

BEGIN WITH THE END IN MIND

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## INTRODUCTION

I have decided to make the theme of my doctoral portfolio “Begin with the End in Mind.” This is an important concept. This motto has helped me power through life’s toughest encounters, including my doctoral journey. I started the journey in the summer of 2007 when I enrolled in CI 702 with Dr. Calvin Meyers. I never thought I would make it through that class. The coursework was like a foreign language. I am a clinician trained in nutrition and dietetics, and I was enrolled in a doctoral course about curriculum theory with a room full of teachers. I wondered all summer what in the world I had gotten myself into. However, earning a doctorate degree had always been my ultimate professional goal. So, again I went back to my motto “begin with the end in mind” and kept going. I made it through that class and ultimately, many more. This [portfolio](#) will be a reflection of that journey. And what a journey it has been.

I was enrolled part-time in the Curriculum and Instruction program from summer 2007 through summer 2009, with all intentions of finishing the program in a timely manner. At the time, I was teaching full time for the Department of Dietetics at Marshall (my first go round in this position). I had been struggling with infertility for several years and after finally getting pregnant and delivering a healthy baby in May 2009, I decided that I couldn’t juggle being a doctoral student, tenure-track faculty member, full-time mom, and commute an hour each way to the Huntington campus. In August 2009, I changed positions and went to work as a youth specialist for WVU Extension Service where I managed a nutrition education program for low income children across West Virginia. I decided to take a little time off from classes to focus on the baby and my new job. I had intentions of returning to the program in summer 2010. However, the universe had different plans. Unfortunately, I was diagnosed with breast cancer in April 2010. Suddenly, I found myself facing life or death decisions of surgery, chemotherapy,

and radiation. This diagnosis was completely unexpected and totally derailed my plans to continue with the doctoral program. I had no choice but to put the program on hold.

The cancer treatment and reconstructive surgery took approximately three years. A year later, I unexpectedly found out I was pregnant again with my second child. I was still working at WVU Extension Service, but by this point I was the state director for the entire nutrition education program - the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Education, or SNAP-Ed. I was managing a \$3.3 million grant and had over 50 people and three subcontracting agencies who worked under my direction. Once again, I found myself in a position where I didn't want to juggle this amount of professional responsibility and motherhood. I was very fortunate that shortly after my second child arrived, another position came open in the Department of Dietetics at Marshall. I jumped at the opportunity. Luckily, I was able to return to Marshall, this time in the role of Assistant Professor and Director of the Didactic Program in Dietetics (DPD).

Even before getting pregnant with my second child I had been considering returning to the EdD program to finish the doctorate. I was almost half-way finished with classes and it was the right thing to do. My motto was "begin with the end in mind" and I knew I wanted to eventually reach the end. When I was rehired into the Department of Dietetics I was once again in a tenure-track position and the timing was right to finish the doctoral degree. Finally, the stars were aligned, and by August 2015 I was enrolled in classes again.

### **ACADEMIC BACKGROUND & GOALS**

I have a Bachelor of Science in Family and Consumer Science, Human Nutrition and Foods from West Virginia University. I completed my undergraduate degree in May 1999. My career goal was to become a registered dietitian. In order to sit for the registered dietitian board exam, graduates are required to complete 1,200 clock hours of supervised practice in a dietetic

internship, which is very competitive. Nationwide, almost half of the applicants are not accepted during the first round match. I was fortunate to become accepted at Marshall University. I completed the internship from August 1999-July 2000. Afterward, I worked in numerous positions, including as a clinical dietitian and a consultant dietitian with long-term care facilities, with special needs adults and children, in wellness and as an outpatient dietitian, in pharmaceutical sales, as a pediatric weight management specialist, and in higher education at both WVU Extension Service and in the Department of Dietetics at Marshall University.

I have held numerous consulting positions (these were mostly clinical in nature) and have rarely ever been employed in just one position at a time. But, since 2004, my “day job” has always been in higher education. This remains my career goal. I have many years of experience teaching undergraduate classes, as well as non-credit courses for the adult learner. I’ve also taught hundreds of hours of nutrition classes to the lay public on topics such as diabetes management and nutrition in early childhood education. I also have several years of administrative experience in education, at both WVU and Marshall. As I previously mentioned, I was the WV state-wide SNAP-Ed director from 2012-2015, where I managed a very large USDA nutrition education grant for over 50 employees and three subcontracting agencies. Currently, I am serving as the DPD Director at Marshall. I enjoy many aspects of higher education administration, but my heart is in the classroom.

My future goals include to continue teaching at Marshall and working in my current position as DPD Director too. This provides just enough administrative duties to keep me up-to-date with current accreditation regulations, but does not constitute a burdensome load with the burnout feeling I often experienced when I worked full-time in grant administration. My department at Marshall has a subcontract with WVU to administer the SNAP-Ed program in a

six-county radius, central to Marshall's main campus. Once my doctorate is finished, I would consider becoming the grant's primary investigator for Marshall. I would also like to work as a consultant in nutrition education curriculum development in either the private or public sector. But, what I want to do more than anything else is to remain in my current position, providing teaching, research, service, and administration to the Department of Dietetics, both growing and improving the program year-by-year.

