e-Journal of Business Education & Scholarship of Teaching
Vol. 12, No. 3, December 2018, pp: 69-84.
"http://www.ejbest.org"

Transitioning to Online: A SWOT Analysis by First Time Online Business Faculty

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Abstract

Online education continues its growth trajectory benefitting public four-year institutions of higher education as well as private universities. Recently, private non-profits have experienced double-digit increases despite late entry into online education. Situated within the context of a private nonprofit institution and its recently developed asynchronous online program, the purpose of this paper is to examine the teaching experiences of first-time business professors as seen through the lens of a SWOT analysis. Designed to capture the views of three stakeholders: Students, Faculty, and the Institution, the SWOT analysis suggests that local and regional research may yield untapped sources of opportunity for online programs at non-profit institutions.

Key words*: Online teaching, face-to-face teaching, college-level business courses, SWOT analysis.*

JEL Classification: M10; M31
PsycINFO Classification: 3530; 3550; 3560
FoR Code: 1303; 1503
ERA Journal ID#: 35696

Introduction

For the past decade, growth opportunities in online education have increased not only for public four-year institutions of higher education, but also for non-profit or private universities. This is especially encouraging news in view of declining on-campus enrollments (Allen & Seaman, 2016). The Digital Learning Compass (Allen & Seaman, 2017) now finds initial indicators of an enrollment downturn between the three-year period of 2012 through 2015. Enrollment declines of 10.4% were reported at two-year institutions; for-profit institutions suffered a drop of 31.4% (Allen & Seaman, 2017). However, data show the greatest promise of growth lies with private nonprofits who have captured annual double-digit percentage increases in online enrollments for academic years 2012–2015 (Allen & Seaman, 2017).

The Council of Independent Colleges (CIC), an association of non-profit independent colleges and universities, also assesses adoption of online programs in their 2017 report titled 'Online Learning at Private Colleges and Universities.' While the CIC analysis does not measure annual student enrollment, it finds that from 2013 to 2016, the number of private institutions offering 'five or more fully online programs increased from 15% to 25%' (Clinefelter & Magda, 2016, 5). The number of private universities offering 'no fully online programs but that offer hybrid or online courses shrank from 47% to 39%' (Clinefelter & Magda, 2016, 5). It is evident that private non-profit institutions, while trailing behind their public four-year counterparts (Clinefelter & Magda, 2016), are increasing their presence in distance education and capturing market share.

The purpose of this paper is to develop a SWOT analysis for online vs. face-to-face (F2F) teaching formats for an asynchronous online program at a non-profit private four-year Hispanic Serving university in South Texas. A SWOT analysis, as commonly understood, examines the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing a new initiative. As a managerial tool, it is used to gather information that assists the firm, entity or institution in making decisions about a proposed enterprise. To develop the SWOT analysis, we utilize our first-year teaching experiences--as business professors--along with the available literature for online and F2F teaching.

This paper unfolds in five main sections. The first section is a review of the literature where we have organized the previous research from a SWOT analysis perspective. The second section presents the methodology pertinent to conducting a SWOT matrix. Section three presents the results, followed by a discussion in section four. Finally, in section five we offer the conclusion.

In this paper, we have used Allen and Seaman's (2016) definitions, a three-prong arrangement that classifies online content. Web-facilitated courses, Allen and Seaman's first category, use web-based technology to deliver sections of a traditional F2F course; these courses deliver 1% to 29% of its content online. Blended or hybrid courses, Allen and Seaman's second category, are composed of 30% to 75% online content with the balance delivered in F2F format. Lastly, online courses, the third category, have 'at least 80% of the course content delivered online' (11). Online courses can be 'synchronous,' meaning students regularly meeting online, or 'asynchronous,' meaning students never meet online. While our University offers courses in both asynchronous and hybrid formats, in this paper we focus on our experiences with asynchronous online education.

Literature Review

A review of the recent literature in online teaching in business disciplines finds numerous considerations institutions should evaluate when adopting online programs. In this paper, we have organized the previous research according to the SWOT analysis lens, under the sub-categories of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. We not only search the relevant literature in online teaching at business schools but also examine national and state reports for indicators of opportunities and threats. Our review examines internal and external considerations for three groups: students, faculty, and the institution itself.

