



9-17-2015

Determining the Fates of WMU's Programs in Educational Technology and Organization Learning and Performance

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WMU ScholarWorks Citation

Horvitz, Brian, "Determining the Fates of WMU's Programs in Educational Technology and Organization Learning and Performance" (2015). *Academic Leadership Academy*. Paper 54.

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Determining the Fates of WMU's Programs in Educational Technology and Organization Learning and Performance

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Introduction

In 2011, a decision was made by the WMU College of Education and Human Development to move the Human Resource Development (HRD) program out of the Counselor Education and Counseling Psychology (CECP) department and into the Educational Leadership, Research, & Technology (ELRT) department. Upon migrating into ELRT, HRD was renamed Organizational Learning and Performance (OLP). The OLP program prepares students to transform their workplace through the use of innovative learning technologies.

The ELRT department is also home to the Educational Technology (EDT) unit. This program prepares learning professionals with specialized knowledge and competencies required to train and coach others in the instructional use and management of technology in a variety of settings.

This poster describes a recent initiative to identify opportunities for cooperation between the OLP and EDT programs with the possibility of merging the two into a new, larger program.

Challenge: Merge OLP & EDT?

In 2014, the Chair of ELRT asked the faculty in both the OLP and EDT units to begin looking at the possibility of merging the two into one larger unit. As a group during the 2014-15 academic year, we met approximately eight times and communicated frequently through email. We brainstormed ideas, devised drafts of plans, met to discuss and critique each other's plans and ultimately try to reach consensus. We did not reach consensus and a final decision has not been made.

This coming academic year, we have the same charge from our department chair. The following summarizes my perspectives on the key issues we need to consider moving forward as we continue to work on this initiative

SWOT Analysis

SWOT Analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) is structured planning method used to evaluate projects or ventures. Strengths and weaknesses are factors internal to the organization; opportunities and threats are factors external to the organization. Following is a summary of my analysis of this initiative.

Strengths

- Positive reputations of both OLP and EDT programs
- Breadth and variety of courses currently available
- Crossover appeal of courses in each program to students in the other program
- Would create more flexibility for students to customize their program to meet their unique needs
- May help justify the creation of new faculty lines

Weaknesses

- Current staffing issues: between the two programs, only one full-time faculty line and one full-time faculty specialist line
- Inertia – perception that programs are not broken so they do not need fixing
- EDT offers a majority online courses and OLP offers mostly hybrid courses. Need to determine delivery mode(s) that meet all students' needs

Opportunities

- Presence of successful graduate-level programs at other high profile institutions with a similar mix of offerings

- Largely untapped areas in the state of Michigan that can be marketed too (especially if we offer more online courses or develop programs in EUP regional sites)

Threats

- A name change could alienate people currently considered key to market for either program. A program without the word "organization" or "education"

Moving Forward

As we continue to work on this initiative and get closer to making a decision regarding the fate of the OLP and EDT programs, we will have multiple options from which to choose:

- Do nothing and leave these programs as they are
- Create a new program that contains multiple program tracks: one that is similar to the current OLP degree program, one that is similar to the current EDT degree program, and one or more new ones that draw from both to create hybrid programs
- Create a new program that essentially "blows up" what currently exists in the OLP and EDT programs and design a new program from scratch.

Stay tuned.

Contributors

Created by Dr. Brian Horvitz, associate professor of Educational Technology. Others who have contributed to the work described in this poster are Dr. Daniel Gaymer, OLP; Dr. Larry Buzas, formerly of OLP; Sharon Peterson, EDT; Dr. Robert Leneway, EDT; and Dr. Donna Talbot, Chair of ELRT.