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# Faculty Perspectives of Student-Faculty Collaborative Course Design

Lauren Mead

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Faculty Perspectives of Student-Faculty Collaborative Course Design

by

Lauren Mead

Thesis

Submitted to the Department of Special Education

Eastern Michigan University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

Speech-Language Pathology

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Ypsilanti, Michigan

## Dedication

*To my fiancé, Timothy James Shea, who told me to go out and follow my dreams.*

## Acknowledgments

As I sit and think of those I would like to acknowledge, I am overwhelmed by the amount of support I have had for this work. To begin with, I would like to thank Dr. Sarah Ginsberg for her support and mentorship throughout this process. Dr. Ginsberg saw in me something that I did not initially see in myself and gently pushed me to aim high. Without her encouragement and innovative ideas regarding teaching, this work would not have come to fruition. Dr. Ginsberg's commitment to her students is truly remarkable, and she is the type of professor that I one day aspire to be.

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## Abstract

This qualitative research study explored speech-language pathology (SLP) faculty perspectives of collaborative course design. Student-faculty collaborative course design offers benefits to faculty members and students; however, research regarding this topic is lacking in the field of SLP. Interviews with faculty members in SLP programs explored faculty perspectives regarding the incorporation of student input into course design as well as anticipated benefits and challenges involved. The results of this study identified several factors related to faculty reluctance to use collaborative course design, including reluctance to share control, faculty views of students, institutional expectations, faculty planning styles, and uncertainty of how to implement this type of course design. While the faculty members expressed reluctance to use collaborative course design, they acknowledged potential benefits, such as valuable student input, growth for the professor, increased student engagement, and clinical application. Faculty members also suggested ideas for how to implement collaborative course design. Lastly, faculty members identified information that they would need to implement student-faculty collaborative course design, which has implications for future research.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **Background Information**

In recent years there has been a shift from the traditional didactic role of professors to the role of “facilitators” of learning (Ziegenfuss & Lawler, 2008). Student-faculty collaborative course design is one method that has been suggested as a means to incorporate student perspectives and provide student-centered learning. However, research regarding this method of course design is lacking in the field of speech-language pathology (SLP).

In earlier research, Mihans, Long, and Felten (2008) implemented faculty-student collaboration to redesign a course that had received negative student ratings. They found that student ratings of the course improved and the professors involved in this collaboration felt more in tune with their students. At the same time, Cook-Sather (2008) discussed using students as consultants for professors. In this project students not registered in the course were enlisted to monitor and talk to students enrolled in the course. The student consultants then met with the professor to go over the findings and the ramifications for instruction and student learning. They found that the use of student consultants allowed professors to collaboratively reflect on their classroom teaching and offered insight that helped the professors to connect with their students. Later on, Aguirre and Duncan (2013) used a phenomenological, autoethnographic perspective to report their experience of faculty-student collaboration for student accommodations in online and hybrid courses. The authors found that this experience enhanced their dedication to collaborative course design in order to make classes accessible to all students.

Despite the suggested benefits of collaboration with students, research regarding student-faculty collaborative course design is lacking, especially in the field of SLP. Bovill, Cook-Sather, and Felten (2011) theorized that professors should “explore ways for students to become

full participants in the design of teaching approaches, courses, and curricula” (p. 133). In order to ensure that beneficial teaching and learning are taking place, a research basis is needed (Ziegenfuss & Lawler, 2008). Therefore, in order for professors to involve students as “full participants” a larger evidence base is necessary to help guide this process and provide the “evidence-based education” called for by Ginsberg, Friberg, and Visconti (2012).

### **Purpose of the Study, Justification and Significance**

Student-faculty collaborative course design is one method to involve students and gain insight into their perspectives. Implementation of student-faculty collaborative course design is dependent on faculty interest in this type of course design. Although students are valuable assets they are “rarely consulted about their educational experiences” (Bovill et al., 2011, p. 133). The purpose of this study was to explore SLP faculty perspectives on student-faculty collaborative course design. It was hoped that by exploring faculty perspectives the following information might be identified: potential barriers and facilitators of student-faculty collaborations, information that is needed for professors seeking to use collaborative course design, and why information regarding education is seldom sought from students.

A thorough review of the literature on this subject has been conducted, and evidence that student-faculty collaborative course design has been explored in the field of SLP has not been found. Also, little research regarding this subject has been conducted in other fields. The findings gained from this research would contribute to the knowledge base regarding the value of student-faculty collaboration in the field of SLP as well as the need for “evidence-based education” (Ginsberg et al., 2012) in communication sciences and disorders (CSD).

## **Research Questions**

The questions addressed in this study aimed to explore faculty perspectives of student-faculty collaborative course design. A semi-structured interview format was conducted to allow the researcher to ask additional questions or follow-up questions as necessary (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Interviews included the following questions:

- Have faculty members used collaborative course design?
- Would they consider using collaborative course design if they have not used it previously?
- What potential benefits or barriers do faculty members anticipate?
- How much input do faculty members think students should have in course design, if any?
- What information would professors need in order to consider using collaborative course design?

## Chapter 2: Review of Literature

### Introduction

When designing courses professors have many different things to take into consideration, from classroom time management to the content that should be taught. Even professors who have been teaching for many years may be constantly trying to improve their courses. Faculty members are taught to be specialists in their field, but are not always taught how to be professors or to design courses (Ziegenfuss & Lawler, 2008). However, being an expert regarding a certain field does not mean that this knowledge will automatically transfer into effective teaching and learning (Brackenbury, Folkins, & Ginsberg, 2014). While the experience of doctoral students may differ depending on the type of university, organized instruction regarding teaching pedagogy and course design is often not provided (Fink, 2003; Robinson & Hope, 2013). The field of speech-language pathology (SLP) is no exception, and SLP professors are not always given the necessary groundwork in educational methods or planning (Hadley & Fulcomer, 2010). Possible ramifications of insufficient instruction in teaching include insufficient teaching development, a decline in student performance, and a lack of successful interactions (Robinson & Hope, 2013). Lack of instruction in course design also has consequences, as this could be one obstacle to effective teaching and learning (Bovill et al., 2011; Fink, 2003).

As society changes and evolves, the role of the professor and trends in teaching methods and course design also evolves. This evolution has led to new ideas regarding the preparation of faculty members (Ziegenfuss & Lawler, 2008). The responsibility of faculty members has shifted from relaying information to students to facilitating student learning. This shift places the focus on students. This student-focused learning emphasizes the value of designing and structuring learning experiences as opposed to only focusing on teaching course content

(Brackenbury et al., 2014; Ziegenfuss & Lawler, 2008). In order to refine student learning, faculty members must center their attention to student views; however, this cannot solely be accomplished by giving professors current research regarding teaching (Ziegenfuss & Lawler, 2008). A theoretical modification in how professors view instruction and the acquisition of knowledge is necessary, and the only way for professors to alter their views on teaching and learning is to explore student insights (Ziegenfuss & Lawler, 2008). The exploration of student insights involves an approach to teaching and learning in which power is shared among professors and students, and the idea that professors are also learners in the classroom and can learn from their students is emphasized (Fielding, 1999; Fielding, 2001). This student-centered approach to teaching and learning is based on the theory of student voice (Bovill et al., 2011; Fleming, 2015). Student voice is defined as “students in dialogue, discussion and consultation on issues that concern them in relation to their education, but in particular, in relation to pedagogy and their experiences of schooling whether as a student cohort, individual class groups or within a forum construct like a student council” (Fleming, 2015, p. 223). According to the theory of student voice, students possess noteworthy views of teaching and learning and are significant assets that should be enlisted as consultants and contributors to course design; however, students’ perspectives regarding their education is seldom sought (Bovill et al., 2011). Carlile (2012) argued that, “a constructive, dynamic and socially-just education requires the teacher and student to consider and make decisions together about how and where learning and schooling takes place” (p. 398). Student-faculty collaboration is one way in which faculty members can incorporate student insight into the students’ education.

## **Student-Faculty Collaboration**

Collaboration among faculty and students involves enlisting students as equals in order to refine and advance classroom procedures (Bovill et al., 2011). Developing a true collaboration with students is necessary for professors to explore student perspectives and formulate current methods to assist in student learning (Kane & Chimwayange, 2014). Three different forms of student-faculty collaboration have been identified, including collaboration for teaching approaches, curricula, and course design (Bovill et al., 2011).

The first form of student-faculty collaboration is collaboration for teaching approaches. This involves enlisting students not registered in the course as consultants to professors (Bovill et al., 2011). At the beginning of the semester, the student consultants and professors work together to determine the focus of the consultation. With this focus in mind, the student consultant monitors and talks to students currently enrolled in the course then meets with the professor to go over the findings and the implications for instruction and student learning. Recruiting students as consultants gives the professor access to a perspective that they otherwise would not have access to, and aids in the reflection of teaching. Schön (1983) introduced the idea that incorporating reflection into pedagogy is crucial to growth in teaching. Reflection can be difficult without an outside spectator to provide feedback (Cook-Sather, 2008). Incorporating students in reflection enhances the professors' view of their own expertise. Using students as consultants not only provides a different level of awareness, but also alters the typical interactions of students and faculty members. These alterations impact current methods of instruction and the process by which knowledge is acquired (Cook-Sather, 2008).

A second form of student-faculty collaboration is collaboration for curricula issues. Collaboration for curricula involves students and faculty members collaboratively developing the

organization, execution, and assessment of learning (Bovill et al., 2011). Through this form of collaboration both students and faculty members expand on their “negotiation skills through discussion, compromise, and agreement about curriculum decisions” (Bovill et al., 2011, p. 137).

The third form of student-faculty collaboration is that of collaborative course design. Student-faculty collaborative course design typically involves one to two faculty members, an academic planner and between two and six students. These individuals work together as a group to refine the classroom procedures. First, foundational goals for the course are determined, then instructional design and evaluation of learning based on the foundational goals are developed. Through student-faculty collaborative course design, students transition from the role of a passive learner to an active participant in their learning, while faculty member awareness of student requirements and knowledge is increased (Bovill et al., 2011; Mihans et al., 2008). This type of course design redefines the dynamic among faculty and students requiring the faculty members to “become facilitators of change, creating learning situations where power was shared, not held” (Mihans et al., 2008, p. 2).

### **Paradigm Changes in Faculty-Student Relationships**

It is important that students learn course content, but it is also important that they reflect on and obtain knowledge regarding learning. Students’ educational experiences, in addition to the content that they learn, are what shape their views and how they function in their respective fields (Brackenbury et al., 2014). In order to give power to students over their learning, faculty need to shift their views from that of the professor holding all the power and knowledge in the classroom, to a student-centered view. In the student-centered view, students have a say in their education, and emphasis is placed on what students attain throughout their education instead of what professors do in the classroom (Brackenbury et al., 2014). In addition to effective learning

approaches, the main objectives of educational programs should be to increase student reflection regarding their learning, to involve students as dynamic representatives in learning, and to incorporate students in the planning process (Hutchings, 2005). Collaborating with students for course design requires a relationship in which faculty and students are viewed as reciprocal partners in the teaching and learning experience. Therefore, student-faculty collaborative course design challenges the current paradigm of course design because it calls for a shift in the relationship of authority between faculty and students (Bovill et al., 2011). Faculty members may be hesitant to implement collaborative course design due to the necessary sharing of control with students who may lack knowledge regarding course design (Mihans et al., 2008). They may also view collaborative course design as a threat to their “responsibility to maintain the integrity of the educational process” (Huthchings, 2005, p. 2).

### **Faculty Members’ “Vocabularies of Motive”**

Mills (1940) theorized that one’s “motives,” or the explanation of behavior, are determined by social communication and the context in which that communication takes place. Different situations are navigated with a particular “vocabulary” that is considered appropriate for that social context. Further exploration of one’s explanations for one’s behavior is necessary, as these explanations have deeper meaning behind them. Consequently, the vocabulary of the social context is an important part of inferring the meaning behind one’s motive, and can provide “a more sophisticated understanding of the variety of substantive motive forms that have in practice guided action” (Campbell, 1991, p. 96). Therefore, although some faculty members may use the vocabulary of “responsibility” or “knowledge” as reasons why they may not want to use student-faculty collaborative course design, these reasons are not without reason themselves, and must be explored further.