Primarily, students are motivated to enrol in online courses when it fulfills needs and adds value. In a study of 1,405 part- and full-time students at an AACSB undergraduate business program, Sanford et.al. (2017) studied students' perception of convenience and its effect on course satisfaction and perceived learning. Students value convenience and pursue it as a solution that facilitates degree completion. The study also found that convenience is associated with both course satisfaction and perceived learning and concludes that convenience equals value. In a similar vein, Blau and Drennan (2017) asked 1,184 business undergraduate students over a two-semester period to identify their 'preferred classroom environment delivery mode' (226). Students not only favoured online and hybrid class delivery methods but were also more likely to recommend these courses than peers who preferred F2F classes. Blau et.al. (2016) also found that greater perceived learning in online courses motivates business students to complete their degrees on time. The combination of one or two online courses together with regular F2F classes motivates student learning and persistence toward graduation (Blau et al., 2016) in business undergraduates. Undergraduates who are technologically adept will seek online course offerings if they perceive they will help meet their educational goals (Robinson, 2017).

Many students benefit from the online curriculum, but others find it problematic. In their study of undergraduate management students enrolled in asynchronous courses, Comer, Lenaghan, and Sengupta (2015) report much variability in students' willingness to accept and adapt to the adjustments required in online courses. In agreement, Fetzner (2013) in a community college setting, concludes that unsuccessful online students lack awareness of course expectations, time commitment and organizational skills. Indeed, the CIC (Clinefelter & Magda, 2016) reports students' 'lack of discipline to succeed online' (16) as a primary obstacle to online course acceptance. In questioning why students fail, Lee and Choi (2011), in their 10-year empirical review of online dropout factors, found 69 reasons. Using qualitative research processes, they condensed these reasons into nine groups. The groups were subsumed into three sections: Student factors, course or program factors, and environmental factors.

Institutions with high minority enrollment, should also consider the possible interaction among diversity, culture and online learning. Yeboah and Smith (2016) find weak self- directed learning skills, lack of support, and linguistic differences affect students' ability to succeed in online courses. In addition, Ibarra (2000) reminds us that students within high-context cultures, such as Latinos, may find low-context environments, e.g., online learning, to be an obstacle. Personal interactions and peer relationships found in F2F classrooms are instrumental in conveying meaning to high-context dependent students.

Online teaching offers some benefits to faculty. Current research finds that at the very least there 'are no differences in performance outcomes between online and classroom-based courses' (Arbaugh et al., 2009, 83). Studies in which F2F learning outcomes surpass those of online classes become less prevalent as faculty and students become more proficient with online technology (Arbaugh et al., 2009). For technically agile colleagues, teaching online can facilitate the task of making student

communication easier and faster (Taylor, 2002). In addition to research studies, multi-media sources, quality assurance organizations, and learning management systems provide a rich base of information and structure for online faculty. Furthermore, many universities offer course development support from instructional designers and teams (Legon & Garrett, 2018).

For faculty, there are several negatives associated with the decision to teach online. Inexperienced F2F instructors encounter much more difficulty translating a course into an online format (Taylor, 2002). For an online setting, faculty also bear much more responsibility for student success. For instance, Ladyshewsky (2013) finds that online instructors may shoulder a greater teaching responsibility for student satisfaction than in F2F courses. Similarly, Lightner & Lightner-Laws (2016) states that the selection of teaching strategies, an instructor decision, may heavily influence student achievement. Furthermore, instructor evaluations may also suffer. For instance, Mintu-Wimsatt et.al. (2006) found that online learning environments negatively affected instructor evaluations in an MBA marketing management class; instructors are more likely to receive positive ratings in F2F settings than online. As such, poor class evaluations can affect future promotion decisions. Therefore, faculty should carefully weigh online teaching opportunities as business schools continue to shift course delivery options from F2F to virtual classroom formats.

Like other non-profit universities, our institution views online courses as a strength, a strategy to increase revenue in the face of declining on-ground enrollment reported by Clinefelter & Magda (2016). Weaknesses include costs, retention and loss of personal student contact. For some institutions, costs have been reported to be greater than the administration initially planned (Smith & Mitry, 2008). University retention may suffer.

Priluck (2004), for example, finds that first-time full-time students find it difficult to manage and successfully complete online courses. Additionally, some faith-based universities 'see online education as counterintuitive to their mission to provide a personalized learning experience where students and faculty bond in a campus setting' (Clinefelter & Magda, 2016, 8).