### **COLLABORATION**

I feel that I have excelled at collaboration, with both faculty and peers during my time in the doctoral program. There have been opportunities for collaboration in almost every class I've taken. I've chosen to expand on a few opportunities below. Several occasions, such as the 2016-2017 DPD accreditation self-study and site visit, as well as several research posters and proposals were among my most valued experiences. While these certainly fit in this section, I think they are better explained in other sections of this paper.

One of my most meaningful collaborative experiences came when I was first enrolled in the program. In spring 2008, I took CI 703, Learning Theories with Dr. Calvin Meyers. One project was to choose a specific learning theory and collaborate with other students to design an experiential delivery method while encompassing the theory. I worked with Ashley Stephens and Stacey Murrell to present humanism based on concepts demonstrated by the television show, *Mr. Roger's Neighborhood*.

Humanism resonated with me because one of the main theorists is Abraham Maslow, who is also a major figure in human and child development. Maslow pioneered Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which I refer to when teaching concepts such as self-actualization and determination, and helping students to understand how basic needs must be met before people

can consider making behavioral changes related to food and beverages. Humanism is a paradigm that emerged in the 1960s and focused on human freedom, dignity, and potential. A central assumption of humanism is that people act with intentionality and values. Humanists also believe that it is necessary to study the person as a whole, especially as an individual grows and develops over the lifespan (learning-theories.com, 2017; McNeil, 2009).

Carl Rogers, another humanist, developed the theory of facilitative learning, the basic premise of which dictates that learning will occur by the educator acting as a facilitator (McNeil, 2009). This is a concept that I used in most of my adult learning courses when I taught lay members of the community. This project was important to me because it was the first major collaborative project where I worked together with other students to teach a concept through modeling. I learned a lot during the process, not just about the subject matter, but about teaching itself. My partners were teachers by trade and both were very creative. Using the Mr. Rogers theme as a backdrop of the presentation provided an excellent opportunity to embrace humanism. I have included the [lesson plan](#) from this presentation on my online portfolio.

In the summer of 2008 I completed an independent study (DTS 585) and collaborated with Dr. Mary Kathryn Gould and Dr. Kelli Williams in the Department of Dietetics, and (former) Dean Shortie McKinney in the College of Health Professions to develop a nutrition curriculum for the Marshall University School of Medicine. This curriculum included learning objectives, six nutrition presentations (nutrition overview, obesity, cardiovascular disease, gastrointestinal disease, breastfeeding, and diabetes), out-of-class assignments, and hands-on activities for each presentation. These were presented to first and second-year medical students by Dietetics faculty members for several years. Although the School of Medicine changed their curriculum in 2010 and now only offers one nutrition lecture per year, the curriculum we

developed was used for several years in a row. This was a good experience for me because it provided the opportunity to work across disciplines and interact with medical students, who are notorious for having very little knowledge about nutrition. At the time I was also providing consultative clinical services to HealthyKids, a childhood obesity treatment program, where I worked for over a decade. It was not uncommon to have medical residents rotate in my clinic who had attended one of the nutrition lectures while in medical school at the Marshall Joan C. Edward's School of Medicine. I have included a link to two PowerPoint presentations for [cardiovascular disease](#) and [diabetes nutrition](#), as well as a [syllabus](#) for the course on the online portfolio.

In summer 2009, I completed an independent study (DTS 586) with Dr. Mary Kathryn Gould in the Department of Dietetics where I developed rubrics for the assessment of DPD Learning Outcomes. These rubrics were essential to the success of the DPD because they provided the foundation for accreditation assessment. This was the first time the department had developed such extensive rubrics for accreditation. When I returned to Marshall the second time, the rubrics were still in use and were included as part of the self-study for the accreditation site visit in February 2017. The collaborative experience with Dr. Gould and Dr. Williams in creating the rubrics was beneficial because I had very little knowledge in this area. The knowledge I gained from this experience has been applied to each of my classes, as I've created rubrics for all of my assignments, as well as to the 2017 accreditation self-study that I wrote. I have included a copy of the [rubrics](#) I developed on the online portfolio.