## **Benefits of Student-Faculty Collaborative Course Design**

Although some faculty members may be hesitant to use collaborative course design, it offers a means to access student insight and to enact the theoretical change that Ziegenfuss and Lawler (2008) called for. There are several reasons why incorporation of student faculty collaborative course design would be beneficial, including benefits for both faculty members and students, a means to improve the course evaluation process, and hands on experience collaborating.

Research suggests several benefits of student-faculty collaborative course design. One benefit that enlisting students as peers in course design can provide is a more extensive knowledge of learning for both students and faculty members. For faculty, the inclusion of students in course design provides access to student views regarding their needs and unique student experience. This entry to the student perspective of learning helps faculty members to develop a greater understanding of how and what students need to learn, which allows faculty members to expand the ways in which they assist in student learning (Kane & Chimwayange, 2014). Thus, faculty members refine their expectations of students as they learn more about how students learn.

For students, collaborative course design could enhance student dedication to learning. According to the theory of “student engagement” (Bovill et al., 2011, p. 134), active participation and dedication to learning are critical components of student achievement. In order for successful learning to take place, “students need to engage in higher-order thinking skills, including analysis, synthesis, and evaluation” (Hadley & Fulcomer, 2010, p. 3). The transition from a passive role to one of active participation enhances student views and knowledge of what learning looks like, how learning is supported, and how learning is assessed. Students become

superior scholars when given a say in their educational experiences, and when students take an active role in their learning their dedication to learning is enhanced (Bovill et al., 2011; Hutchings, 2005). Another benefit for students is increased commitment, incentive, and interest in learning (Bovill et al., 2011). Allowing students to provide input in their learning increases student ownership of learning, thus reinvigorating their commitment. Faculty commitment to learning is also reinvigorated as faculty members make connections with students. Lastly, the collaborative process changes the relationship between students and faculty members into one involving joint dedication and cooperative endeavors (Bovill et al., 2011), therefore enhancing the student and faculty appreciation of each other.

**Improve the course evaluation process.** In addition to the benefits to faculty members and students, collaborative course design could impact the value of student course evaluations, offer one method to address negative student evaluations, or provide a proactive means to address student input. Student evaluations are one of the main sources of input that students have regarding courses, yet faculty members feel that there are limitations to student evaluations and that they would like the feedback to be more meaningful (Safavi, Bkar, Tarmizi, & Alwi, 2013). Safavi et al. (2013) found that faculty members retroactively use student ratings to modify their teaching preparation, delivery, and interaction but not their planning or assessment. Although the authors did not speculate as to why course evaluations are not used in all areas, it is of interest that course evaluations have no impact on two critical aspects of teaching. Providing students with knowledge regarding teaching could help to enhance student evaluations (Hutchings, 2005). It is the professor's "responsibility... to let students in on the tricks and truths of the learning trade" (Hutchings, 2005, p. 2), and doing so will strengthen student input by improving students' caliber of feedback. Mihans et al. (2008) used student-faculty collaborative course design as a

meaningful and insightful way for faculty members to respond to a course that received negative student evaluations. They found favorable satisfaction ratings among students taking the redesigned course, partially due to the student's recognition that their peers took part in designing the course. Not only did they find higher satisfaction rates among students, but the faculty members involved in the process reported that they teach their courses "somewhat differently because we are more attuned to student needs and expertise, and we have wholeheartedly embraced the concept of student collaboration in course design" (Mihans et al., 2008, p. 8). Even though Mihans et al. (2008) used collaborative course design as a retroactive response to negative course evaluations, implementing student input proactively could be a potential method to prevent negative course evaluations.

**Hands on experience collaborating.** The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) lists collaboration as one of the service delivery domains in the framework for speech language pathology practice. ASHA (2016) states that SLPs "share the responsibility with other professionals for creating a collaborative culture." Therefore, it is within the scope of practice for SLPs to collaborate not only with other professionals but also with clients and client families/caregivers in all areas of practice. Collaboration is also a vital component of effective therapy (Epstein, 2016). Because collaboration is an intrinsic component of service delivery in SLP, it is an imperative skill for students to refine during their educational experience, and SLP programs "should provide experiences to foster the development of these skills" (Epstein, 2016, p. 45). The development of peer collaboration is a skill that should be acquired sooner rather than later (Johnson, 2013). However, employing methods to promote proficient collaboration skills that reflect real life application is one area of difficulty faced by SLP programs and faculty members (Friberg, Ginsberg, Visconti, & Schober-Peterson, 2013). The research has recognized

the importance of the development of collaborative skills among students and various methods have been suggested as a way to help students develop this area of expertise though “the field of speech-language pathology has published relatively few research studies on instructional practices in graduate programs” (Epstein, 2016, p. 3).

Several collaborative methods that are being used in the field of SLP education include: team-based learning, cooperative learning, problem based learning, and interprofessional education (Epstein, 2016; Goldberg, 2015; Hadley & Fulcomer, 2010). Team-based learning involves students working with each other to relate course content to clinical scenarios (Epstein, 2016). Cooperative learning entails students collaborating towards a shared assignment. In problem-based learning, the professor assists in learning instead of conveying information, while students work with one another to answer clinical questions (Hadley & Fulcomer, 2010). Lastly, interprofessional education involves students collaborating with students in other fields in order to gain a better understanding of these fields and to learn how to collaborate with professionals in other fields (Goldberg, 2015). Student-faculty collaborative course design is another potential method that could be used to provide students with collaborative experience that has real life application.

### **Downfalls and Challenges of Student-Faculty Collaborative Course Design**

Although there are benefits to student-faculty collaboration, there are also several potential downfalls that should be considered before implementing this type of course design (Bovill et al., 2011). To begin with, students possess different levels of motivation and have different backgrounds in regards to learning. Therefore, students’ diverse views regarding learning should be considered in light of the students’ motivation and background. Another potential downfall is possible detachment of students. If a partnership is not developed between

faculty and students, students may feel that their views are not truly valued, which could cause them to become disengaged from the course design process. Lastly, some students may not feel comfortable in a collaborative role if they are used to and expect teachers to retain control. In addition to the potential downfalls, there are several challenges involved with implementing student-faculty collaborative course design (Bovill et al., 2011). It may be difficult for faculty members to share control with students in order to develop a collaborative partnership. Also, the time commitment needed may seem overwhelming for faculty members who have high workloads. Lastly, faculty members may feel that collaborative course design is unrealistic due to pressures to meet certain requirements of the universities they work for. Several suggestions for maneuvering these potential downfalls and challenges in order to implement collaborative course design are discussed below (Bovill et al., 2011).

### **Suggestions for Implementing Student-Faculty Collaborative Course Design**

For some faculty members, determining how to implement collaborative course design may seem challenging. Therefore, several suggestions are offered to help guide faculty members in the process (Bovill et al., 2011). To begin, employing the help of colleagues may be useful to determine situations in which collaboration at their individual university may be fitting. Establishing rapport is also an important part of student-faculty collaboration, and faculty can begin to build rapport with students early on. Rapport can be built by emphasizing to students that their input is critical to the collaborative process. Faculty members are also urged to appreciate the process involved with collaboration, and students should be encouraged to do the same. Additionally, in order to ensure that involvement in the process is significant, neither faculty nor students should feel pressured to be involved. Welcoming students as equals is crucial to the collaborative process. Therefore, faculty can focus on appreciating what each

participant individually brings to the table in order to involve and embrace students as equals in the process. Faculty considering collaborative course design may want to consider starting with smaller collaborative projects before taking on collaborative course design. Finally, faculty members must keep in mind that collaborative work with students is a dynamic process, and participating in the process once does not forever alter academic design.

## **Chapter 3: Methods**

### **Positionality**

During the Summer 2016 semester, I volunteered to participate in a course redesign of a course currently taught by Dr. Sarah Ginsberg. As a group, several other students and I worked with Dr. Ginsberg to redesign this course. I was surprised that a professor was willing to take into account student insight and opinion to redesign her course. I asked myself what insight I could possibly have to offer such an experienced and accomplished professor? After all, I knew nothing about course design or teaching. I realized that while I may not be the expert on course design or teaching, I do know something about the student experience. I thought to myself, who better to help redesign a course than the students who have already taken that course? I wondered why I hadn't heard of more professors using collaborative course design. This led me to pose the following questions about professors' perspectives of student-faculty collaborative course design. Do professors see any benefits of student-faculty collaborative course design? Do professors have concerns regarding this idea, or foresee any issues? How much input do professors think students should have in course design, if any? Lastly, what information would professors need in order to be comfortable with this idea?

### **Study Design**

This research study explored faculty perspectives of student-faculty collaborative course design, through the semi-structured interview format employed in qualitative research. Qualitative research focuses on “participant perspectives” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 7) in order to develop a clear understanding of how participants interpret their world. By exploring faculty perspectives it was hoped that potential obstacles and facilitators to student-faculty collaborations, as well as necessary information to guide future research, might be identified.

## **Study Population**

The study included faculty members in speech-language pathology (SLP) programs at universities in the Midwest. All identifying information, including name and institution, were altered to protect the participants' identities. The participants ranged in age from 30 to 59, with teaching experience ranging from 1 to 28 years. All participants had completed their Ph.D. and were currently teaching SLP courses. Six faculty members were interviewed for this study, four participants were women (Judy, Lindsay, Lucille, and Barbara), and two were men (Robert and Kenneth). A small sample size was used due to the depth of the information sought by the researcher (Bogden & Biklen, 2007).

Potential participants were solicited from SLP department heads at area universities. Interested faculty members were asked to contact the researcher via e-mail to schedule an interview. At the time of meeting, participants were given an informed consent and demographic questionnaire to fill out before beginning the interview, in accordance with the IRB approved procedure (Appendix A). No participants who expressed interest in participating were excluded from the study.

## **Participants**

**Robert.** Robert is a professor with considerable university teaching experience, and currently teaches at Shea University. Shea University is a public doctoral research university that offers a bachelor's and master's degree in SLP. It is located in a rural town in the Midwest and has a predominately Caucasian demographic. Robert described his teaching style as "Didactic: I am sort of the talking head." However, he questions if this is really the best teaching style. Robert wonders how some professors become effective because he feels that professors are "expected" to know how teach but "aren't taught." Robert thinks that professors are the content



experts because they “have been conditioned over the years that we are supposed to be the people that know” the content.

**Lucille.** Lucille agrees with Robert that the professor is the expert in regard to content. Lucille has limited university teaching experience and is currently a professor at Erickson University. She currently teaches at a public larger programs master’s university, which offers a bachelor’s and master’s degree in SLP. Erickson University is located in a suburban setting in the Midwest, with a mostly Caucasian demographic. Lucille has never taken any “formal teaching courses.” She confided that it “was difficult for students to shift” to her application-based teaching style. However, Lucille does not think “you can do this job by memorization and regurgitation of factual information” and therefore explains to her students her rationale for her application-based methods. Lucille has found that her “evaluations have gone up” and stated that when it comes to her students, she tries “... to put them in the forefront. I remind them I am just here to give them information.”

**Judy.** Like Robert, Judy also has many years of teaching experience. Judy currently teaches at Earl University, a public higher doctoral research university that offers a doctoral program in speech-language science. Judy’s university is located in a rural city in the Midwest, with a largely Caucasian demographic. Judy feels that being a professor is “humbling,” and that “it is a constant process of figuring out how to do it better.” Judy also values student feedback and generally implements student input in her courses. Occasionally Judy will present students with “the shell of the syllabus,” give them different options, then ask the students to “think about how you learn best, and what kind of assignments would be best.”