Nationally, it is not surprising that many institutions now view online education as 'critical to their long-term strategy' (Allen & Seaman, 2016, 24). Their survey finds that private nonprofits have captured double-digit percentage increases in online enrollments between academic years 2012–2015 (Allen & Seaman, 2017). Consequently, universities view online offerings as revenue generators and find that such programs grow or stabilize enrollments (Legon & Garrett, 2018). They find student retention is easier, and the rate of completion improves (Clinefelter & Magda, 2016). Academic leaders believe that online learning outcomes are the same as or exceed those in F2F courses (Allen & Seaman, 2017). Surprisingly, surveys find that most universities draw their online and F2F students from the same geographic area; most students live within 50 miles of campus (Allen & Seaman, 2017). Albert and Johnson (2011) find working class students value online education more than the traditional students. Lastly, from a marketing perspective, institutions should fulfill student needs by focusing on course convenience and its association with student learning and satisfaction (Sanford et al., 2017).

Nationally, external threats include the possibility of an oversupply in online programs and the prospect of market saturation (Legon & Garrett, 2018). Community colleges, four-year publics, and private institutions report more local, regional and national competition (Legon & Garrett, 2018). Private colleges and universities not only face increasing online competition but also the task of maintaining on-ground enrollment (Clinefelter & Magda, 2016). In addition, shrinking national pools of high school graduates are affecting both on- ground and online enrollment (Clinefelter &

Magda, 2016). If student demand is insufficient, online program costs may need to be re-evaluated (Albert & Johnson, 2011).

Regionally, the university's geographic location provides and advantageous position in enrollment opportunities. Positive demographic changes in the Southwest translate into potential on-ground enrollment and therefore, online growth. In 2017, Texas led the nation in the largest annual state population growth. Both natural state population increases and net migration account for the growth in the state's largest metropolitan cities (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017a). Accordingly, Texas' public elementary and secondary school enrollment will increase by 15% between 2015 through 2027 (U.S. Department of Education, 2017).

Locally, in San Antonio, Census figures report a 13.9% population increase between 2010 and 2017 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017b); and in 2017, the Bureau recognized San Antonio as the city with the largest population increase in the country (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). San Antonio's growth is further evidenced by a 27.0% increase in public school district enrollment from 2006 through 2017, and a 5.6% increase between 2015–2017 (Texas Education Agency, 2017).

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (2015) reports that the 25- to 34-year-old Hispanic population is projected to increase by 41.0% between 2015–2030. Albert and Johnson (2015) find this population of working adults view online programs more positively than traditional middle-class students.

Regionally, Texas' weak high-school-to-college student pipeline is an external threat. Annually, The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board tracks higher education completion rates for Texas students graduating from the 8th grade. By following students for 11 years, the state determines the percentage who graduate with a certificate or bachelor's degree, from a Texas university or college, within six years of their high school graduation date (Murphy & Daniel, 2017). Only 21.6% of the 2006 eighth-grade cohort attained a certificate or degree (Murphy & Daniel, 2017), roughly one of five students. For financially disadvantaged students, that rate drops to 12% (Texas Education Agency, 2016), or one of eight students.

Method: SWOT Analysis

In studying online vs. F2F teaching setting, we have utilized a SWOT analysis. Below, we will provide a brief background regarding the evolving history of SWOT methodology.

Strategic planning is at the core of a SWOT analysis as firms seek a competitive advantage in a complex environment (Porter, 1991). Fundamental to Porter's work is an examination of the strategy context, the analysis of the firm's internal operation and its external environment and how the latter shapes the firm's position in a competitive environment.

Boar (2001) details eleven different analytical methods, each classified under situation analysis. Boar states that 'situation analysis is the collection and analysis of information about the business from both internal and external perspective for developing conclusions about the state of the business' (193).

Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, and Lampel (1998) argue that while there are many strategic planning tools, 'most standard textbooks continue to use the SWOT model as their centerpiece' (28). Likewise, Helms and Nixon (2010) state that SWOT analysis is the generally agreed upon instrument for launching the strategic planning process. It easily constructs and facilitates 'multiple viewpoints as a brainstorming exercise' (216).

In agreement, Werbach (2009) establishes that use of the SWOT analysis helps a firm determine 'an agreed-on reference point' (79).