As previously mentioned, when I returned to Marshall as a faculty member for the second time, I was also hired into the role of DPD Director. During my first semester back, my department chair, Dr. Kelli Williams, informed me that we were in the process of finding a space



to build a new foods laboratory on campus so we could meet the standards for the upcoming accreditation review and site visit. One thing lead to another and a decision was made to renovate Huntington's Kitchen, a community outreach and teaching facility located in Pullman Plaza in downtown Huntington, to become our new foods laboratory. Shortly thereafter, a decision was made to move our entire program, including our SNAP-Ed Nutrition Education Program (NEP), off campus to Huntington's Kitchen so we could become more involved with community outreach and student engagement. There was however, one caveat. The department had to agree to pay for our own space within five years. This was going to be a challenge. The rent for the whole space was estimated to be several hundred thousand dollars per year. The NEP grant would pay for part of the rent, but we still needed to come up with the rest of the money. I proposed that we started a new distance learning program and dietetic internship. Within weeks my department chair - Kelli Williams, the Dean of the College of Health Professions - Dr. Mike Prewitt, the interim president of Marshall - Gary White, and the CEO of Cabell Huntington Hospital - Kevin Fowler, worked out the details. During finals week in December of 2015 we moved to our new location in Pullman Plaza.

Since it was my suggestion to start the new distance internship program, I volunteered to write the new program accreditation program proposal. Although I collaborated with Dr. Mary Kathryn Gould, Dr. Kelli Williams, and Professor Mallory Mount, another faculty member in the Dietetics department, to write and develop the proposal and handbook, much of this endeavor was a "learn as you go" type of project. This was by far the largest and most complex document I'd ever written. In total, including appendices, it was 84 pages long and encompassed the current accreditation standards. Beyond just the size and scope of the project, this was very significant for me because I had no experience with accreditation standards. I was basically

working from scratch and only had the information and wisdom that my colleagues shared with me to write the prospectus.

My colleagues and I met several times along the way to work on details such as program goals and objectives and to develop important details such as clinical site rotations. There were times when I felt overwhelmed with this process. However, looking back I can see that while Dr. Williams and Dr. Gould provided me with the feedback I needed, they also gave me the freedom and flexibility to work independently, which helped strengthen my confidence and helped create the expertise I needed to write the DPD self-study. The new distance internship program was approved in summer 2016. The program proposal was also used for the distance internship's February 2017 accreditation site visit.

As mentioned above, I also used the knowledge I gained from writing the distance internship program proposal to complete a self-study for the Didactic Program in Dietetics (DPD), which I began writing in June 2016. Dr. Williams and Dr. Gould had been through several site visits and had both written self-studies in the past. Without their collaboration, I would not have been able to write the distance internship program proposal, the DPD self-study, or get through the accreditation site visit. I am very thankful for their generous time and input during this very arduous process. I have explained more about my experience with the DPD's accreditation (which was also very collaborative) in the curriculum and instruction section of this paper.

I have served as the Media Relations Chair for the WV Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (WVAND) for many years. As part of my duties in this role, I write press releases for all major WVAND events, such as EatRight Day at the WV Legislature, and for our annual continuing education conference. I also provide local media interviews for the Department of

Dietetics and on behalf of WVAND on various nutrition topics as needed. In spring 2017, I was invited to present as part of an expert panel at the annual conference. My topic was media readiness. This was an interesting topic because I was able to garner feedback from colleagues with whom I had worked on several large media projects to use during my presentation. I also collaborated with several graduate students in our department to enhance my presentation with multi-media videos and interview clips. I have included a copy of the [presentation](#) on the online portfolio.

### **SCHOLARSHIP**

As a faculty member in the Department of Dietetics, my faculty responsibilities include teaching, research, and service. I am also responsible for providing ten percent of my time to the SNAP-Ed grant. I find value in having each of these duties support the others when possible. For example, much of the research completed in my department is programmatic evaluation to support the grant. Much of my service work is dedicated to supporting the administrative needs of the DPD.

I took Dr. Heaton's Technology and Curriculum, CIEC 700, course in fall 2015. The final project of the class was to write a paper on the use of technology in curriculum and to include an action research piece in the paper. This provided an excellent opportunity to explore the use of iPads to collect pre-/post- data for the NEP. To write the paper, I completed an in-depth literature review and also reviewed quantitative data that had been collected over the past fiscal year. Using the iPads for data collection was a novel technique that had only been in use for a little over a year. To get a better feel for the project, I also interviewed several of our graduate students and professional educators to discuss their perception of this technology. What resulted was not only a very thorough paper for Dr. Heaton's class, but also a collaborative research

project which Dr. Mary Kathryn Gould, Mallory Mount, and I presented as a poster at a national conference. I have included a copy of my [final technology paper](#) for Dr. Heaton's class on my online portfolio.

After I submitted my final paper to Dr. Heaton, I realized that we needed to have more feedback about the graduate students and professional educators' perception of iPad use. The literature review I completed for Dr. Heaton revealed a gap in the literature about use of iPads for data collection in SNAP-Ed programs. We recognized this as a unique opportunity to research and publish something on this topic. Mallory Mount and I worked with Dr. Gould to develop a process evaluation survey. The survey was deployed from May to June 2016. We had an excellent response rate and decided to apply for a short-oral and poster-presentation at a national conference, The Food and Nutrition Conference and Expo (FNCE) in Boston, MA in October 2016. The poster presentation was accepted and Mallory and I presented it. We also presented the same poster at the annual WVAND spring conference in May 2017 in Huntington. I have included a copy of the [poster](#) and [pictures of the poster presentation](#) on the portfolio website.