**Kenneth.** Kenneth also teaches at Earl University and has quite a few years of university teaching experience. Kenneth welcomes student input, and the amount of student input he

incorporates in his classes depends on the level of the students. Kenneth has used collaborative course design in the past out of “necessity,” because he had a “really tight deadline” to develop the course design. He described his experience as “positive in the sense that I got to a better product right away.” Kenneth further went on to explain that it did not feel “like true collaboration” because while the students were “involved” in the course design, he “still drove” the process. When it comes to course design Kenneth likes to “leave things a little open-ended and work on the course as it evolves.”

**Barbara.** Unlike Kenneth, Barbara is a planner and thinks that “starting with a shell” of a course “is like running wild.” Barbara is very new to teaching at a university. She is currently a professor at Pauline University, a private not-for-profit larger programs master’s university that offers a bachelor’s and master’s degree in SLP. The university is located in a suburban setting in the Midwest, with a mainly Caucasian demographic. Barbara is new to being a professor and feels as though she is still trying to figure it out. Barbara feels that she has grown a lot in the past year, thanks to a teaching mentor and student feedback, and she has “learned a lot through failure.” Barbara employs her own student feedback forms, and makes changes to her courses based on student feedback that is “reasonable.” Barbara hopes to “create a learning environment that facilitates growth and critical thinking,” and does not feel that she has “to be right every time.”

**Lindsay.** Lindsay has also had a teaching mentor. Lindsay has been a professor for several years and currently teaches at Erickson University, a public larger programs master’s university located in a suburban setting in the Midwest with a predominately Caucasian demographic. Erickson University offers a bachelor’s and master’s degree in SLP. Lindsay uses backwards course design when designing her courses so that she can determine the objectives

before thinking about how to get students to learn the content. She also tries to think about “what would be feasible for students to do” when designing her courses by considering how much time certain assignments will take students, and then compares this to what the students will gain from the assignment. Lindsay also alters her courses based on student evaluations “a lot.”

## **Procedures**

Each individual was interviewed individually for approximately one hour. With the participants’ permission, all interviews were audio recorded, and pseudonyms were used to protect against direct identification of participants. A semi-structured interview format and open-ended questions were used to allow the participants to respond based on their unique point of view, and to allow the researcher to ask follow-up questions as necessary (Bogden & Biklen, 2007).

Data analysis involved analysis of interview transcripts. Transcriptions were analyzed and coded. Codes were identified by analyzing data for consistency and emerging themes (Bogden & Biklen, 2007). Once codes were established, all data collected were marked with the corresponding code. After the data were assigned a code they were interpreted. Creswell (2003) suggested interpreting qualitative data by asking “What were the lessons learned” (p. 194). Bogden and Biklen (2007) suggested interpreting data by asking, “What are the implications of my findings for practice?” (p. 197). Data were interpreted to answer both of these questions. Steps were taken to check for accuracy and credibility of findings by the use of peer debriefing and saturation. Peer debriefing incorporates “the use of disinterested parties to assess conclusions” (Meline, 2010, p. 138). Saturation refers to “the point of data collection where the information you get becomes redundant” (Bogden & Biklen, 2007, p. 69).

## Chapter 4: Data

Data analysis indicated reluctance on the part of the participants to collaborate with students on course design. Potential benefits from the perspective of faculty members were also distinguished. Lastly, faculty members suggested ideas for how to implement student-faculty collaborative course design.

### **Themes Related to Faculty Reluctance to Collaborate with Students: “It would never work right now. I am not ready.”**

Barbara acknowledged that there would be several positive reasons to use collaborative course design; however, after discussing the topic in detail she confided “it would never work right now.” Many of the other participants expressed reluctance when asked if they would be open to collaborative course design. They acknowledged that collaborative course design could be valuable; however, they identified areas of concern that would make them hesitant to use it. The participants revealed several factors that impacted their reluctance to collaborate with students on course design, including reluctance to share control with students, views of students, institutional expectations, planning style, and questions regarding how collaborative course design would work.

**Control: “I apparently have control issues.”** Barbara felt that one of the main challenges with collaborative course design is that “it takes some of the control from the professors.” Although Barbara felt that student input would be “valuable” she didn’t “feel like full relinquishment of control is necessary.” However, Barbara realized that in order for it to be a “collaborative involvement” she would need to “relinquish some control.” Barbara explained, “being a new professor and not having a lot of experience it is really hard for me to imagine letting go” and concluded, “I apparently have control issues.” Even though Barbara is a new

faculty member, she was not the only one who expressed reluctance to share control with students. Lindsay has been a professor for six years and also felt that “the most difficult thing would probably be giving up some of the control.” Lindsay was very open to the idea of collaborative course design, but she expressed that sharing control with students “would be a little bit difficult.” She felt that it would be important to keep “a piece of the control to make sure that I have the students getting all the knowledge and all the skills that I feel like they need to make the course happen.” Therefore, she did not feel that she would be able to leave it up to students to decide “what we are going to learn and how we are going to do it.” Lindsay concluded that she would want to “retain the final say” to ensure that the final product was one that she was satisfied with. Judy has been a professor for 24 years, and generally allows for student input in her courses; however, she admitted that when she does not do this “the degree of control” is what ultimately impacts this decision. Judy explained that her openness to student input fluctuates and there are times where she is not as “flexible” or “very open to input.” For example, Judy stated that when “going through big grants and I am dealing with a whole bunch of other stuff, I might not be as flexible.” Therefore, there are times when Judy is not as open to sharing control with students. Judy further explained that some professors “are more rigid about how we do things,” and in order to incorporate student input “you have to be flexible” because “the more you leave experiences open to student input, the less you are regulating how things are done.” Robert thought that his 26 years of teaching experience might make it more difficult for him to be flexible and share control. Even though Robert has “changed a lot” in the way that he does things, it has not been “in a collaborative kind of way.” Robert stated that someone with less experience “might be much more able to share that power with a student in terms of doing some collaborative course stuff than the guy, like me, who has been at it for 26 years.”

*Vulnerability: “That makes me feel very vulnerable.”* Professor vulnerability emerged as a subtheme of reluctance to share control with students. The participants reflected on their experiences receiving student feedback through course evaluations, and their reactions to negative student feedback. The participants discussed the feeling of vulnerability involved with student feedback, making them question if they would be open to placing themselves in a potentially vulnerable situation with students in a collaborative context.

Barbara confided that collaborating on course design with students would make her “feel extremely vulnerable.” As a new professor she already feels “relatively insecure about the process” of course design. After her first semester teaching, Barbara received negative course evaluations that she described as “the most humiliating feeling” and “such an attack... very harsh.” After reading these evaluations she “broke down and started crying.” Barbara concluded, “the student perspectives on the courses... they hurt sometimes and so I don’t have thick enough skin to give a student that much control.” Despite being a new professor, Barbara is not alone in her feelings of student evaluations and the related vulnerability involved with the idea of sharing control with students. Robert, a professor for 26 years, also expressed just how difficult student evaluations can be for professors. He stated, “I don’t think students realize just how painful of a process that can be to look at those evaluations.” Robert joked “sometimes I will put it off and I won’t look at it for maybe a couple of months, and then when I am in a real safe spot or something, I will open up my course evaluations.” While Robert may have been joking, the take away message is that student evaluations can be “painful.” Robert stated “I would like to think I am open-minded enough and sort of comfortable enough in my own skin that I would be willing to listen to somebody say to me that I didn’t learn very well in your class,” and then “work together to try to figure out how to make that happen.” However, he also recognized that “we are

all sensitive human beings.” Judy has also had experience receiving negative student evaluations. From her perspective these evaluations are “hard to predict” and leave “a lot of unexplained stuff.” She felt that students are more “motivated” to respond to the evaluations if they have had a “negative” experience. Judy was formerly the director at her school, and as part of this position she saw all of the student evaluations. Judy described these evaluations as “racist or sexist, so just inappropriate. Commenting on people’s clothing or their makeup. Just not useful.” She concluded that these evaluations “can be very helpful, and very hurtful.”

**Faculty views of students.** When asked if they would use student-faculty collaborative course design and how much input students should be given on course design, the participants divulged their perspectives of students and their doubts about the abilities of students to contribute knowledgeably about courses.

**Power relationships: “Equal kind of relationship.”** Robert was unsure if students and faculty members could have an “equal kind of relationship.” Robert felt that “if you are working with a student there is always going to be some of that non-equal level to it.” He stated that students and faculty members have a “power relationship,” and professors are in the position of “power” because they are the ones who determine the students’ grade. Therefore, he believed “it would take a special faculty person and special student” to develop a collaborative relationship. Lindsay also expressed concern that some students may not like collaborative course design because it is “just a little too much out of their comfort zone.” Lindsay thought that students who are “a little more reserved or have less confidence” might not be “comfortable or don’t feel like they should say anything or speak out.” However, from Judy’s experience, incorporating student voice into her courses is “a way to build relationships.” She felt that this portrays a “humble” attitude to students and shows that she doesn’t see herself “as being superior or knowing the best

way to do everything.” She has found that this “humble” attitude helps students to “trust you and to feel like you care about how they are learning.”

***Student knowledge: “Students aren’t always the best arbiters of what the best teaching is.”*** Barbara felt that “the students are not the expert and they also don't have a very good understanding of teaching pedagogy.” Robert also questioned how much students could offer in regards to course design. He felt that “when you are coming in as the position of the faculty person, you have, hopefully, a pretty deep understanding of your teaching.” However, in regards to students, Robert stated that he was “wrestling with the whole idea of what knowledge base they come to that with.” Lucille did not feel that students possessed enough knowledge to give input into course design. She stated that she did not “know that there is an answer to collaboration between students and faculty on course design” because she was unsure if “students have enough experience.” Lucille felt that students would go with what they already know because change is “uncomfortable.” Therefore, she did not “think they would offer much” in terms of change for course design. Kenneth also shared this view, and felt that due to students’ lack of knowledge regarding teaching that another challenge “would also be just getting away from this kind of deferment to me as the instructor.” Kenneth thought that this “deferment” to him would make it difficult to get students “meaningfully involved” in course design. Judy agreed that students are lacking knowledge regarding teaching. Judy generally takes student input into consideration, however she has found that sometimes “the student input lacks experiences, so the students aren’t always the best arbiters of what the best teaching is.” Judy questioned, “How much we buy into students who drive things that we really have some expertise about that they wouldn’t have?” Judy concluded that receiving student “input is great, as much input as they want. But how much of it do you integrate?” The participants’ views of



student knowledge regarding teaching impacted the amount of input the participants felt students could be given in course design. The participants felt that students do not possess enough knowledge to collaborate on course content or objectives and offered mixed responses to collaborating on assessment with students. However, the participants were more open to collaborating with students regarding course delivery and scheduling.

In regards to course content, Robert stated, “presumably I have the content because I have the Ph.D., and I took those classes, and I studied this, and so my problem is probably not content.” Robert felt students “would always view the faculty person as sort of the content specialist” and that professors are “conditioned” to view themselves as the content “experts.” Robert speculated that when the professor views himself as the “expert,” collaborations with students could be impeded. He explained that when students ask him questions regarding his area of expertise he becomes the “content expert,” and he is “didactic and less collaborative.” However, if the question is not in his area of expertise then he is able to have a more “collaborative” conversation. He suggested that a collaborative relationship would be promoted if the faculty member doesn’t have the attitude of the “expert.” Robert felt that “clinically we have much more of an opportunity to be collaborative.” He pointed out that in his clinical teaching he doesn’t always come “from a position of being an expert.” Robert concluded “maybe that is the key, I just need to not know so much about something and give them a chance to share their insights.” Kenneth also felt that the professor is considered the “expert in the subject matter.” As the content “experts,” the professors are the most knowledgeable as to how to scaffold the students’ learning while keeping in mind what is “realistic” for the students. Kenneth thought student input on content could be a “challenge” because students “don’t know, they will say they want to know everything.” Even though Kenneth felt that professors are the

content “experts,” he has used project-based learning in which students’ drove the curricular content. Kenneth employed this type of learning method for a course that incorporated students from different disciplines because he recognized that “they all had different abilities, they were in different points in their programs.” Lindsay expressed similar views of the professor as the content “expert” when she stated, “as the instructor, I have more knowledge of the subject matter than they do and more knowledge of what they need to know to go out and be a successful clinician and pass their boards.” Therefore, Lindsay did not feel that it could be “completely up to the students” to decide “what we are going to learn.” Lucille also felt that students would not have the appropriate knowledge in order to collaborate on content. She did not anticipate that students would “have any input on content because that is why they are taking the course; they don’t know much about it.” In fact, if students were given input on content, Judy felt that there would be “certain content that students would shy away from because it is more difficult.” While the students may “shy away” from certain content, Judy felt that some content is necessary for students to learn and therefore would be “non-negotiable.”