Hill and Westbrook (1997) recommend the SWOT analysis as the first planning activity to be undertaken. Ghazinoory et al. (2011) define it as a process of exploring the internal and external environment of an organization and extracting convenient strategies based on its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Furthermore, for executives, the SWOT analysis format provides an easily read chart illustrating the internal and external factors affecting the firm.

Advocates of the SWOT matrix argue that it is flexible, easily understood and focused on change. For small firms, SWOT analysis is time and cost efficient especially when there are not enough resources to undertake market research; and it is easily applied by managers. As a preliminary decision-making tool, the SWOT quadrants organize and order the organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (Kotler & Armstrong, 2016) to 'assess alternatives and complex decision situations' (Helms & Nixon, 2010, 216).

A SWOT analysis can be applied to many situations. For instance, (Helms & Nixon, 2010) report that a SWOT matrix is frequently used as an assessment tool for strategic planning and it is preferred by individuals, businesses, healthcare, government, profits and not-for-profits. It has also been utilized by industries and countries. In this paper we will incorporate a SWOT analysis for online vs. F2F teaching setting.

To conduct a SWOT analysis for online vs. F2F teaching setting, we review and analyze the internal and external environmental conditions in which the institution exists and classify them as strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

In our application, strengths and weaknesses are best viewed from the perspective of the stakeholders who participate in this online higher educational venture. For us, opportunities and threats occur in the external environment and from the stakeholders' perspective, are difficult to predict or control.

While a SWOT analysis has many advantages there are some deficiencies to be noted. For instance, Pickton and Wright (1998) identify and classify three areas of concern: Inadequate definition of factors, lack of prioritization of factors and compiler bias. They point out that inadequately defined factors can be situated in more than one SWOT quadrant, that a typical analysis does not rank the importance of various factors, and that managers are subject to various types of bias, including their opinions.

Other researchers also raise caution in conducting a SWOT analysis. For instance, Hill and Westbrook (1997) list several SWOT weaknesses including lengthy lists, unconfirmed or undocumented observations and opinions, and importantly, no 'link to the implementation phase' (51). According to Boar (2001), 'one should leverage strengths, eliminate weaknesses; exploit opportunities and deflect threats' (28). Moreover, Formisano (2004) argues that it is very important when evaluating the SWOT analysis to keep the goals of the firm in mind. Formisano states that without guidance, the SWOT results can easily get off track. Similarly, Helms and Nixon (2010) claim no strategic direction emerges from the analysis; no implementation strategies are developed to match strengths with opportunities. The literature recognizes that the SWOT analysis is poorly and incompletely used and misapplied (Everett, 2014).

In summary, a SWOT analysis can be an effective tool in decision making, strategy formulation and selection process. However, because it may involve some subjectivity, some researchers argue that it is best when used as a guide and not as a prescription.

In principle, an environmental scan and SWOT analysis should have been conducted to identify potential issues 'in advance' of a new initiative being taken. However, this is not the case for this initiative, the provision of online teaching at our institution. This paper, therefore, is not intended to assist the institution in its decision-making with respect to online programs. While this paper will provide some coverage of all the issues related to online teaching, it will primarily reflect our experience during its early stages at our campus.

Results

Table 1 presents our SWOT matrix which combines the literature and various aspects of our experiences as first-time professors engaged in asynchronous online delivery. Our natural tendency is to compare the efficacy of online teaching and F2F. An important question is whether online education represents a solution while maintaining teaching quality. How do students enrolled in online courses perform relative to those in a traditional F2F? A debate exists around the pros and cons associated with the online vs. F2F classroom setting. The comparisons, though, are not limited to the classroom. Online education affects the student, participating faculty members, and the institution. To this end, we employ a SWOT analysis between two delivery methods, online and F2F, to organize our initial thoughts and experiences.

The SWOT matrix shown in Table 1 is designed to capture three stakeholders: Students, faculty, and institution. For the institution, the strengths are the internal attributes that enable us to attain our educational goals while weaknesses are the internal reasons that prevent us from accomplishing those goals. Opportunities exist in the external environment within which the institution operates. Opportunities are maximized when they are matched with an internal strength, a competitive advantage. Threats, also operating in the external environment, may jeopardize the institution's ability to meet its educational goals.