I took Dr. Campbell's Writing for Publication course, CI 677, in spring 2016, shortly after my department moved off campus to our new downtown location in Pullman Plaza. At this point in my career, the only real writing experience I had was as a blogger. After my breast cancer treatment, I started contributing to a mommyhood blog at the *Charleston Daily Mail*. Through the initial literacy autobiography that Dr. Campbell assigned in the beginning of the semester, I realized that the blog and other writing to which I contributed after the cancer treatment was cathartic. The blog provided a platform for me to tell my story. My cancer experience left me physically and emotionally raw. I needed a way to express my feelings.

When our department moved off campus in fall 2015, I found myself once again feeling a sense of trepidation. As a department, we had a lot riding on the success of our new venture - the new distance internship program proposal I planned to write and the upcoming DPD self-study and site visit. This was a lot of change for someone who had been in a new position for less than six months. I knew my colleagues and I were in this together, but I was still insecure. Dr. Campbell and I had discussed the move and my department's looming accreditation in great length. She suggested that I make notes about the process and reflect on the experience. The Writing for Publication course not only provided a great opportunity to attempt my first publication, but it also provided a wonderful chance to contemplate my previous work as a writer and reflect on my experience of moving off campus.

Writing is an important part of scholarship, allowing faculty to contribute to the greater body of work in the field. Writing and scholarship should not detract from teaching, and when properly done, they should fully support each other. The major assignment in this course was to develop a book review or other article to be submitted for publication. With the assistance of Dr. Campbell and Dr. Mary Kathryn Gould, I wrote an article about the department's move to Pullman Plaza and the unique opportunities that working in a community outreach kitchen provided. I submitted this for publication in the Nutrition and Dietetic Educators and Preceptors (NDEP) summer newsletter. NDEP is a practice group of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics for dietitians working in higher education. Although this was a newsletter, it was also a peer-reviewed publication and was published nationwide to all members of the practice group. I was surprised that I was able to get something published on my first real attempt and I feel confident that I wouldn't have been able to do so without the help of Dr. Campbell and Dr. Gould.

My final essay for CI 677 was a reflection essay, which was an overview of my thoughts about the work I'd completed that semester. One quote from the essay summarizes my feelings on the issue of writing, "although I didn't enjoy all of my past writing experiences, they each played an important role in shaping the writer I am today. My writing skills are a work in progress and I hope they will continue to improve for many years to come." I have included the [literacy autobiography](#), the [reflection essay](#), and the peer reviewed [Huntington's Kitchen article](#), which was published in the NDEP newsletter, on my online portfolio.

While less significant, I feel that I have contributed to scholarship through other, smaller projects too. In Dr. Childress' Program Planning and Evaluation course, CI 627, and in Dr. Campbell's Higher Education and Curriculum course, CI 705, I developed logic models to evaluate the DPD program and the DPD accreditation process. Although I understand the importance and utility of logic models, I have often found them to be quite difficult to create. The process of writing these for both courses was helpful because it allowed me to work through the process of using the models as a programmatic benchmark to facilitate planning, evaluation, communication, and decision making. Since I serve as the DPD director and wrote the accreditation self-study, the logic models I created helped me see the big picture of both processes. I will continue to use these in the future. Also, in Dr. Campbell's CI 705 class, I developed a process review poster presentation of the DPD self-study and accreditation. Developing this poster was beneficial because it was the only time during the entire accreditation process that I reflected on the full journey and not just each step along the way. I presented the poster at the annual spring 2017 WVAND meeting in Huntington. During the poster presentation, I was able to talk to students and colleagues from all over the state about Marshall's

DPD accreditation and site visit process. I have included copies of the [accreditation logic model](#) and the [accreditation poster](#) on the online portfolio.

Finally, in fall 2017, my colleague Mallory Mount and I worked on several projects together. We co-presented at the annual fall doctoral seminar where we provided information on presenting poster sessions at conferences to our fellow students. We also submitted a conference proposal, *Downtown Meets Dietetics; Integrating Dietetics Education into the Community*, to the Appalachian Studies conference, which will be held in Cincinnati, Ohio in April 2018. The proposal was submitted in collaboration with Dr. Campbell, and three other doctoral students- Kim White, Amy Saunders, and Ann Hutchison. It will be part of a panel discussion focused on meaningful university outreach and collaborative engagement with the community. Mallory and I have been writing a case study about our department's move to Huntington's Kitchen. As we have reflected on the move and effect of greater community outreach and student engagement, we have been amazed at the unexpected benefits that have resulted for our department, students, and the community. The proposal was accepted, and I am greatly looking forward to the opportunity to present this information at the conference.

