An oral examination in defense of the dissertation for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy in Education with an emphasis in Teaching & Learning (Instructional Technology)

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Exploring the Interactions of Social, Cognitive, and Teaching Presences in Student Learning Experiences in an Online Undergraduate Course

Date: March, 1, 2016
Time: 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Place: Conference Room 1, TLC

Abstract
According to the Community of Inquiry model (Garrison, Anderson and Archer, 2000), the optimal student learning experience occurs at the intersection of three interdependently functioning presences: How students present themselves and connect with one another (social presence), how meaning is constructed and confirmed (cognitive presence), and how the course is designed and discussions facilitated (teaching presence). In this study, the manifestation and interactions of these three presences in an educational technology undergraduate online course were explored through a validated perception-eliciting survey and open-ended reflections of learning experiences prior to taking the course, related to collaborative course activities, and upon course completion. The dynamics of the online course were documented given the context. This study examined the content of various student reflections, determining how they mirror the aspects formulated in the Community of Inquiry framework. Interviews, discussion observations, and email communications were used to triangulate findings from the quantitative and qualitative data analysis. This study resulted in the development of a codebook for analyzing student reflections of learning experiences. Interpretations of what the elements of an optimal learning experience are, and how they interact are presented in the form of a chronological representation of element interactions at the thematic level, and a five-gear representation of the elements at the categorical level.

Defense of Dissertation Committee
James Shymansky Ph.D. (Chair)
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