Discussion

The adoption of asynchronous online courses pose multiple institutional considerations as the new delivery method affects students, faculty and the institution. As first-time business faculty teaching online courses in the School of Business, we developed an experienced-based SWOT matrix (Table-1) that details internal strengths and weaknesses for students, faculty, and the institution, and identified current opportunities and threats occurring in the external environment in which students, faculty, and the institution operate. Our experience-based SWOT matrix is also supported by previous research that augments our conclusions. We will review the most salient aspects of the SWOT matrix by beginning with internal strengths and weaknesses and will follow with external opportunities and threats.

Table 1:
SWOT Matrix

STRENGTHS Internal factors that satisfy student, faculty and institution needs. What online teaching characteristics provide an advantage over face-to-face?	**WEAKNESSES** Internal factors that influence students', faculty's and institution's ability to satisfy educational goals. What online teaching characteristics are disadvantageous relative to face-to-face?
Students ☐ value flexibility; find time and place convenience results in increased efficiency; ☐ are motivated by convenience (Sanford et al., 2017); ☐ may like online courses (Blau & Drennan, 2017); ☐ are liberated from the constraint of place with asynchronous online learning (Sanford et al., 2017); ☐ can achieve a four-year graduation goal; ☐ may gain from the banded tuition policy by taking a full 18-hour load; ☐ may benefit if technology competent (Robinson, 2017); ☐ may gain self-directed learning skills and ☐ will experience improved student-professor interaction through faster information and direct feedback exchanges (Taylor, 2002). **Faculty** ☐ may believe their time may be structured more efficiently; ☐ can incorporate their distinct teaching styles and abilities to their sites (Taylor, 2002, 26.); ☐ may structure courses to accommodate different learning styles; ☐ may experience better and faster communication (Taylor, 2002) once the course is underway; ☐ can facilitate graduation completion rates by offering online courses; ☐ take advantage of internal and external technology training opportunities to improve skills; ☐ can seize a developing trend in online research for business education (Arbaugh et al., 2009) and ☐ are compensated for the initial development of an online course. **Institution** ☐ is the largest faith-based university in Texas and the fourth largest private university in the state (UIW, 2017); ☐ is ranked number one nationally for awarding the most degrees to Hispanic students among private, nonprofit universities (UIW, 2017); ☐ will strengthen its accreditation package with the addition of online offerings; ☐ can improve student retention and graduation rates while meeting state graduation mandates and ☐ will augments its revenues in view of increasing university costs and decreasing on- ground student enrollment (Clinefelter & Magda, 2016) and positions itself for subsequent introductions of new technology.	**Students** ☐ may vary in their readiness for the tasks ahead (Comer et al., 2015); ☐ may lack the discipline to succeed online (Clinefelter & Magda, 2016); ☐ may be unable to learn on their own due to isolation, weak technology skills, and lack of a work ethic; ☐ may be unable to shift from a face-to-face learning model to an online interface; ☐ may undergo face-to-face separation anxiety; ☐ may lack awareness of the time commitment and organizational skills required for course completion (Fetzner, 2013); ☐ may find it difficult to function in a low-context online learning environment, especially minority students (Yeboah & Smith, 2016) and ☐ may experience high drop-out rates (Lee & Choi, 2013). **Faculty** ☐ may invest a significant amount of time and effort in technology and pedagogical training, including personal sessions with instructional designers; ☐ may experience an intimidating and overwhelming teaching environment as compared to the traditional face-to-face class; ☐ merge discipline content, knowledge, and teaching strategies with technology which can be challenging and mentally taxing; ☐ may encounter steeper learning curves than experienced colleagues if relatively new to online technology (Taylor, 2002); ☐ lack a team of QM-certified peer reviewers and a peer course review process for online teaching at our institution; ☐ may receive better classroom evaluations in the face-to-face classroom than online (Mintu-Wimsatt et al., 2006); ☐ may find online courses erode face-to-face course enrollment resulting in cancellation of on-ground classes; ☐ find translating the University's identity as a mission driven institution difficult to implement online; ☐ may bear a greater teaching responsibility: o Their role as online instructor has great implications for student satisfaction (Ladyshewsky, 2013); o their selection of teaching strategies may heavily influence student achievement (Lightner, 2016) and ☐ may doubt the integrity of online testing and program credibility (Lederman & McKenzie, 2017). **Institution** ☐ may find its open enrollment criteria for online classes leads to high dropout rates; ☐ can discover that first time, full-time students are least likely to successfully complete online courses (Priluck, 2004); ☐ may find costs to be more expensive than initially thought (Smith & Mitry, 2008); ☐ may find its F2F and online business program enrollment cannibalized by internal competition from our on-campus evening and online degree offerings; and ☐ may have no core competency from a marketing perspective and will find it difficult to meet an external need without an internal strength.