## **RESEARCH**

In addition to developing a process analysis for the use of iPad evaluations, I have also been involved with research for the SNAP-Ed grant evaluation in several other ways. I have worked as part of the research team to evaluate our intervention through the use of pre-/post-tests. I have also conducted teacher focus groups and will provide statistical analysis of the parent survey data once this is completed.

One of my main goals in the doctoral program was to learn as much about research as possible, therefore I took as many research courses as my schedule allowed. In summer 2016, I

took EDF 625, Qualitative Research in Education with Dr. Lassiter. In spring 2017, I took LS 776, Computer Data Analysis in C&I and Educational Leadership Studies with Dr. Seccuro. In summer 2017, I took two courses with Dr. Childress, CI 627, Program Planning and Evaluation and EDF 711, Survey Research in Education. In fall 2017, I took EDF 627, Mixed Methods Research with Dr. Lassiter. Through these courses, I've had good and bad experiences. I've learned what kind of research I most enjoy and what I like the least. I have used the information I learned through my research courses to not only enhance my own personal research skills, but to also improve my courses and my research agenda as a faculty member.

When I returned to Marshall as a faculty member in fall 2015, I was assigned to teach DTS 460, Research in Dietetics, to undergraduate students. I attended a workshop on incorporating research into undergraduate courses as part of faculty orientation in fall 2015. I wanted to provide a hands-on project in this course. I firmly believe that research can best be learned by constructivist projects, through example and coaching. Through this process, the faculty student relationship is transformed to more of a mentor-mentee relationship (Hesse & Schubert, 2017). I developed the idea to have students in my course conduct focus groups as part of the existing NEP evaluation. That semester, I had two groups of students work with teachers in two schools in Cabell County to conduct the focus groups and transcribe the interviews. I worked with the students to develop themes from the data. Students then wrote a literature review on the use of focus groups in SNAP-Education and nutrition education and wrote a paper about the focus group methods and results. Students presented their findings to the class at the end of the semester. I've continued this same project for three semesters now, slightly tweaking the parameters each semester, based on the students' feedback.



The value of undergraduate research is powerful. It allows for greater student engagement, the development of critical thinking skills, and career development. Publications and presentations at the undergraduate level are also important as this allows for a more constructive mentor-mentee relationship. Using the skills I learned in EDF 625, I worked with two undergraduate students and Dr. Mary Kathryn Gould to complete a retrospective review of student's feedback about their experiences with this project. We pulled themes out of the feedback to determine the students' perceived value. We developed an abstract proposal, which I submitted to FNCE for a poster presentation. Unfortunately, the poster was not accepted, based on the limited data available. The reviewers encouraged us to continue collecting data to enhance the strength of the project.

The following semester (spring 2017), I worked with two more undergraduate students, Jessica Walden and Lauren Wilson, to submit an abstract to the College of Health Professions Undergraduate Research Day, based on the results of the teacher focus groups conducted the previous fall. The abstract was accepted and I mentored the students as they developed the poster. The poster was presented in April 2017 at the COHP Research Day and in May 2017 at the WVAND annual meeting. This was a valuable experience, which provided me with the opportunity to use the knowledge and skills acquired through my doctoral courses and to convey the value of research and evidence-based practice to students through the lessons of interpreting research and translating results into practice (Hesse & Schubert, 2017).

One of my favorite projects in the doctoral program was the personal interview assignment in EDF 625. I interviewed my priest, Father John Finnell, about his views on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ) issues. Although this topic had nothing to do with my background in dietetics, the assignment was extremely interesting because it allowed me to

delve into a topic of interest and to get to know my priest on a more personal level. It also allowed me to develop more experience with transcribing data. This is a skillset that I've incorporated into DTS 460. I used the information from the interview with my priest to develop a final paper where I pulled out themes from the interview and compared these to epistemological approaches in research, such as social deconstructivism and the paradigm of constructivism in relation to ethics and participant-generated meaning and value (Lincoln & Guba, 2005). At the time, this was the most difficult paper I'd ever written. I relied on readings and work by Lincoln and Guba (2005) to help develop the content of the paper, as well as to set the stage for what I wanted to do for my doctoral dissertation. In this section of the paper, I explained that I wanted to incorporate focus groups into my dissertation. This continues to remain part of my research plan. I have included a copy of the [final paper](#) from this course on the online portfolio.

I've learned that I enjoy qualitative research the most, but I see a huge benefits of mixed methods research, and specifically removing the boundaries of qualitative vs. quantitative terms to use the methods that are most appropriate for the goal of the project. The final research course I took in fall 2017, EDF 627, Mixed Methods Research was a transformative experience in how I view research methodology. We used three books in the course to learn and define epistemological and ontological approaches to mixed methodology and develop our own research paradigm. I based my research paradigm on pragmatism, constructivism, positivism, phenomenology, and interpretivism.

