

## **Session 1873NR Using the ARCS-V Model to Reframe Success in Online Courses**

**March 25, 2015, SoTL Commons Conference, Savannah, Georgia**

*Ludwika Goodson (Indiana University – Purdue): goodsonl@ipfw.edu*

This session addressed one major question for online course design and a related question about factors of student retention: (1) Should the Attention, Relevance, Confidence, Satisfaction, and Volition (ARCS-V) motivation model by John Keller (Zammit, Martindale, Meiners-Lovell, & Irwin, 2013) reframe the design and teaching of online courses? (2) Do factors of student retention in higher education (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011; Jenson, 2011) continue to make sense in the growing context of online education?

Answers evolved from discussing the following findings:

- a. Different variables affect dropout rates in on-campus v. online courses.
- b. Student effort overcomes other variables.
- c. Predictors of success (retention) include organizational support, online resources, relevance, confidence (including Internet self-efficacy), and satisfaction.
- d. Student-student interactions can increase withdrawals, but some interactions improve retention.

Participants discussed whether elements of the ARCS-V motivation model should be included in a model of college retention and what factors of persistence in online courses might also be addressed, given that some different variables affect dropout rates in on-campus v. online courses, particularly the type of organizational support, online resources, relevance, confidence (including Internet self-efficacy), and the importance of satisfaction for online learners.

To have a common framework for discussion, I prepared a PowerPoint with the concept of models of retention and highlights from some recent research. After the brief PPT presentation, I provided the same basic handout from our workshop to describe the ARCS model, and added a brief note on Volition, and a copy of the Quality Matters™ rubric, and invited the whole group to compare the elements of the ARCS-V model to the QM™ checklist of standards. I alerted participants in this session that I was not “picking on” QM™ having chosen this checklist in anticipation that many would already have familiarity with it, which was in fact the case in this session.

Participants came to the conclusion that motivational elements were not explicitly represented in the checklist. One person expressed a thought that the item on “Learner Interaction and Engagement” could be expanded in a way that might address motivation elements. Although our IPFW Online Course Design Review Team has members who have gone through the QM™ training program, we have our own checklist that we work on reviewing and improving each year. One big difference with the QM™ approach is that we have a “Met” and “Not Yet Met” column and an “Action Plan” for improvements instead of point scoring; we also have fewer discrete elements within a standard category, providing peer review members with a more manageable number of elements in our set of standards at just half as many as QM™.

In this session, four groups further examined research findings, each group focusing on one of the four issues listed in the abstract above. The purpose of this research reflection was to provide a springboard for talking further about whether there was a logical reason to incorporate elements from ARCS-V into the standards for an online course. Each group was provided with a handout having the same cover page, but excerpts of research citations on the group’s handout related only to the one issue the group was addressing. Each group gave its own report for the answer to the question assigned to the group (Group A—variables differ for online; Group B—student effort overcomes other factors; Group C—predictors of online success; Group D—impact of different types of student-to-student interactions).

I followed the group reports using questions as a wrap-up to the session: If some online course factors of success are different from the traditional college retention factors, does it make sense to stay with the traditional factors? If effort is a powerful variable in student persistence online and if, besides organizational support and resources, the factors of relevance, confidence, and satisfaction are big drivers, then would it make sense to make elements related to these factors explicit in the standards for online course design? With the rise in online courses, would it make sense to update the college retention models? (Regarding the fourth issue about student-student interactions, the emphasis was on how arbitrary artificial interactions reduce retention, but meaningful constructive relevant interactions can support retention.)

**Materials used in this workshop:**

PowerPoint presentation (provided in PDF format).

ARCS-V Handout

QM™ Checklist (this checklist is viewable online at several sites and not provided here in this repository)

Group A Handout

Group B Handout

Group C Handout

Group D Handout