Overview:
New online courses are developed through **Online in 9**, a nine-week course development series for faculty; courses previously developed are considered “grand-fathered in” and are exempt from course reviews and development. The series includes learning how to design a course, creating the content and activities, having the course reviewed, ending in a short discussion about transitioning to course delivery This model guides faculty to author their own courses with guidance from an instructional designer. The university, one of four UM-System campuses divided into seven colleges, largely operates in academic silos with little to no discussion or collaboration on course design or teaching strategies among full-time faculty. Important to note: 51% of courses are taught by part-time instructors. In short, instructors are left to their own decisions about how best to teach. Online in 9, on the other hand, is designed to encourage instructors to share knowledge and perspective across disciplines and to embrace online teaching strategies that foster interaction and meaningful learning. Unfortunately, the dream for this community of sharing has yet to be realized. An integral part of the course development process includes a quality course review with a focus on continuous improvement. These reviews are done by the campus’s three instructional designers without peer (faculty) feedback, though the original intent of Online in 9 included peer feedback in the process. External forces have great implications on the success of Online in 9. 1) Recent mandates from our university administrators require that at least 75 new online courses will be developed each year. 2) The campus buzz is that we are losing far too many students. 3) The incentive structure encourages faculty from all colleges to participate (except from College of Nursing and College of Education). 4) There is no formal incentive to encourage course improvements after the original course development. 5) Not everyone who starts Online in 9 finishes with a course completed. With limited resources and personnel amidst increasing expectations for more, we wonder how to encourage more faculty to complete the program successfully, return to share their experiences with those new to teaching online, create a conversation about teaching and learning online, engage campus stakeholders in the process, and embrace a spirit of continuous improvement for future course renewals. Below is a case study about an administrator struggling with these factors that prevent a positive cumulative impact on the university to help it scale up course and faculty development in a sustainable way.

Case study:
Administrator X receives a phone call from the Chancellor seeking input on the state of “our online program” and how we’ve met System challenges. In particular, the Chancellor wants to understand the return on investment and has asked for the number of newly developed online courses, the estimated cost of producing those courses (stipends + an estimate of the number of hours instructional designers (ID) spend with a faculty member), and projected income from tuition revenue online student fees. The Chancellor also seeks information about retention in all online courses including student success data and withdrawal rates. Administrator X’s analysis reveals that 41 faculty participated in Online in 9 during 2012-2013, but only 29 produced new online courses. On average, an ID spends 60 hours per course throughout Online in 9 making current business operations costly to produce online courses, especially for courses that fail to be completed. Here’s the good news: those 29 courses, compared with other grandfathered online courses (roughly about 215), retain more students and have a higher student success rate, however. Student evaluations in those courses are also higher, especially in the courses part of a pilot program embedding a student mentor to solve technology and logistical questions as they arise. The bad news: it’s expensive to develop a quality online course; we fell short on meeting our promise of 75 new online courses; our retention data is abysmal, especially in pre-existing online courses. What can Administrator X do to help this small Online in 9 program attract more faculty, prepare faculty to be more successful at the start and to complete the program, communicate with Deans and Department Chairs about the importance of interactive, student-centered online courses, and build supports like the successful embedded mentor in online programs?

1

Recommendations for Administration/Institution:

Recommendations for Chair / Department:

Recommendations for Faculty:

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2

Recommendations for Administration/Institution:

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