As I read various texts throughout that semester, I developed a thorough understanding of the theoretical assumptions often overlooked in my field. This understanding has formed my personal mixed-methods framework. I believe that mixed methods research includes the collection and analysis of data using methods typically labeled as quantitative (such as pre-/post-

tests, anthropometric data, laboratory values) and methods typically labeled as qualitative (focus groups, client interviews, case studies), collected concurrently and given equal importance in the final research findings. These methods should be used equally and in a parallel manner and for the purpose of expansion to increase the scope of inquiry, as well as for complementary purposes to increase rationales such as interpretability, meaningfulness, and inquiry. In this way, the selected methods should be chosen based on the inquiry and will capitalize on strengths and counteract biases in methods (Clark & Creswell, 2008; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006).

The pragmatic approach, which assigns equal attention to the connection between methodology and epistemology and methodology and methods, is the cornerstone of my personal framework. The pragmatic approach also highlights intersubjectivity, emphasizing the process of communication and shared meaning (Edirisingha, 2014). Pragmatists believe the goal of research is to utilize the strengths of two or more approaches by combining them into one study - by maximizing the strength of each and minimizing their weaknesses. Other elements that are important to my mixed method paradigm include the tenants of phenomenology, mixed-methods interpretivism, constructivism, and positivism. Based on phenomenological assumptions, qualitative and quantitative research focus on different perspectives and different phenomena.

Clark and Creswell (2008) explained this from a medical point-of-view, which resonated with me. Drawing from a clinician's standpoint, I believe that quantitative research cannot explain the lived experience of patients, including patient-practitioner interactions, as well as patients' thoughts, feelings, and perspectives. Conversely, qualitative research cannot explain various medical phenomenon such as laboratory values, medicine response rates, or changes in anthropometric data. Quantitative research has a positivist orientation, based on empirical data that exists independently of human perception. Qualitative research has an interpretivist

orientation, based on one's lived experiences, with multiple truths and realities which are socially constructed (Clark and Creswell, 2008). Mixed methods research is not intuitively linked to a particular philosophy. However, by combining methods, the strengths are maximized and weaknesses minimized, allowing the researcher to look at multiple phenomenon, enhancing and improving data from multiple perspectives. I've included a copy of [Assignment 2- My Mixed Methodology paper](#) on the online portfolio.

These research courses and experiences have all been very helpful to me. I also found value in the other research courses I took too. I found LS 776 with Dr. Securro to be very challenging and even difficult at times. During this course I realized that my statistical knowledge is not as strong as it should be. Therefore, I purchased the book that my colleague Mallory Mount used in her doctoral statistics class with Dr. Meisel to use as a reference. I used the information I learned from Dr. Securro's course to improve my lectures in DTS 460 on quantitative research and descriptive and inferential statistics. I also used the information I learned in this course to better evaluate research articles in Dr. Childress' course EDF 711, Survey Research in Education. I have included a [sampling survey analysis](#) I completed for three articles in this course on my online portfolio. I will also use the information I learned in LS 776 to complete a statistical analysis the NEP's new parent survey data, beginning in December 2017. I used the information I learned in EDF 711 to assist students DTS 460 to develop a survey to evaluate the annual 100 mile meal, which the Student Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (SAND) hosts each fall. Students in my course will tally the results of the survey and submit an abstract for the COHP Research Day in spring 2018. Finally, in Dr. Childress course EDF 627, Program Planning and Evaluation, I developed a Logic Model for the DPD. I will use this Logic

Model to better understand program inputs and outcomes and as a method of evaluation for future accreditation site visits (ACEND, 2015).

## **CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION**

As a professor in the department of dietetics, I am charged with teaching undergraduate courses to dietetics students, as well as non-majors, and with directing the Didactic Program in Dietetics (DPD). I regularly teach three courses each semester and have the equivalent of three hours release time to manage and direct the DPD. My teaching and course assignments are consistent with the mission of the DPD, which is to provide the depth and breadth of food and nutrition knowledge and skills that prepare students to enter a supervised practice program in dietetics. This is achieved through a commitment to hands-on, constructivist learning. Many of the students in our department are from economically-challenged backgrounds and are first-generation college students. Our department has a high expectation of student learning and performance to adequately prepare students for the supervised practice experience and develop successful, lifelong dietetic practitioners. I work hard in the classroom to provide a variety of educational opportunities to my students. Since being employed in the department I've taught a variety of courses, including:

- DTS 210→ Nutrition
- DTS 201→ Introductory Nutrition and laboratory
- DTS 202→ Introductory foods and laboratory
- DTS 314→ Nutrition and Diet Therapy
- DTS 310→ Nutrition Across the Lifespan
- DTS 320→ Intermediate Nutrition
- DTS 460→ Research in Dietetics
- DTS 468→ Chemistry of Foods and laboratory
- DTS 476→ Senior Seminar in Dietetics

When I began the doctoral program, I had no previous background in education, but I had already been teaching for several years. The first class I took in the program was CI 702,

curriculum theories, with Dr. Calvin Meyers. In honest reflection, this class was a complete culture shock to me. With no foundation of knowledge, I felt like I had been thrown to the wolves. I hadn't heard of any of the theories or theorists and I was tasked with writing very lengthy papers and developing in-depth projects about a subject matter of which I had no previous knowledge. I felt like I had to work ten times harder than my classmates to produce a paper of only mediocre quality. Ultimately, I earned an A in the course and ended up learning a lot about curriculum theory.