In respect to the course objectives Lindsay thought that students could be given a “large amount of input” however she didn’t feel that “students can be the ones to solely develop the objectives.” Therefore, she felt that the professor should provide students with “a base list of objectives,” then the “students could contribute to that.” Judy occasionally implements exactly what Lindsay described by giving students the objectives and then asking if they “want to add any” or “change the wording.” Judy was open to student input on the course objectives, but she felt that certain objectives are “non-negotiable” because they are necessary to “meet the ASHA standards.”

When it comes to collaborating on assessment, Kenneth thought that “negotiations” around grading would be necessary if collaborating with students. From Kenneth and Judy’s perspective, students are focused on grades. Kenneth stated that students “have a formula they already know they can apply to get a certain desired grade.” From his experience Kenneth has “had students who say they think I should just give them a test.” He felt that this is because students “are at a level where they think there are clearly right or wrong answers, and they feel confident in studying.” He felt that if collaborating with students on assessment, the students “will just go on how they have done it before,” and therefore did not think that students would offer original ideas for assessment. Judy also felt that “students are really driven by how they are evaluated.” She explained that students “get annoyed with too many creative” teaching methods, and “are often requesting more lecture with power points.” Judy felt that this is because students “are so in the mind set about grades and they feel that this is what they need to do well on exams.” As a result she has found that “it’s really hard” to get students to “think more about real content and development as a professional.” However, she felt that exams are necessary and therefore “non-negotiable.” Although Judy felt that exams are “non-negotiable” she has incorporated student input on exams by asking students if they would like “to have an open-book exam or closed book exam.”

Robert on the other hand, felt that student input regarding assessment and activities would be very helpful. According to Robert, “a student may have a different opinion about that and maybe have a different approach that I haven’t even thought of.” Lindsay also felt that students could have a lot to offer in regards to assessment. She thought that students “could help develop methods of evaluation and ... even contribute to what the grading rubric might look like.” Lucille “absolutely” felt that students should be given a say in assessment. However,

contrary to Kenneth, Lucille stated that if students were given a say they would not want exams. She then speculated that this input might not be beneficial because then students would “complain on the assessment... that you didn’t assess them.”

For course delivery, Robert felt that students would be able to “help more in the delivery.” He felt that if there is an issue with the course, it is most likely not the content that is an issue because the professor has received the necessary education to make them the “expert.” Robert reasoned that any issue “is probably how I am delivering that content to students,” and perhaps “the presumption of knowledge that I think they have,” or “the way that I am delivering the material.” Therefore, he felt that “student input would be helpful” to determine where the breakdown in delivery is. Even though Lindsay was very open to a “high level of student input” on course delivery, she pointed out that student input would “need to be balanced” with her “strengths and limitations.” Lindsay explained that if students were to suggest something she is “not able to do well, then it may not work out well.” However, she was open to incorporating student ideas with a method she has used in the past “that has been successful.” Lucille speculated that students would have more input to offer on course delivery “as opposed to changing the structural design of the course.” She explained that she has “heard comments on the side about some professor’s being really boring, and/or really uninteresting, or really demanding, or too organized, or obsessive compulsive.” Therefore, Lucille thought that, “those are the types of things that they would think that they would want to change” and that “they would like to change the instructor, not necessarily having a different one, but change those personality characteristics.”

When it comes to scheduling, Judy recognizes that her students’ time is “precious” and that their schedules can be “crazy.” Judy demonstrates “respect” for her students’ schedules by

making sure to ask for student input on scheduling. Judy stated that it is “kinder to let them have some input about the dates, because in fact that is not going to change anything for me as much as it is for them.” Judy also lets the students decide if they would rather have group assignments or individual assignments because she recognizes that “getting together with a group can be really demanding.”

***Maturation level of students: “I don’t think that junior, senior and undergraduate has the maturational level or the exposure.”*** The participants also expressed concerns regarding collaborating with undergraduate students, as opposed to graduate or doctoral students. When it comes to course design and teaching Robert felt that “the population you are given certainly has some impact on how this works.” Robert stated that undergraduate and graduate students are “just very different populations of students to deal with.” He explained that graduate students come in with “a pretty good knowledge base already,” whereas undergraduate students haven’t “had much exposure.” Lucille also commented on the amount of “exposure” undergraduate students have to certain content. Lucille discussed altering her teaching methods for undergraduate students because she felt that they do not have the “maturational level or the exposure” to learn from the application based teaching methods she uses. Barbara’s experiences with undergraduate students have led her to believe that they are not as engaged in their learning. From her perspective she felt that undergraduate students often “don’t come to class prepared.” Kenneth explained that he “would have reservations” working with undergraduate students because of their “orientation” to teaching and learning. According to Kenneth, undergraduate students “are coming from a culture of high-stakes testing where their performance on a certain exam defines your level of knowledge” and he thought “it takes a long time for students to let go of that.” On the other hand doctoral students are at a point where they realize there are no right or

wrong answers, and “the instructor is not actually the person in charge of knowledge anymore, and they are someone that could help you along the way.” Judy has also found that students are mainly concerned with grades. She felt that as a result, students often do not appreciate newer methods of teaching and that it requires more on her part to engage the students. In Judy’s experience, “students are often requesting more lecture with Power Points because they get annoyed with too many creative... learning techniques.”

**Institutional expectations.** There are many expectations placed on professors by the institutions that they work for. Kenneth explained that there are numerous expectations at his university, including teaching expectations, research expectations, and service expectations. While not all universities (like Barbara’s university) require professors to conduct research, professors have other obligations. Some participants expressed reluctance to use student-faculty collaborative course design because they felt it might not align with what they have deemed as priorities of their institutional expectations. The data below discusses the participants’ reluctance to use collaborative course design in light of institutional expectations, including faculty obligation, recognition, and time.

**Obligation: “I have an obligation as a faculty member.”** Barbara discussed how difficult it is to imagine designing courses with students because of her “obligations” as a professor. Barbara explained that she has “an obligation as a faculty member to have students meet certain objectives so that they can incorporate this knowledge into a clinical experience, then take a comprehensive exam and a national praxis exam, and be successful in an internship.” As a result, Barbara felt that “there is a lot of pressure on me to ensure that information is getting conveyed to the student. So if there is any compromise in that because of that collaborative process, that is kind of a red flag.” The fear of not meeting her responsibilities as a faculty

member, Barbara view collaborative course design as “risky” and something she could not implement right now. Robert also felt that collaborating with students was somewhat risky. He explained that the professor has the obligation to adhere to the syllabus and to make sure that the American Speech-Language and Hearing Association (ASHA) criteria are met when he stated that “there is a responsibility to that group of students, that we are going to attempt to deliver content here that meets ASHA standards and prepares you.” Robert pointed out “even though I am working with this student and we are going to try and do this together, I still have a responsibility here.” Lucille stated that she would consider using collaborative course design because it is the students “learning experience, they are paying for it.” However, she also felt that she would only consider using it if it “is in the confines of meeting the expectations of ASHA, and the university, and all the other standards that are put on you for the course design.”

***Recognition: “It wouldn’t be a great mechanism of recognition.”*** Kenneth confided that using collaborative course design would not bring him any recognition, whereas if he were to write a grant or publish a paper he could get new equipment or funding for the department. Kenneth stated that in order to be “promoted or tenured, I am supposed to be developing my own research agenda in my area of expertise.” Kenneth went on to explain “collaborating with students is not my area of expertise... if you don’t know the literature in that area, you are not going to get your stuff published.” Lindsay expressed concern with recognition of this work towards achieving tenure, which is one year away. Although she is interested in trying student-faculty collaborative course design, she may wait until after she reaches tenure. At Lindsay’s university, student evaluations play a big part in achieving tenure. Consequently, Lindsay said that she wants “those evaluations to be good, and they have been good. So if it’s not broken, don’t fix it yet.” Barbara has also adopted the same “if it’s not broken don’t fix it” attitude.

Barbara works at what she calls a “non-publish or perish institution,” where there is a “focus on effective teaching and the scholarship behind teaching.” Even though Barbara described the environment at her university as “nurturing,” she still feels pressure to excel as a professor. “I am just so terrified of failure, because I put a lot of pressure on myself to make sure that I do the very best that I can.” Barbara has found teaching methods that work for her and stated that she would keep using these methods “until those stop working, or until it’s time to do something else because the literature tells us that this is the new up and coming trend.”

***Time: “There are a lot of things that take up time already.”*** Judy thought that collaborative course design could be more time consuming and stated that professors may not “want to change what they have been doing because it is too much work.” Judy also felt that the amount of effort professors are willing to put in could impact how much student input is incorporated. Judy explained that when “you have it down and you have already taught it, then it is a lot easier to just go with what you already had.” This way you “just change the date on the syllabus and the times of class, and you are good to go.” Kenneth also pointed out that collaborative course design could be more time consuming, and “a lot of course development isn’t well accounted for in my contracted time.” Kenneth estimated “that a single course represents about 10%” of his time. Kenneth explained that professors “don’t frequently develop tons of new classes” because developing a new class can be taxing. Professors “don’t have a lot of time” for course design “because they have to do their research, or write manuscripts to get them published, or serve on committees for the college.” Lindsay confirmed Kenneth’s statement that professors do not often design new courses when she stated that she has “a template that I work from, and I do make changes every semester, but as far as how the course is designed, I don’t necessarily make broad changes.” Lindsay felt that with this type of course design, time



would be necessary for the professor to “reflect on student input, my own thoughts, and kind of integrate that together.” As a result she felt that this type of course design “might be more time consuming, and there are a lot of things that take up time already.” Although Lindsay thought student-faculty collaborative course design might be more time consuming, she concluded that, “in the end it would probably be worth whatever extra time would be required.”

**Professor planning style: “It is just not generally how I do stuff.”** Two different styles of faculty approaches to teaching were identified: planners and non-planners. Both planners and non-planners identified aspects of collaborative course design that may conflict with their planning style, making them reluctant to use it. Lindsay is a planner: she is “used to kind of knowing when a semester starts what it is going to look like.” She felt that it would be “difficult” for her to not have a plan and to have things “up in the air.” Therefore, Lindsay concluded that if she were to use collaborative course design, she would want to use a “timeline to do it... in advance” of the beginning of the semester. Like Lindsay, Barbara also stated that she needs a “plan.” As a result, Barbara felt that in order for collaborative course design to work for her she would need a plan in advance. She stated that she “could see selecting a few students and trying to redesign a course based on feedback,” as long as she had a plan of action before the course started. Kenneth on the other hand, does not spend as much time designing courses up front and is more used to adjusting the course as he goes. Kenneth has not “thought about a mechanism” to work on course design “ahead of time,” and felt that planning ahead of time would go against what he is used to doing. Kenneth stated “I am used to working whenever I feel like. Now you are talking about having a set meeting, doing this at a specific time. It is just not generally how I do stuff.” Like Kenneth, Judy will also occasionally “go in with a kind of shell” for the course and make adjustments based on student feedback. For example, Judy might “print out the shell of

the syllabus...like a template,” and then give students “some options.” Judy may then ask the students to “just think about how you learn best, and what kind of assignments would be best, and have them get in small groups... just have a conversation like that.” Barbara felt that employing methods similar to those used by Kenneth and Judy, where you are “starting with a shell” at the beginning of the semester and collaborating from there, would be “like running wild. I couldn’t do that... I need a plan. For me that wouldn’t work, I would not sleep at night. It would be really nerve racking.”