OPPORTUNITIES External environment factors that students, faculty and institution can maximize. What favorable external conditions exist that the institution can exploit by matching it with a strength?	**THREATS** External conditions or barriers that prevent students, faculty and institution from reaching their objectives.
Students • can continue to enroll in online programs with most students taking at least one online course (Allen & Seaman, 2017) and • may value time and place flexibility. **Faculty** • may gain a competitive edge over traditional face-to-face colleagues; • may recognize this is what the market truly wants; • may replace peers with no technology training and • may offer departments scheduling flexibility when trained. **Institution (state and local)** • will gain from the 14% increased growth in public elementary and secondary school enrollment for Texas (U.S. Department of Education, 2017); • may capture part of the 41% growth in the 25- to 34- year-old Hispanic population projected to increase between 2015–2030 (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2015); • will gain from continuing positive elementary and secondary public-school enrollment trends and • may increase its market share by maximizing the potential gains of Texas' and San Antonio's increased population growth if online programs meet the needs of the local and regional community. **Institution (nationally)** • should capture a strong growing national trend in non-profit online student enrollment (Allen & Seaman, 2017); • may find that learning outcomes for online education are the same as or better than those in F2F courses (Allen & Seaman, 2017); • can target marketing campaigns to working-class students who value online technology more positively than middle-class students (Albert & Johnson, 2011); • should focus on course convenience and its association with student learning and satisfaction (Sanford et al., 2017); • should continue to focus on local and regional online enrollment; most students live within 50 miles of campus (Allen & Seaman, 2017) and • can optimize opportunities associated with late-mover advantage and minimize its possible weaknesses.	**Students** • may find online delivery is perceived as less credible by some employers and affect online enrollment decisions and • may discover parents are unwilling to pay for online courses when charged with expensive private university tuition rates. **Faculty** • can become class facilitators, no longer the primary source of knowledge in the classroom (Alavi & Gallupe, 2003) and • may doubt the integrity of online testing and programs (Lederman, & McKenzie, 2017). **Institution (state and local)** • faces increasing local competition for on-ground undergraduates affecting total and online enrollment; • is not competitive with state-funded public university tuition and • faces a weak pipeline from high school to college (Murphy & Daniel, 2017). **Institution (nationally):** • will experience stronger competition for a limited pool of national high school graduates (Clinefelter & Magda, 2016); • may face robust competition in online programs (Legon & Garrett, 2017); • may find itself in a market saturated with online programs (Legon & Garrett, 2017); and • can find that high costs and insufficient student demand (Albert & Johnson, 2011) may derail its online offerings.

Students: Strengths and Weaknesses

Asynchronous online courses free students from attendance constraints. They also meet the students' needs, a primary student strength and marketing objective. Online courses offer convenience as well as time and place flexibility; they help students secure a four-year graduation goal while using loan and scholarship funds efficiently. Online courses maximize students' banded tuition investment; consequently, they are more likely to enroll in 18 hours, rather than 12–15 F2F hours. Students also learn self-directed learning skills, valuable life lessons.

In support of our findings, Clinefelter and Magda (2016) find some students lack the discipline to succeed online. An observed weakness for our business students, relatively new to the asynchronous online experience, is an inability to function in isolation and reticence to acquire technology skills. In addition, Fetzner (2013) finds students who are weak managers of time also lack organizational skills which are prerequisite to successful course completion. At our institution, enrollment is comprised of 51% Hispanics. Yeboah & Smith (2016) reports that this cultural group may find it difficult to function in a low-context online learning environment. For these and other groups of students, classroom socialization is an essential part of decoding the course requirements. Verbal and visual contact with class friends and the professor facilitate successful course completion in F2F classes.

Faculty: Strengths and Weaknesses

The available research on faculty strengths is rather limited. Most of the research focus is on the learner, 'learning outcomes, learner characteristics, and learner attitudes' (Dillon & Walsh, 1992, 5). We surmised that faculty may believe their time may be structured more efficiently in an online course, thus opening more time for other academic pursuits. We also assume an advantage to online learning lies in faculty development. As life-long learners, faculty may take advantage of internal, external technology training opportunities to improve skills. By extension, the opportunity to transform these learning experiences into an emerging online research stream in business education has never been better (Arbaugh et al., 2009). Taylor (2002) found that faculty experience better and faster communication with students; the online environment helps faculty blend their unique teaching styles and abilities into their sites.