Through that course, I learned that a curriculum is a cumulative process of complex influences that shape and guide what we learn. Our personal values, opinions, beliefs and knowledge influence what we teach in the classroom and how we design our curriculum (McNeil, 2009). As I have studied the major curriculum and learning theories in my other doctoral courses, I can find pieces of my personal curriculum philosophy in various theories. The theories that have been most influential on my personal viewpoint are constructivism and humanism. Even though my first few courses in the program were very challenging, studying these two theories helped me realize how important it is for students to make a connection with previous knowledge when constructing new knowledge. I also realized the importance of building a personal relationship with students and helping students develop self-actualization during the learning process.

Constructivism is a learning theory that proposes that as we reflect on our experiences, we construct our own understanding of the world in which we live. Each person generates his or her own mental models of learning. Learning is simply the process of adjusting our mental models to accommodate and reflect upon new knowledge and experiences (funderstanding.com, 2008). Constructivism promotes learning through experience, and with reflection and the

intercession of previous knowledge and new information. Constructivism can be attributed to ancient philosophers such as Socrates, who asked students direct questions, which lead students to a greater understanding of the weakness of their thinking (McNeil, 2009). Today's theory of constructivism is generally attributed to Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, John Dewey and others. Although Piaget's work is often associated with cognitive learning, his influence on constructivism is apparent. Piaget's work promoted mechanisms through which knowledge is internalized by learners through accommodation and assimilation and through the function of incorporating new information and experiences into an already existing framework of mental construction, known as scaffolding (funderstanding.com, 2008). Constructivist education is built on the concept of successive knowledge building, increasing in depth and complexity throughout the various stages of life (funderstanding.com, 2008). I've included a copy of my [constructivism critique](#) from CI 703 on the online portfolio website.

Constructivists believe that we generate our own mental models and rules of learning. Therefore, the act of learning is characterized by adjusting our minds to accommodate new knowledge and experiences. Learning is the search for meaning; therefore learning must start with issues for which students are trying to construct meaning (funderstanding.com, 2008). This is a concept that I try to incorporate into my classes with constructivist instruction and projects, such as the teacher focus group research project in DTS 460, and the senior capstone project in DTS 476, Senior Seminar. Both of these assignments require students to construct their own learning experiences through hands-on work on semester-long projects, which allow for the enhancement of critical thinking skills.

As I mentioned in the introduction section of this paper, I have been teaching in higher education, at both WVU and Marshall for nearly a decade and a half. My thoughts and feelings

of curriculum have changed significantly over that time. Lately, my personal curriculum theory has been greatly shaped by my experience as the director of the DPD. Although I teach nearly every single day, the events that brought the DPD curriculum full circle was the experience I had writing distance internship proposal and the DPD accreditation self-study in 2016.

In hindsight, I felt woefully unprepared for this process and I didn't have the confidence that I could accomplish the task. I'd never written anything so lengthy. Both of these documents took an incredible amount of time and focus and required me to dig into the curriculum process much deeper than I ever had in the past. I had to pull together a lot of unfamiliar information and study the department's philosophies on teaching and scholarship to develop both a depth and breadth of understanding of the curriculum. I wrote the program proposal for the distance internship first. This required me to think critically about competencies and learning objectives for our graduate students. The proposal was accepted and we received approval to start the new program. Writing this program proposal provided the experience and confidence I needed to develop the DPD self-study. The self-study took six months to construct. Although I held the title of DPD Director before writing the self-study, I really didn't understand the DPD curriculum until I went through this process. By reviewing and writing about each course and assignment that are offered in the program, I began to see the concepts I learned about in my curriculum and learning theory courses in action. It all came together and I finally saw the value of constructivist teaching methods. If it hadn't been for my doctoral training, there's no way I would have been able to complete the distance internship proposal or the DPD self-study. In February 2017, my colleagues and I participated in 10 year accreditation site visit. We received positive and constructive feedback from the site visitors and expect to receive full accreditation renewal in January 2018.



New accreditation standards were released by our accrediting agency in January 2017. Although I had just developed the self-study for the site visit, I had to write all new goals and objectives for the DPD to meet the new 2017 standards by June of that year. Thankfully, I was able to collaborate with my colleagues Mallory Mount and Mary Kathryn Gould during this process, which made the task much easier. In reflection, developing the distance internship proposal and DPD self-study provided much needed growth in the area of curriculum and instruction. Although I had to face feelings of trepidation and unpreparedness, I ultimately grew by leaps and bounds as a faculty member and specialist in curriculum. I have included copies of the [distance internship proposal](#), the [DPD self-study](#), and the new [DPD handbook](#) that I wrote on my online portfolio.