**How would this work?: “I am not sure how that works.”** When asked if he would ever consider using collaborative course design, Robert stated that he was “not sure how that works” and conveyed that he had questions regarding this type of course design. Many of the other participants expressed reluctance to use student-faculty collaborative course design due to questions regarding how this type of course design “would work.” The participants felt that they would need more information before considering or attempting to use student-faculty collaborative course design. The participants specifically felt that an evidence base supporting the use of collaborative course design may make them more likely to consider using it. They also felt that a model to follow would be beneficial in order to implement this type of course design.

Kenneth felt that if he had “evidence about better outcomes,” he would be more likely to use this type of course design. Robert also felt that research showing that collaborative course design “resulted in better learning” would increase his openness to including students in the design process. Lindsay specifically wanted “evidence showing that maybe students are more engaged or have better outcomes” as well as the “student perspectives” of collaborative course design. She felt that if “the outcomes are better” it would give her a “reason” to use collaborative course design. However, if the outcomes are the same as “faculty designed courses,” she thought

“it might still be worth trying if the student perspectives of it are positive.” When asked about how much input students could be given on course design, Barbara also stated that she was “trying to think of how that would work” and was “not really familiar with the process of including students in course design.” She was interested in learning about the “effectiveness” and the “purpose” of collaborative course design. She stated that she would also need “a rationale” before she would “incorporate” collaborative course design.

Lindsay had many questions about how to implement collaborative course design. She wondered about the “amount of input other people have had students give,” the “methods people have used for resolving conflicts or coming to consensus,” timing of when this type of course design should be done, and selection of students. Therefore, Lindsay stated that she would first want “some practical tips on how to get started.” Barbara also felt like she would need more information so that she could develop “the whole picture” regarding collaborative course design. Barbara specifically wanted information that included “some success stories” as well as “some examples of what other professors have done, how it worked for them, who they used and why.” Barbara also felt that information regarding how a collaborative course design model could be “customized” for different professors “particular needs” would be helpful. Like Barbara, Robert wanted an example to follow that “worked well” for other professors and shared that he is “great at stealing others’ ideas.” Just as Lindsay had questions regarding student selection, Kenneth felt that he would need some “guidance” regarding which students to select, the number of students who should be involved, if they should be students who have already taken the course, and how often the group would need to meet. Kenneth concluded that a “roadmap” or “guidelines about how I would do this” would be “helpful.

### **Themes Related to Anticipated Benefits: “I think it could be beneficial.”**

While the participants expressed reluctance to use student-faculty collaborative course design, they also acknowledged several benefits and reasons to consider using this type of course design. The participants’ anticipated benefits of student-faculty collaborative course design are discussed below.

**Valuable student insight: “Having student input on course design would be valuable.”** Lucille stated that “unless you can project yourself into the shoes of the current student population... I don’t think you can be a very effective instructor.” The participants recognized that collaborative course design would provide “valuable” insight into the student perspective, which would lead to an enhanced course, and assistance scaffolding student learning.

Barbara confided that she occasionally has doubts regarding some of the activities she plans, leading her to wonder, “Is this even doable? Is this too much for them? Is it too hard?” Barbara stated, “if I had that collaborative effort, I would kind of be going in knowing or feeling as though what I am presenting to the students is completely manageable.” Barbara also acknowledged that change is implemented through course evaluations, but that “so much of what we learn from the students is retrospective.” However, Barbara stated that she preferred this retrospective feedback because she wasn’t sure how she would incorporate student input earlier on. Kenneth also recognized that as opposed to the “retrospective” feedback provided by student evaluations, collaborating prospectively with students by making changes to his courses as they develop has helped him to get “to a better product right away.” He explained that with traditional course design approaches, he would “have had to wait until the end, then make changes and try it again. It might take two semesters or three semesters” to get to a good product. While he has

incorporated student input as the course evolves, he felt that involving students in “original discussions” at “the onset” would have allowed the students to respond “to something that we found out during the course of the semester.” He concluded “we could have started at a different point if we had had some student input initially.” Lindsay foresaw benefits that could be carried forward when designing courses in the future. She felt that collaborating with students would ultimately provide her with “more perspectives to consider” when designing courses which would help her to “design projects so that they can be useful for the majority of students.” Robert also thought that student input would be useful “moving forward.” Robert felt that insight into the student perspective “would be helpful” to determine where issues are in a course and then to determine “what could we do to make that better.” He concluded that this insight into the student perspective could be useful “moving forward” to help professors “have a better ability to take a student perspective on things.”

The participants also acknowledged that insight into the student perspective would help professors to scaffold student learning. Kenneth explained that the professor must consider “what is going to be a good framework” so that students can “be successful as novice clinicians.” Therefore he felt that student “feedback in just how much they can do on their own is really important in the process rather than at the exam level.” Lindsay felt that collaborating with students would give her “insight into how students learn, what students are looking for in a professor” as well as “new ideas of some things to do” that she might not “have considered that students might suggest.” Barbara recognized that “there are a lot of different learning styles,” and that insight into the student perspective could help to “incorporate those styles into a course.” She concluded that “having student input on course design would be valuable” because “trends change, and students change, and their preparedness for college is very variable with every

student.” Kenneth has tried different collaborative approaches with students, including leaving the syllabus open-ended and revising it with students as they go. He has found that collaborating with students has led to better learning outcomes for the students. He stated that he “felt better about where the students were at the end of the course” and “felt like they did a lot more synthesis” of the information he presented. Therefore, he concluded that incorporating student input into his courses “ultimately felt more satisfying.”

**Professional growth: “It would definitely help me grow as a professor.”** Lindsay recognized that student faculty collaborative course design could lead her to “grow as an instructor” because it would help her to “take on different perspectives” as well as “to have new ideas” and “face new challenges.” She felt that “meeting new challenges is important for growing as a professor.” Judy also recognized that growth as a professor is important. When reflecting on her teaching, Judy felt that “there is always room for improvement.” Judy confided that in her opinion, teaching “is a constant process of figuring out how to do it better.” Judy felt that collaborating with students has helped her to grow as a professor. She has found that incorporating student input into her courses has made her “more flexible” by “letting go of things that I thought were so important.”

**Increased student engagement: “The more they feel invested in how they are learning... the more engaged they are going to be.”** The participants discussed that they try to think of ways to get students to take ownership for their learning. Lindsay thought that collaborative course design would require students to “take some responsibility for their own learning,” as opposed to the instructor being in charge of the students’ learning. Kenneth also felt that if students were involved in the course “from the ground up” it would increase student ownership over their learning, which has applications for “the work world or employment.” Judy

stated that she thinks “a lot about how to engage the students” when planning her courses. Judy thought that collaborating with students puts them “in the driver’s seat of their learning” which could result in the students being “more engaged.” Barbara has incorporated different methods in her teaching “so that there would be more engagement in the classroom.” She stated, “We all like doing things that we want to do, and I think we all like doing things in a way of taking the path of least resistance and making it easier for ourselves.” She reasoned:

If a student provided feedback on how they wanted a class to be designed, they would be more engaged, and in being more engaged, they would have better retention and hopefully better processing of information, and be able to apply it in a multitude of formats.

Lindsay felt that enlisting students in course design would also “garner positive feelings toward the course,” which could ultimately increase student engagement. Lindsay pointed out several reasons why giving students input in course design could lead to “positive feelings,” not only about the course, but also “about the instructor.” She suggested that students would feel more positively because they would be “choosing to do certain things,” as opposed to “being told to do certain things.” She also suggested that involving students would show that the professor is “interested in their perspectives and thoughts,” leading to positive feelings on the part of the students. Lucille speculated “students would be happier” if given input into course design, and if students knew a course “was designed by prior students” they “might be a little more critical, but they would also be interested to see.” In Kenneth’s experience collaborating with students on course design, he found that when students are “involved in the process” they understand “that it is quite complex.” As a result, he found that students had decreased frustration regarding certain “aspects of the course,” and he felt this helped garner positive feelings about the course.

**Clinical application: “That can really kind of mirror what they have to do in therapy.”** When planning her courses, the most important thing to Lucille is “bringing the clinic into the classroom.” Therefore, in her classes she and the students “are always talking about application.” Barbara also felt that clinical application is important, and one of her goals as an instructor is to bridge the “gap between academic learning and clinical application.” Robert tries to make sure that there is time in his courses to “make connections” for the students as to “how they might use this clinically.” In his courses Kenneth incorporates “clinical problems the students have encountered.” Lindsay thought involving students in collaborative course design would “give them insight into how others learn.” She felt that this could be “important for working with clients who may not learn in the same way they do or have different communication styles.” Lindsay further stated that this process would “mirror what they have to do in therapy” because they would be “thinking about that collaborative plan for someone else.” Lindsay also suggested that collaborative course design would provide experience using two important skills: collaboration and reflection.

Judy pointed out that “teamwork is very common across our courses within the master’s curriculum.” In Lucille’s courses, she encourages students to collaborate with each other. She said that she hopes “that they are talking to their peers because they are going to be talking to other colleagues about solving problems.” Barbara also plans opportunities for students to “talk to their peers,” and incorporates team-based learning activities to promote student collaboration with their peers. Lindsay felt that experience collaborating “is really important for students going into speech and language pathology.” Lindsay explained that when working in the field, SLPs must collaborate with “many other professionals.” She felt that collaborative course design would be “useful” and “beneficial, long-term” for students to practice collaboration because they



would be “learning how to reach a consensus and design a program together.” Learning about collaborative course design could also be beneficial for students in “a number of fields.” Lindsay stated that there are other professions where “you are working with other people, you are negotiating, you are having conflicts and resolving them.”

Lucille felt that reflection is important, and stated that in her courses there is a “tremendous amount... that focuses on the students.” It is important to Lucille to have her students reflect on “their role in the clinical setting” instead of “just thinking about the patient’s role.” Lucille recognized that reflection is important in the field of SLP and tries to help her students learn to consider “their impact” in therapy. Lindsay also tries to stress how “important” reflection is with her students. Lindsay felt that reflection is “part of the content” she is trying to teach. She wants her students to reflect on the information, their own views and principles, and then decide how they are going to incorporate the information with their views and principles. Lindsay thought that student-faculty collaborative course design “would require a lot of reflection on their learning.” She explained that students would not only need to reflect on their own learning, but they would also need to reflect on things they “liked about other courses... things that professors can do that are helpful... and how could the class be structured.” Judy also recognized that student reflection on their learning is important when incorporating their input. When Judy incorporates student input into her classes, she first asks the students to reflect on their learning by asking them to “think about how you learn best and what kind of assignments would be best.”

**Themes Related to Participant Suggestions for Implementing Collaborative Course Design:  
“That is probably what I would do as a starting point if I was interested in this.”**

All of the participants provided ideas for how to implement student-faculty collaborative course design even though they were not specifically asked for suggestions. The following ideas were discussed during the interviews and could have potential implications for future research and development of a collaborative course design model.

**Gaining student trust: “You need to establish a level of trust from the student that this was actually going to be okay and lead to good learning on their part.”** The majority of participants expressed that they felt it would be vital to “establish a level of trust from the students” when using collaborative course design. From past experience, Kenneth found that when he let students know that he wanted “their expertise” or “their opinion as a student,” the students “were pretty free in giving it.” Judy felt that in addition to being transparent with students it is very important to provide a rationale for different “pedagogic methods” in order to increase the students’ comfort using different kinds of learning methods. Judy stated that professors “really need to be clear with them about why we are using the methods that we use... the benefits, and what they are for.” Lindsay agreed with Judy that it would be “absolutely critical” to share the rationale for collaborative course design with students. Lindsay stated, “I wouldn’t want students to think I am just pawning my work off on them, that I don’t want to plan and so I’m just having them do it.” Therefore, Lindsay felt that she would “have to be very intentional in talking about why” she is using collaborative course design. Being transparent with the students would help to gain trust from the students because they would “know why and how this is going to help them later on.”