Nevertheless, faculty weaknesses outweigh strengths. The learning curve is steep (Taylor (2002); technology, pedagogy, and instructional design consume much time. Faculty new to the online environment find it intimidating and may be overwhelmed by the task of blending discipline content, knowledge, and teaching strategies with technology. Faculty may believe they save time by teaching online. This may be a myth. Faculty new to online teaching find that time efficiency occurs after mastering multiple technologies, continuously upgrading technology skills, understanding and applying Quality Matters (QM) standards, and refining course sites, such as adding sections for Frequently Asked Questions, aligning course goals with activities and measurements, and providing clear assignment instructions. Despite of all the preparatory online work, faculty who teach in F2F sections receive better student evaluations than online faculty (Mintu-Wimsatt et al., 2006). Faculty also shoulder greater teaching responsibility as studies find the selection of teaching strategies greatly influence student satisfaction and student achievement (Ladyshewsky, 2013; Lightner & Lighter-Laws, 2016).

At our institution, a commitment to social justice as expressed through various forms of community service is one of the tenets of University's Mission Statement. As faculty teaching online within a faith-based institution, it is a challenge to bring the University's mission-driven identity to life, an easily accomplished goal in F2F classes. A

weakness for faculty who teach in private institutions is that online sections can siphon enrollment from F2F classes, leaving smaller student sections, or no section at all. Additionally, QM is still in early development within the business school and we lack a team of QM-certified peer reviewers and a peer course review process for evaluating online teaching. In line with national studies, some of our business school colleagues doubt the integrity of online testing and class credibility (Lederman & McKenzie, 2017).

University: Strengths and Weaknesses

There are several strengths for the Institution and the School of Business. Student retention and graduation goals are improved (Clinefelter & Magda, 2016). Quality Matters strengthens our accreditation package and sets standards for quality online delivery. Online offerings allow the Institution to increase enrollment and revenues.

Unique to our campus, other on-campus evening and online degree offerings, known as the Extended Academic Programs, operating under separate academic leadership than the School of Business, cannibalize our F2F business students, diluting F2F and potential online enrollment, which is a strong weakness. The goal of improving the business school's retention and graduation rates may be affected by Priluck's (2014) findings that first time full-time students are least likely to complete online courses, also a potential weakness. Lastly, the School of Business may have no true core competency. To achieve a competitive advantage, business schools need competencies that are not easily copied by rivals; these competencies should meet external market needs. In this respect, it will be difficult to compete in Texas's highly competitive regional and local arena of higher education.

Students: Opportunities and Threats

Nationally, there are several external opportunities for students. For instance, Allen & Seaman (2017) report that undergraduates continue to enroll in online programs with most students taking at least one online course, which is a continuing trend. Understandably, students value time and place flexibility, which presents another opportunity that should be met. On the other hand, for students, there are external threats. Based at our own experience, students may find online courses to be less credible by some employers, a threat. In addition, it should be noted that some parents are unwilling to pay for online courses when faced with expensive private university tuition, another factor that can affect online enrollment.

Faculty: Opportunities and Threats

For faculty, those who are trained in online teaching gain a competitive edge over those who do not. Technology-trained faculty offer business schools scheduling flexibility. In addition, some faculty may want to be part of an educational trend that promises to move their career forward. For retired faculty who want to extend their career after retirement, online teaching offers an opportunity to stay academically engaged.

On the other hand, some faculty may perceive online teaching as a threat. No longer the key source of information, the faculty member is now a facilitator of knowledge, a cultural challenge for many peers steeped in F2F teaching techniques (Alavi & Gallupe, 2003). Nationally, faculty continue to doubt the integrity of online programs (Lederman & McKenzie, 2017), a continuing point of faculty resistance to online teaching.