In addition to leaning on my departmental colleagues for examples in teaching and instruction, I was blessed to work individually with Dr. Campbell and Kim White, a faculty in the Department of Social Work, to discuss the challenges of being a junior faculty member and a doctoral student. We met several times as I was writing the distance internship proposal and the DPD self-study. The intent of our time together was to fulfill the doctoral requirement of team teaching with a faculty member. Since Kim and I were both teaching already, we didn't need the teaching experience. What we needed was someone to vent to, talk with, and gather ideas and share experiences. Our discussions went in many directions, but often focused on topics like social justice, the anxiety of teaching, and reflections of student evaluations of our teaching. We shared teaching ideas and tips, discussed interesting podcasts, and developed a relationship where we could reflect on the intentionality of our teaching experiences. Talking together shifted my thinking about teaching in new ways so I could consider the importance of making a significant and lasting impact on my students. I would like to end this section with a quote from

a student who graduated in fall 2017. I've chosen to include this quote because it points to the intentionality of my teaching and provides justification for the hard work and dedication that teaching necessitates:

*“Thank you for being an awesome and inspirational professor. I have to admit today was pretty bittersweet. I'm glad to be graduating, but realizing I won't get to have you as a professor anymore makes me sad! I have learned so much from you!”*

### **CONCLUSION & REFLECTION ON THE QUALIFYING ASSESSMENT RUBRIC**

The Curriculum and Instruction doctoral program was very different when I started in 2007 from what it is today. Most of the folks in my classes were teachers by trade. I was one of the only people at the time who worked in higher education and who came from a non-education background. This was challenging because I felt as if my previous knowledge was inadequate to support success in some of the most difficult courses. In other ways, this was good because it provided me with the opportunity to learn creative and useful classroom techniques, which I still employ today.

When I returned to the program in 2015, the program's demographics had shifted significantly. This time I was in classes with people from all walks of life and from a variety of backgrounds. This was an even better opportunity because it provided a diverse and rich learning environment. At one point in my life, I would have never imagined that I could be well on my way to earning a doctorate in education, a field that was once foreign to me. Through collaboration with faculty and students, I've been able to learn and grow as a professional. I've been fortunate to have been able to collaborate with Dr. Campbell in Curriculum and Instruction and Dr. Williams, Dr. Gould, and Professor Mallory Mount in the Dietetics department on

several projects. I've also enjoyed working with other doctoral students and learning from the classroom teachers with whom I've completed projects over the years.

I've developed a deep level of understanding of the field of curriculum, which I've applied and integrated not only in the classroom, but also as the director of the DPD and throughout our recent accreditation site visit. I can attribute the success of that visit to my doctoral training. The field of curriculum and research have been opened up in ways that I once thought unimaginable. I am very grateful for the hard work and dedication of the faculty in the department who have been patient and understanding with pursuit of understanding a very complex system. I realize I still have a lot of room for growth as a professional in the field of curriculum, but I am well on my way to demonstrating success and integration into my daily teaching, research, and scholarship.

Throughout this paper, I've tried to reflect on my experiences in the doctoral program. As I mentioned, my understanding of curriculum has changed immensely and I feel that I've been able to be successful as a professor and as the director of the DPD because of my doctoral training. I've been able to integrate my doctoral coursework into my own classroom teaching, both in terms of constructivist instruction and through a humanistic approach to student learning. I have also been able to use the knowledge I've gained from my research courses to improve my program evaluation skills, enhance the undergraduate research course that I teach, and gain confidence as a junior researcher through publications and presentations at state, regional, and national conferences.

My communication skills have also improved because of my doctoral training. I had fairly good written communication skills before beginning the program, but my writing has become more fluent and effective with each course I've taken. My technology and multi-media

skills have improved significantly too. I've learned how to use new computer programs such as SPSS for statistical analysis and multi-media functions of everyday programs like Power Point. I've also gained confidence in my oral communication skills through presentations at state and national conferences, such as the annual WV Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Conference and the Food and Nutrition Conference and Expo.

“Begin with the end in mind.” This is the quote with which I started the doctoral program over ten years ago. I knew the path to getting the highest degree in the land would be long, but I didn't expect such an arduous journey. Life is unpredictable. I never expected to experience breast cancer at such a young age. I never thought I would have two beautiful boys when I was trying to get through the coursework. I never expected to have several job changes throughout my time in the program. Although all of these personal events were unexpected, and at times difficult and tragic, they all played a very important part in my professional journey. I am grateful for the process and to have an end to this specific chapter. I look forward to the road ahead with anticipation and determination, in which I will again, begin with the end in mind.

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