**Starting out slowly: “I would probably start with having them design an aspect of the course.”** Many of the participants felt that they would be more comfortable starting off “slowly” using collaborative course design. Kenneth felt that designing an entire course “from the ground up” with students “seems like a lot.” He stated that he would initially feel more comfortable collaborating with students to “design an aspect of the course.” Barbara acknowledged that collaborative course design was not something she would be comfortable implementing right now; however, she felt that starting out with one area would “be a little bit closer to my comfort level.” Lindsay also felt that she would rather implement student input “slowly,” and then “see how that goes before I have them design a whole course.”

**Student selection: “Which students am I going to talk to?”** The participants had conflicting ideas as to which students should be selected to participate in collaborative course design. Barbara thought that student input should be “retrospective.” She felt she could “almost relinquish some control” if she were to collaborate with “previous students about three years post graduation” that “have been in the field and have taken my class.” Barbara explained that previous students would know what she “didn’t teach well or didn’t teach enough of” because they have been working in the field. Kenneth also liked the idea of incorporating “retrospective” student input. He thought that talking to “students who just took the class” and getting “their input relative to what they learned” could be “beneficial.” However, he expressed concerns over those students not coming up with new ideas “because they saw how I did it” leading him to be unsure if he “would want to talk to the students who already took it.”

Kenneth thought retrospective student feedback could be helpful; however, he also acknowledged that prospective feedback would be beneficial. Reflecting on his experience working with “someone in instructional technology” to design a course, Kenneth stated that it

“would have been really interesting to have had students involved in those kind of original discussions” and that incorporating the students “could have potentially been valuable.” He thought that the students “could have responded to something that we found out during the course of the semester and we may have been able to start a little further along.” Robert also touched on prospective feedback when he suggested that collaborative course design could be used as a way to help the “less academic oriented group.” Robert felt that when it comes to less academically oriented students, “we have a responsibility to try to identify those students earlier on that are probably not going to be successful in the major” in order to “help them to sort of connect to that information.” He explained that it might be difficult for professors to pinpoint areas where students are struggling when he stated, “I am not sure if I am the person to know what those things are because I didn’t struggle with that information.” As a result, he felt that input from these students “would be helpful” because the professor may need “to break it down even more, to simplify it even more, or just do it differently.” Robert also suggested that collaborative course design would be beneficial for Ph.D. students. Robert reflected on his time as a Ph.D. student, during which he “taught the entire class” however he “wasn’t the instructor of record.” Robert did not feel like he “had much ability to change things” and stated that if he had gone “into that with an understanding of let’s work together on this, that would be kind of exciting.”

## Chapter 5: Analysis

This study explored faculty perspectives of student-faculty collaborative course design. The results of this study revealed several themes related to faculty member reluctance to use student-faculty collaborative course design. The results also identified anticipated benefits and research that is needed regarding collaborative course design. Lastly, the participants suggested ideas for implementing student-faculty collaborative course design.

### **Themes Related to Faculty Reluctance to Collaborate with Students**

Five themes impacting faculty member openness to student-faculty collaborative course design emerged from the data. Data analysis revealed that reluctance to share control with students, faculty views of students, institutional expectations, professor planning style, and questions regarding how collaborative course design would work were all factors related to reluctance to use collaborative course design.

**Control.** Sharing control with students is a vital part of collaborative course design, yet professors may not be comfortable handing some control over to students. Bovill et al. (2011) acknowledged that “a more democratic pedagogical planning process” (p. 140) could be difficult for faculty members, and they may find it challenging to share control over course design with students. Barbara noted that the biggest challenge of collaborative course design is that “it takes some of the control from the professors,” ultimately causing her to realize that she has “control issues.” Insight into why this aspect may be so challenging for faculty members has not yet been explored. Data analysis indicated that professor vulnerability is one potential factor contributing to professor reluctance to share control of course design with students.

**Vulnerability.** The participants revealed that collaborating with students could put professors in a potentially vulnerable situation. Barbara confided that sharing control with

students would make her “feel extremely vulnerable.” Sharing control of course design with students would require professors to listen to negative or positive student input and feedback. The participants expressed reluctance to collaborate with students due to the vulnerability experienced from negative student feedback. Some of the participants described the process of looking at negative course evaluations as “painful,” “the most humiliating feeling,” and “such an attack... very harsh.” However, the participants stated that student evaluations are the largest source of input that students have in courses. There is quite a bit of research regarding student evaluations and their effectiveness. Simpson and Sigauw (2000) examined faculty member perspectives of student evaluations and found that the majority of their participants viewed student evaluations as “problematic assessment instruments” (p. 209). The authors further found that faculty felt students use these evaluations as a form of retaliation and are not able to impartially assess their professors. Although these findings are consistent with the findings of this current study, they did not specifically address professor vulnerability related to student evaluations. A study by Kane and Chimwayange (2014), in which student feedback was incorporated through “learning-centered dialogue,” touched on the idea of professor vulnerability. The authors found that “the reality of listening to students’ feedback on their lessons was initially somewhat threatening to some,” and a particular teacher expressed “fear of what students would say” (Kane & Chimwayange, 2004, p. 58). Delpit (1988) acknowledged that incorporating student voices might create a vulnerable situation for teachers because student views could be “unflattering” (p. 297). While this could be challenging, Delpit (1988) argued “it is the only way to learn what it might feel like to be someone else and the only way to start the dialogue” (p. 297). In conclusion, the participants expressed reluctance to share control with

students because this may mean that they are placing themselves in a potentially vulnerable situation.

**Faculty views of students.** Data revealed that the professor's perception of students was another factor contributing to reluctance to collaborate with students. While the interviewer did not bring up the topic of views of students, the participants shared these perspectives when asked if they would use student-faculty collaborative course design and how much input students should be given on course design. The sub-themes of power relationships, student knowledge, and maturation level of students emerged from these conversations regarding faculty views of students. The participants revealed that they had concerns regarding forming a collaborative relationship with students. Previous research has suggested that changes to the power dynamic between faculty and students could be difficult for some faculty members (Bovill et al., 2011; Cook-Sather, 2008). The participants also expressed concerns regarding the abilities of students to contribute knowledgeably about courses and having the maturation level to contribute to course design. Lack of student knowledge regarding teaching and learning has been identified in other research as one reason some faculty are hesitant to incorporate student voices in their education (Kane & Chimwayange, 2014). However, maturation level of students was a new theme to emerge and has not been previously explored in the literature.

***Power relationships.*** Establishing an equal relationship is very important to the collaborative process. Yet, the participants felt that this relationship would be difficult to develop. The participants expressed that the professor is in a position of "power" because the professor determines grades and that "if you are working with a student there is always going to be some of that non-equal level to it." In addition to this "power" relationship, professor reluctance to share control with students could also impede the formation of an equal

relationship. Previous literature (Bovill et al., 2011; Cook-Sather, 2008) suggested that establishing an equal relationship could be a potential challenge of collaborative course design. Bovill et al. (2011) acknowledged that faculty may “be uncomfortable with the necessary change in power relationships” (p. 14). It could also be difficult to determine “norms for participation in a new structure and set of relationships” (Cook-Sather, 2008, p. 481). Overcoming the typical relationship between faculty and students would involve outlining a shared understanding and employing a professional attitude and conversational style in order to avoid misunderstandings (Cook-Sather, 2008).

***Student knowledge.*** In their research regarding “learning-centered dialogue”, Kane and Chimwayange (2014) found that some teachers “were reluctant to accept that the students’ feedback was worthy of serious consideration” (p. 58) because of the students’ lack of knowledge regarding teaching. The participants in this study also expressed concerns regarding the amount of knowledge that students have regarding teaching and course design, leading them to wonder how much students could really offer in terms of course design. While the participants were asked about collaborating with students, the participants gave responses as to why students could not “solely” be in charge of certain aspects of course design due to their lack of knowledge. Collaboration is “working together toward common objectives” thus, the idea of students being “solely” responsible for aspects of course design does not fit within the concept of collaborative course design (Martin, 2005, p. 44). Due to the mismatch between the vocabulary used in the participants’ responses and the vocabulary used in the researcher’s questions, these responses were considered in regards to the participants’ “vocabularies of motive” (Mills, 1940). Many of the participants felt that they would need to retain “a piece of the control” if collaborating with students. Explaining why students cannot “solely” be in charge due to their



lack of knowledge, may truly serve as a justification for why some participants didn't "feel like full relinquishment of control is necessary." This means that student knowledge is not the only factor at play, and the participants' responses are indicative of the reluctance to share control with students and the related potentially vulnerable position this may create for faculty members. Additionally, the interpretation of "collaboration" by some participants indicating that the students would be "solely" in charge of any aspect of the course design may indicate greater hesitations and concerns than the participants were willing to admit. Their transition from a question regarding collaboration to an answer reflecting "sole" control may be reflective of greater concerns about losing control of the decision-making process than they were willing to admit to a graduate student researcher.

The participants were reluctant to receive student input on course content and objectives. In regards to course content, the participants viewed themselves as the "expert" and did not feel that it could be "completely up to the students" to decide "what we are going to learn." Regarding course objectives, the participants conveyed that professors would need to maintain a certain amount of control in these areas and students couldn't "be the ones to solely develop the objectives." Mixed views were given regarding collaboration on assessment. Some participants felt that if they were collaborating on assessment students "will just go on how they have done it before," whereas others thought that student input would be helpful because "a student may have a different opinion about that and maybe have a different approach" the professor hadn't "even thought of." The participants expressed openness to receiving student input on delivery and scheduling. In regards to delivery, the participants felt that students could "help more in the delivery." For scheduling, some participants recognized that the students' time is "precious" and that their schedules can be "crazy," and were open to giving students input. This led the

researcher to wonder if the participants did not feel that as much knowledge may be needed regarding delivery and scheduling, making it acceptable to incorporate student input in these areas.

***Maturation level of students.*** Data analysis also revealed a difference in participant views of undergraduate students versus graduate students. The participants expressed hesitation to work with undergraduate students due to their maturation level, engagement in their learning, and “orientation” to learning. Some of the participants discussed altering their teaching methods for undergraduate students because they do not have the “maturational level or the exposure” to learn from certain types of teaching methods. Other participants stated that undergraduate students often “don’t come to class prepared,” indicating that they are not engaged in their learning. Other participants discussed undergraduate students’ “orientation” to teaching and learning “where their performance on a certain exam defines your level of knowledge,” leading some participants to “have reservations” regarding working with undergraduate students. Previous research has discussed the role of academic developers and support for both professors and students participating in collaborative endeavors; however, the maturation level of students was a new theme to emerge (Bovill et al., 2011; Cook-Sather, 2008). Academic developers provide “advice, support, or other consultation” to university faculty (Cook-Sather, 2008, p. 474). Academic developers could serve as a potential means to address concerns regarding maturation levels of students by providing support and guidance for both students and professors.

***Institutional expectations.*** Institutional expectations emerged as another theme related to reluctance to collaborate with students. Three subthemes of institutional expectations emerged from the data including: professor obligation, recognition, and time.

**Obligation.** The participants expressed reluctance to collaborate with students because of their “obligations” as professors. When asked about their openness to implement collaborative course design and the amount of input they felt students should be given in course design, the participants’ responses incorporated vocabulary such as: “obligation,” “red flag,” “risky,” and “ASHA standards.” The participants discussed their perceived responsibilities such as: meeting the course objectives, ensuring students learn the content they are teaching, and ultimately achieving a positive product when it comes to their classes. They felt that helping students learn the content is vital because students need to be able to apply this knowledge in their clinical experiences, pass their praxis examinations, and represent the university in a positive light. The participants also mentioned their responsibility to meet ASHA standards, though the researcher never mentioned ASHA standards. Overall, the participant responses indicated that they viewed collaborative course design as somewhat “risky” and wondered if it would pose a threat to their perceived institutional obligations. The idea of professor obligation is consistent with the challenges to fulfill “professional requirements” suggested by Bovill et al. (2011, p. 141). However, Bovill et al. (2011) argued that while professors have the responsibility to make sure that students are competent in their profession, they still have flexibility to choose how “the knowledge, skills and values required” (p. 141) are reached. The participants’ responses were analyzed by examining the “vocabularies of motive” (Mills, 1940) of their perceived institutional obligations. Considering the participants vocabulary of obligation in light of the fact that professors have the flexibility to choose what type of teaching methods they employ could suggest several potential factors impacting the participants’ responses. To begin with, the participants’ responses could potentially have been a polite means to convey that they simply are not interested in collaborative course design. Secondly, the responses could suggest that the

participants were uncomfortable with collaborating with students on course design. Lastly, the responses could also reflect the hesitation to use collaborative course design due to limited knowledge and questions regarding this type of course design.

