will benefit me in the MSN online program.

5. I learned useful information about test anxiety, including signs/symptoms of anxiety, tips to manage test anxiety, and ways to avoid test anxiety from the questionnaires and sections on Test Anxiety.

6. The amount of time required to review the information/participate in Module 2 was about right.

Module 3 (n=92)

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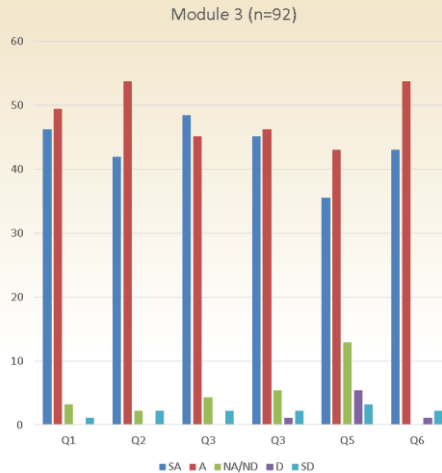
Module 3: Student Feedback

"This was very useful & informative module. It has helped me to identify my learning style and aided me in seeing that I need to improve my note taking."

"I feel that I gained a lot of valuable information from the tips provided in the video."

"Great tips on organization and prioritization."

"This week is just a great reminder of how I will have to keep myself focused since this is online degree."

"Week by week I encounter new things in the MORE program that opens my eyes to my strength and weaknesses."

"The content was remedial."

"I feel like this was geared for an undergraduate student. Perhaps there is a more valid tool available for masters program students."

"Effective note taking presentation can be more in depth."

"The presentations had long pauses that were not necessary which made it hard for me to concentrate and follow along."

"This was, by far, the most ineffective module (in my opinion)."

"I think the scoring methods were incorrect for some questions."

Module 4: Learning Teams

1. The New Student MSN Program Guide provided me with information that will be useful in my MSN online program.

2. I found the track-specific Discussion Board Q&A provided me with valuable insight into the MSN online program.

3. The Learning Team Assignment has adequately prepared me for how a group will function in the MSN online program.

4. The APA Formatting assignment provided me with useful information that will benefit me in the MSN online program.

5. The Peer Self Evaluation Form (PSEF) provided me with an opportunity to openly & honestly share my feedback of my group members' work with the instructor.

6. The amount of time required to review the information/participate in Module 4 was about right.

Module 4 (n=84)

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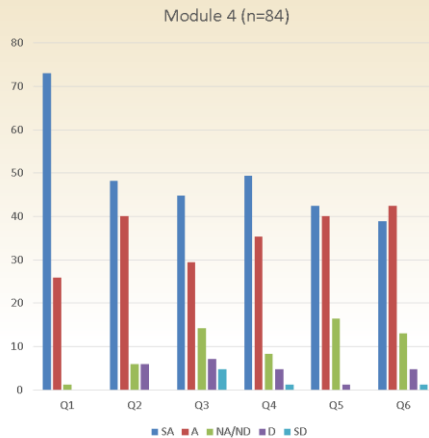
Module 4: Student Feedback

"The group assignment was a good example for how it will be to work with others when writing and sharing papers."

"A very useful and informative module."

"This module was helpful in making me more aware of what it will be like to work with a group."

"I feel that Module 4 is the perfect recap to the MORE program."

"This team assignment made me realize the difficulties with online group projects."

"I found this assignment to be the most frustrating that I have ever participated in throughout my school or professional career. I think the amount of time that we had to complete the assignment was insufficient when communicating with people in different states and on different schedules."

"The online team format will probably be the most frustrating part of this program."

"I hope group work will not be as challenging thing for me in the future."

Additional Student Comments

"Overall, the whole MORE program prepared me for what lies ahead."

"Thank you for the MORE program."

"This has been a valuable experience. Thank you so much!"

"Thank you for allowing me to participate in this course. I feel that it has helped prepare me for the upcoming MSN program."

"I wish that the program was longer! I am absolutely satisfied."

"This feels like such a head start. This should almost be required. It would take a newly-accepted student to experience the MORE program to appreciate the value."

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Results

75% - Students report feeling better prepared for success in online graduate program after MORE

3% - MORE participants are likely to graduate vs. non-MORE participants

4% - MORE participants lower likelihood to withdraw from program vs. non-MORE participants

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MEBIR Scale

Management Education by Internet Readiness (MEBIR) Scale

- Originally designed for online delivery of management education

- Measures a prospective learner's readiness to participate in the online education environment

- Results can assist both online education providers and prospective learners in determining the extent to which online delivery of content is likely to be effective

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MEBIR Results

Indicators	P-Value
Flexibility	0.0009
Self-Discipline/Self-Awareness	0.0032
Quality	0.1910

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Final Comments

Added RN-to-BSN (Collaborative Online orientation for Retention Excellence, or CORE, Program) - 2020

Added DNP and PhD (CORE-d) – Fall 2021 (-d = Doctoral programs)

- Fully asynchronous/on demand format without active facilitator(s)

Implementing similar format for incoming BSN students

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