University: Opportunities and Threats

The SWOT analysis uncovers regional and local opportunities for the University. The institution should capitalize on a strong, double-digit national trend for non-profit online student enrollment (Allen & Seaman, 2017) and combine it with the excellent opportunities that exist for F2F and online growth at both the state and local level. Unlike other parts of the country experiencing population declines, Texas' population continues to grow. State and local universities will continue to experience a steady pool of incoming students based on the projected 15% growth in public elementary and secondary school enrollment through 2027 (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). Texas is also entering a strong period of growth for the 25- to 34- year-old Hispanic population (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2015), presenting new opportunities for the School of Business to offer online degree or certification programs within the School of Business.

Locally, San Antonio has experienced a 27% increase in public school district enrollment (Texas Education Agency, 2017) from 2006 through 2017, an outcome of natural state population increases and inflows of people from other states (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017a). Increases in public elementary and secondary school enrollment, both at the state and city level, bode well for future increases in on-ground and online education.

Since most students live within 50 miles of campus (Allen & Seaman, 2017), our strategy should continue to emphasize local and regional enrollment. By designing marketing strategies to attract both the traditional and adult student, the institution can capture local and regional on-ground, and by extension, online enrollment.

Uncontrollable threats, operating in the institution's environment, affect the institution's competitive position and its ability to grow. While strong demographic growth offers much promise, universities should consider local and regional threats that can derail future enrollment opportunities. The first is Texas' weak high-school to college pipeline. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (2015) states only 20% of students graduate with a Texas certificate or bachelor's degree within six years of their high school graduation date, or one in five students. For economically disadvantaged students, that rate drops to one in eight (Texas Education Agency, 2017). A weak high-school to college pipeline and economic disadvantage affects both future on-ground and online enrollment. It becomes a threat to future online numbers, deflecting the promise of potentially college-bound students. The second threat is strong market share competition from two local branches of state flagship institutions. Within its geographic locale, we are the only Texas city to face competition from other major state universities. These institutions pose a clear threat to our on-ground and online enrollment. As such, private nonprofit institutions cannot compete with lower state tuition. The third risk is a potentially saturated national and regional market for online programs. To succeed, the institution must work to divert these threats or transform them into future opportunities.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research paper is to discuss the implementation of asynchronous online programs at a non-profit private four-year Hispanic Serving university in South Texas. We, as first-time online business professors, initiated the idea of creating a SWOT matrix for online vs F2F teaching out of our own academic curiosity. As such, the process was organic, emerging from our experiences, rather than planned as academic research. For us, the strengths of the SWOT analysis are ease of use, interpretation, and application. It also encourages reflection and aids in organization of ideas. We hope that this paper will initiate further discussion followed by a comprehensive strategic direction.

The SWOT matrix presented in this research paper is highly situational, driven by geographic context. The following recommendations flow from the findings of our paper:

Firstly, the institution can use to its advantage local and regional demographic growth trends and the subsequent increase in higher education enrollment to plan for additional online offerings. As the external environmental does change, it should guide our strategic direction. Secondly, as reported in the body of our paper, the population trends in South Texas indicate a potential market for online courses and programs among 25- to 34- year old Hispanic population. As a matter of course, we recommend further research be conducted to determine their educational and technology needs thereby creating online courses and programs that respond to market demands. And, thirdly, it has been shown that students prefer online classes over F2F business courses and they are motivated to complete their degree within a four-year time period. Hence, we suggest the School of Business respond to market needs and offer more online courses and programs.

To be successful in higher education, institutions seek a competitive advantage. In his seminal work, Porter (1991) states that a competitive advantage can be found within, as a strength matched to meeting an external need, or it can be found in the external environment. At any point in time these external factors, political, economic, sociocultural, technological, competitive and legal considerations, uniquely shape institutional decisions and outcomes. Institutions should not only be aware of national directions but also focus on local and regional trends. This elevates the value of local research. As Porter states, 'the true origin of competitive advantage may be the proximate or local environment in which a firm is based' (110).

The literature recognizes that the SWOT has its shortcomings. Nonetheless, if a tool moves analysis past a conversation on the advantages and disadvantages of online teaching, toward a conclusive and consequential strategic discussion, then it can be said that SWOT advances a process. If so, it is a good tool.

Acknowledgments

The authors are grateful for the contributions and guidance of Ms. Ana Gonzalez, UIW School of Osteopathic Medicine's Director of Academic Technology Support for the Health Services. In her previous main campus position as Director of Instructional Technology, Ms. Gonzalez piloted and implemented Quality Matters and together with her team, developed the supporting Blackboard template and UIW training programs that facilitate the QM Higher Education Rubric.

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