The vocabulary used by the participants also indicated that the participants were very concerned about the type of product that would be achieved if students shared in the control over course design, rather than just the design process itself. Barbara felt that she had an obligation to develop a successful product because students need to “meet certain objectives so that they can incorporate this knowledge into a clinical experience, then take a comprehensive exam, and a national praxis exam, and be successful in an internship.” These findings were consistent with a study by Ziegenfuss and Lawler (2008), which detailed the process of collaboration between instructional design specialists and professors to design courses and enlist methods to incorporate student views. The authors found that the participants were “focused on the products created during the course, not on the process of course design” (p. 155), whereas the instructional design specialists were “focused on the paradigm shift in thinking about the process of course design in a different way” (p. 157). The authors’ found that this “process/product paradox” (p. 157) is one challenge of collaborative methods in teaching.

***Recognition.*** The participants expressed reluctance to collaborate with students due to concerns that it may impact promotion, tenure, or recognition. This theme also related to the “professional requirements” challenge suggested by Bovill et al. (2011, p. 141). Bovill et al. (2011) stated that faculty members could feel that the demands placed on them “limit the possibilities of co-creation” (p. 141). This statement was consistent with the findings from this study. The participants expressed reluctance to implement collaborative course design because it could potentially interfere with receiving recognition. Some of the participants expressed

concerns that their chances of being promoted or receiving tenure could be impacted if the course outcomes from collaborative course design were undesirable. Other participants conveyed that collaborative course design would not be a significant source of recognition, and therefore would make them less likely to use it. The faculty members at universities with different classifications still felt pressures related to promotion, tenure, and recognition. Kenneth works at a research-focused university and stated that in order to be “promoted or tenured, I am supposed to be developing my own research agenda in my area of expertise” and “collaborating with students is not my area of expertise.” Barbara on the other hand works at a “non-publish or perish institution” where there is a “focus on effective teaching and the scholarship behind teaching.” However, she is “so terrified of failure” that she is reluctant to use collaborative course design. Therefore, the university classification was not found to have a significant impact on faculty member reluctance to implement collaborative course design.

***Time.*** Previous literature (Bovill et al., 2011; Cook-Sather, 2008) recognized that time could be a potential challenge of collaborative course design. Cook-Sather (2008) acknowledged that faculty members and students have demanding schedules, making collaboration challenging. Bovill et al. (2011) suggested that faculty may “resist new approaches viewed as time-consuming if they already feel overloaded with work” (p. 140). Due to this, the authors suggested starting with smaller more manageable collaborative projects at first. The findings from this study were consistent with previous research. The participants revealed that their numerous institutional obligations are time consuming, leaving little extra time for course design. In fact, some of the participants shared that their contracts allow very little time for course design. Since course design can be very time-consuming, the participants shared that many professors work from the same outline and do not make major changes to their courses each semester. These findings are

consistent with previous research; however, they are interesting for several reasons. To begin with Bovill et al. (2011) suggested that course design could be one of the greatest obstacles of valuable teaching and learning. Prior research has suggested that faculty members are not properly trained in methods of course design (Hadley & Fulcomer, 2010; Robinson & Hope, 2013; Ziegenfuss & Lawler, 2008). The findings from this research combined with prior research suggest that faculty members are not given the tools necessary for course design or provided with sufficient time to enhance their course design methods. In addition, the participants' revelation that they work from the same outline when designing courses, only making minor adjustments, is interesting to consider in light of the participants' views of students. Some of the participants' felt that students would not offer original ideas for course design and would offer suggestions based on previous professor's ideas and "will just go on how they have done it before." However, when faculty members use the same outline for a course semester after semester, it could be argued that this is exactly what faculty members are doing, going on "how they have done it before."

**Professor planning style.** Data analysis revealed faculty reluctance to collaborate with students was impacted by the professor's planning style. Two types of professors were identified: planners and non-planners. Both planners and non-planners disclosed that collaborative course design could present challenges to their personal preferences for course design. Lindsay is used to having a plan at the beginning of the semester and felt that if she were to use collaborative course design, she would need a "timeline to do it... in advance" of the beginning of the semester. Whereas Kenneth has not "thought about a mechanism" to work on course design "ahead of time" and stated that planning ahead of time "is just not generally how I do stuff." These findings are consistent with the research findings of Ziegenfuss and Lawler (2008). The

authors found that when collaborating on course design “some may find it difficult to do significant planning up front if they are not accustomed to working in that manner” (p. 159). Although they thought that planning ahead of time allowed for better results, they recognized that this type of planning might not work for everyone. On the other hand, the authors also found that it is necessary to “rethink and make changes during the implementation process” (p. 159), which some professors that require a solid plan that they can stick to may find challenging. Consequently, faculty members may need to develop a collaborative course design process that aligns with their own personal planning style. Incorporating collaboration with students slowly and starting with smaller projects could help faculty members to find a process that they are comfortable using in future collaborative course design endeavors (Bovill et al., 2011).

**How would this work?** When asked if they would use collaborative course design, many of the participants were “not sure how that works” and expressed that they had many questions regarding this type of course design, which impacted their reluctance to use it. Barbara felt that more information would be needed in order to develop “the whole picture” of collaborative course design. The participants had questions regarding the general process of how to implement collaborative course design and wanted “evidence about better outcomes.” These questions and the need for more information have implications for future research.

The participants discussed their questions regarding how to implement collaborative course design, including which students to select, how many students to incorporate, when to begin the process, how to resolve conflict, and the amount of input to give students. In general, the participants wanted information regarding previous methods that have been used and proven successful and felt that a “roadmap” or “guidelines” on how to implement collaborative course design would be “helpful.” Barbara also wanted information on how a collaborative course

design model could be “customized” for different professors’ “particular needs.” Previous research has suggested different ways to implement student-faculty collaborative course design (Bovill et al., 2011; Mihans et al., 2008). However, models of best practice for collaborative course design and suggestions for ways to customize the process have not been suggested.

The participants also explained that they would like to see an evidence base supporting the use of collaborative course design. The participants were specifically interested in “evidence showing that maybe students are more engaged or have better outcomes.” The participants were also interested in research regarding “students’ perspectives” of collaborative course design, both students who took part in the process and students who took the collaboratively designed course. Previous research has discussed the importance and benefits of involving students in their educational experience (Bovill et al., 2011; Carlile, 2012; Hutchings, 2005; Kane & Chimwayange, 2014; Ziegenfuss & Lawler, 2008). Mihans et al. (2008) found that student-faculty collaborative course design improved student ratings of the course. However, in order to provide an “evidence-based education” (Ginsberg et al., 2012), more research regarding the effectiveness of student-faculty collaborative course design and student perspectives of this type of course design is needed, especially in the field of SLP where research regarding this topic is lacking.

### **Themes Related to Anticipated Benefits**

While the participants were reluctant to use collaborative course design, they acknowledged that “it could be beneficial.” The participants anticipated several benefits of collaborative course design, including valuable student insight, growth on the part of the professor, increased student engagement, and clinical application. Previous literature identified insight into the student perspective and increased student engagement as benefits of collaborative



course design (Bovill et al., 2011; Cook-Sather, 2008). Growth on the part of the professor and clinical application were two new themes that emerged.

**Valuable student insight.** The participants acknowledged that student insight is “valuable.” Lucille felt that in order to be an “effective instructor” you need to be able to “project yourself into the shoes of the current student population.” The participants felt that giving students input on course design would help to increase their effectiveness as instructors because it could lead to an enhanced course as well as help professors scaffold student learning.

The participants felt that not only could collaborative course design lead “to a better product right away” but it would also help professors to “design projects so that they can be useful for the majority of students” which could be useful “moving forward.” This finding is consistent with the theory of student voice, stating that students have important views of teaching and learning, and therefore are significant assets that should be involved as consultants and contributors to course design (Bovill et al., 2011).

The participants also felt that collaborating with students would provide “insight into how students learn, what students are looking for in a professor” as well as “new ideas of some things to do” that the professor may not have considered. Previous research has suggested that one benefit of collaborative course design is that it can provide a more extensive knowledge of learning for both students and faculty members. Kane and Chimwayange (2014) suggested that access into the student perspective of learning helps faculty members to develop a more in-depth understanding or awareness of how and what students need to learn. As faculty members learn more about how students learn, it helps them to improve their methods for assisting in student learning, and to develop realistic expectations of students.

**Professional growth.** The participants recognized the importance of growth in pedagogy. Many of the participants expressed the desire to excel as a professor. These participants felt that there is always more that can be done to improve. Some of the participants suggested that collaborative course design would help professors to “grow as an instructor” because it would help them to “take on different perspectives,” “to have new ideas,” “face new challenges,” and ultimately increase professor flexibility. Incorporating student voice would also require reflection on the part of the professor, which in turn would lead to professional growth. Reflection helps one to form enlightened opinions through critical analysis (Schön, 1983). Schön (1983) suggested the incorporation of the client, or the student in the case of pedagogy, in reflective practice when he stated that:

There is the recognition that one’s expertise is a way of looking at something which was once constructed and may be reconstructed; and there is both readiness and competence to explore it’s meaning in the experience of the client. The reflective practitioner tries to discover the limits of his expertise through reflective conversation with the client (p. 296).

**Increased student engagement.** The participants shared that they employ various teaching methods in an attempt to increase student engagement. They felt that the more students “feel invested in how they are learning... the more engaged they are going to be.” Barbara speculated that collaborative course design could increase student engagement, which could result in “better retention,” “better processing of information,” and application of course content “in a multitude of formats.” Previous research has suggested that student-faculty collaborative course design leads to increased student engagement, which results in enhanced learning. The theory of “student engagement” (Bovill et al., 2011, p. 134) emphasizes the importance of active

participation and dedication to learning for student achievement. Hadley and Fulcomer (2010) proposed that for successful learning to take place “students need to engage in higher-order thinking skills, including analysis, synthesis, and evaluation” (p. 3). Student ideas and knowledge of teaching and learning are enhanced when students are given an active role in their learning. This results in students becoming superior scholars with an increased dedication to learning (Bovill et al., 2011; Hutchings, 2005).

**Clinical application.** The participants proposed that collaborative course design could also have clinical implications for SLP students. Lindsay stated that collaborative course design would “mirror what they have to do in therapy” because they would be “thinking about that collaborative plan for someone else” and therefore collaborative course design could provide clinical application for students. The participants thought that collaborative course design would offer students hands-on experience with collaboration and reflection, which are foundational skills necessary to become a competent SLP. The idea of clinical application for collaborative course design is a new theme to emerge and has not been explored in previous literature.

The participants suggested that collaborative course design would provide students with experience collaborating with others to develop a plan of action. Judy stated that “teamwork is very common across our courses within the master’s curriculum.” Lindsay pointed out that experience collaborating “is really important for students going into speech and language pathology.” The topic of collaborative course design as a means to provide hands-on experience collaborating has not been specifically addressed in previous literature; however, research has proposed many different teaching methods in order to promote peer collaboration (Epstein, 2016; Goldberg, 2015; Hadley & Fulcomer, 2010). Though the importance of peer collaboration is emphasized in graduate programs, research regarding teaching and learning in the field of SLP is

lacking, as is research regarding collaborative course design as a method to promote experience with collaboration (Epstein, 2016).

The participants also felt that collaborative course design would require students to do a lot of personal reflection as they would need to reflect on their learning, previous courses, and strategies that have helped them. Lucille explained the importance of reflection when she stated that in her courses there is a “tremendous amount... that focuses on the students” and she encourages her students to reflect on “their role in the clinical setting.” The idea of collaborative course design providing practical application of reflection has not been discussed in previous literature, but the importance of incorporating reflection in SLP programs is not new. In the field of SLP, in order for a clinician to become successful and self-sufficient, it is necessary to “accurately and realistically evaluate or analyze your own performance and make indicated changes” (Meyer, 2004, p. 330). Reflection in the field of SLP is a constant skill that must be used in order to promote growth throughout one’s career (Meyer, 2004). This self-evaluation requires reflection on ones’ sessions, values and beliefs, and role in the therapeutic process. Schön (1983) developed the concept of the “reflective practitioner.” Through reflective practice, students slowly work towards being independent clinicians as they gain firsthand clinical experience. Students first learn to reflect on their role in therapy, and then to use their theoretical groundwork to make informed decisions (Brackenbury et al., 2014). Reflective practice is “appropriate for educating practitioners in fields that require judgments involving complexity, uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and value conflicts” (Brackenbury et al., 2014, p. 72). However, in SLP programs, there is a focus on developing an understanding of the theoretical groundwork before addressing clinical application (Brackenbury et al., 2014). As a result, students are not always provided with hands on experience with reflection until after they have

been taught the theoretical groundwork and are placed in a clinic setting. Not only is reflection important in the field of SLP, but Fink (2003) also suggested that reflection is a necessary aspect of active learning, and course design should include students' reflection on their learning. Student-faculty collaborative course design is one potential method to help students gain the necessary practical experience with reflection early on in order to prepare them to oversee their own clinical skills (Meyer, 2004).

While the benefit of hands-on experience using clinical skills is specific to the field of SLP, this could have implications for other fields, as these skills are not exclusively important to the field of SLP. Previous literature has recognized the importance and difficulty of providing clinical application for graduate students in the field of SLP in order to prime them for professional practice (Friberg et al., 2013). However, previous research on collaborative course design has not explored the idea of potential clinical application for the field of SLP or other fields.

### **Themes Related to Participant Suggestions for Implementing Collaborative Course Design**

While not specifically asked, the participants offered ideas for how to implement student-faculty collaborative course design. The participants shared suggestions for gaining students trust, starting out slowly, and which students to select.

**Gaining student trust.** The majority of participants thought it would be important to “establish a level of trust from the students” when using collaborative course design. The participants suggested that student trust could be gained by letting students know that faculty wants to hear “their expertise” and by providing a rationale for different “pedagogic methods” so that students “know why and how this is going to help them later on.” Previous literature regarding collaborative course design has not addressed the importance of sharing the rationale

with students. However, previous literature has discussed the importance of building rapport with students by letting them know that their input is important. Bovill et al. (2011) stated that rapport could be built by emphasizing to students that their input is critical to the collaborative process. The authors also stressed that faculty begin to build rapport with students early on, as rapport building is an important part of collaboration among students and faculty.

**Starting out slowly.** The participants felt that collaborative course design would be less overwhelming if professors were to start out “slowly” by having students “design an aspect of the course.” This is consistent with previous recommendations by Bovill et al. (2011) who proposed that faculty members interested in using collaborative course design consider beginning with smaller collaborative projects before collaborating with students to design a whole course.

**Student Selection.** The participants had different ideas as to which students to choose to participate in collaborative course design. Some participants discussed ideas for “retrospective” student feedback by including students in re-designing a course that they have previously taken. The participants discussed potential benefits of incorporating students who have just taken a course, versus students who have already graduated and are now working in the field. Barbara thought that using “previous students about three years post graduation” that “have been in the field and have taken my class” might be beneficial. Other participants discussed incorporating prospective student feedback as a means to achieve a better course, instead of retroactively addressing potential problems. Some participants felt that prospective feedback would not waste anyone’s time because professors “could have responded to something that we found out during the course of the semester and we may have been able to start a little further along.” Other participants suggested that collaborative course design could be a potential way to help students

that may be “less academically oriented.” Various methods for student selection in collaborative endeavors have been used (Bovill et al., 2011; Cook-Sather, 2008; Mihans et al., 2008); however, the benefits of selecting one set of students over others, or retrospective feedback versus prospective feedback, have not been explored.

## Chapter 6: Discussion and Implications for Future Research

### Discussion

While the participants acknowledged several benefits of collaborating with students on course design, they were generally reluctant to use this type of course design. Data analysis revealed that the participants' reluctance to collaborate with students was influenced by reluctance to share control with students, their views of students, institutional expectations, planning style, and questions regarding how this type of course design could be implemented. The results of this study indicate that there is a disconnect between the advancement of teaching methods and planning, and the views of teaching and learning held by faculty members and the institutions they work for. Change is necessary in order meet the needs of an evolving society and provide effective teaching and learning opportunities. One form of change that is needed is a paradigm shift in faculty members' views of teaching, learning, and students. Not only is change needed in faculty member's views, but also larger change, institutional change, is essential to support effective teaching and learning methods for an ever evolving society.

**Transformation of faculty member viewpoints.** The participants in this study thought that one of the main challenges with collaborative course design would be that "it takes some of the control from the professors," making some of them reluctant to share control with students and place themselves in a potentially "vulnerable" situation. The participants also questioned how they could navigate the "power relationship" and collaborate with students who have limited knowledge about teaching pedagogy. This caused them to give very little credit to students and decide that students could not "solely" be in charge of certain areas of course design, and therefore "full relinquishment of control" would not be necessary. They often referred to students' lack of knowledge regarding teaching and questioned if students were given



input in course design then “how much of it do you integrate?” Some of the participants referred to themselves as the “expert” in certain areas, like course content. These responses are interesting because collaboration often does not involve collaborating with individuals who have the same knowledge or expertise in one given area (ASHA, 2016; Goldberg, 2015; Johnson, 2013; Justice & Purcell, 2003). Also, being a “content expert” does not mean being an “expert” in regards to teaching and learning (Brackenbury et al., 2014; Ziegenfuss & Lawler, 2008). While the participants recognized that the student perspective would be valuable, they still referred to students’ lack of knowledge as a justification for not giving up full control. Students may not be the experts in regards to pedagogy, but they can provide the valuable perspective of “how teaching was being experienced in their class” (Kane & Chimwayange, 2014, p. 58). Therefore, the crucial topic here is not students’ knowledge of pedagogy, but instead students’ impression of teaching and learning (Kane & Chimwayange, 2014). The participants’ vocabulary behind their reluctance to collaborate with students due to the potential threat to their institutional obligations, indicates that the justifications for areas where students could not “solely” be in charge, might not only be related to students’ lack of knowledge, but may also be related to not wanting to share control and thereby alter the current “power relationship” among faculty members and students (Mills, 1940).

In order for professors to explore the student experience of teaching and learning, they need to open themselves up to the student voice (Bovill et al., 2011; Fleming, 2015). Student-faculty collaborative course design is one method for *professors to learn* about the student learning experience. This type of course design requires faculty members and students to form a reciprocal relationship, thereby threatening and altering the current accepted paradigm of course design in which the professor is solely in control of the course design process, and thus the

learning process (Bovill et al., 2011). As the participants in this study confirmed, this type of change is uncomfortable and requires a complete shift of faculty members' current views of teaching, learning, and students. Considering teaching in light of the patient-centered approach employed in speech-language pathology (SLP) is one suggestion for altering professors' current views regarding teaching, learning, and students.

***Patient-centered care as a framework for student-centered learning.*** In the field of SLP there is a focus on patient-centered care. The International Association of Patient Organizations (IAPO) stated that “the essence of patient-centered healthcare is that patients are at the centre of the healthcare system and therefore that the system is designed around them” (IAPO, 2007, p. 12). In patient-centered care, the patient is given the opportunity to express their unique needs and views in order to develop a meaningful plan of care. The SLP also shares information with the patient so that the patient can make informed decisions about their therapy. Lastly, the SLP collaborates with the patient and caregivers throughout the therapy process. Patient-centered care places emphasis on the patient, not the disease or disorder, in order to increase “involvement of the patient to adhere to treatment, make behavioural changes and to self manage” (IAPO, 2007, p. 5).

Student-centered learning is the academic equivalent of patient-centered care. Just like patient-centered care focuses on the patient in order to provide effective therapy, student-centered learning focuses on students in order to provide effective learning (Barr & Tag, 1995). The standards that are taught to students need to be reflective of “the values that we are conveying to our students through that teaching” (Brackenbury et al., p. 71). Therefore, incorporation of student-centered learning in SLP programs would promote the patient-centered views that SLP programs aim to teach students. In Bloom's (1956) *Taxonomy of Educational*

*Objectives*, he proposed affective and cognitive objectives as part of this taxonomy. According to Bloom (1956), the affective portion of this taxonomy includes “objectives which describe changes in interest, attitudes, and value, and the development of appreciations and adequate adjustment” (p. 7), whereas the cognitive portion relates to the “recall or recognition of knowledge and the development of intellectual abilities and skills” (p. 7). Both of these areas are interrelated, as a goal in one area has an equivalent in the other. Therefore, either domain can be used to achieve an objective in the other domain (Krathwohl, Bloom, & Masia, 1964). The incorporation of student-centered learning in SLP programs would not only fulfill cognitive objectives, but it would also fulfill affective objectives, or the “actions, feelings, and thoughts students are expected to develop as a result of the instructional process” (Krathwohl et al., 1964). If students see that faculty members are demonstrating a patient-centered care approach by using a student-centered approach to teaching and learning, it could help to transition them from a general awareness of the importance of patient-centered care, to the development of this perspective, as well as encourage integration of the values of patient-centered care into the theoretical frameworks that they have studied.

The results of this study, along with previous research stating that students are “rarely consulted about their educational experiences” (Bovill et al., 2011, p. 133), and some teachers are “reluctant to accept that the students’ feedback was worthy of serious consideration” (Kane & Chimwayange, 2014, p. 58), would suggest that emphasis is not being placed on the students and what *they need* for effective learning. As it was discovered in this study, some professors take the stance of the “expert,” impacting their openness to receiving student input due to students’ limited knowledge of teaching and learning methods. However, this opinion leaves out the important idea that students actually have important insight to offer regarding teaching and

learning (Bovill et al., 2011). In therapy, SLPs recognize that the patient is the most knowledgeable regarding his personal experiences and needs/priorities for everyday life. This means that the patient is consulted in order to provide and suggest strategies that are appropriate “for a particular client, given his or her history, lifestyle, financial resources, value system, or stage of emotional adjustment” (Toner & Shadden, 2002, p. 72). As such, it would be alarming for an SLP to state that she wonders how much input a patient should be given in his care due to his lack of knowledge regarding communication disorders. It is surprising then, that the view that students should be given little input in course design due to their lack of knowledge is common in educational programs, and as a result little room is given for student input. Currently in our educational programs, the main source of formal input that students have is through retrospective student evaluations. These student evaluations are like asking your patient how they felt about their therapy and what they would have changed after therapy has ended, and it’s too late to make modifications: meaningless for *that* patient. In SLP programs, the importance of patient-centered care is stressed, yet our educational programs do not reflect the same stance taken in therapy. While CSD professors stress the importance of developing meaningful plans of care for patients and incorporating collaborative and reflexive practice for students, the professors’ approach to teaching and learning is detached from the clinical skills and ideals that they teach because it does not focus on the student perspective. In order to bridge this gap, faculty members could incorporate a student-centered approach to teaching and learning based on the patient-centered care framework used in clinical practice, by opening themselves up to the student voice, teaching students about teaching, and incorporating students as collaborative partners.

*Incorporating student voice.* In SLP therapy, “client-specific” strategies are used, meaning that, “therapy targets are chosen based on an individual’s specific needs” (Roth &

Worthington, 2011, p. 8). In order to select “client-specific” strategies, it is imperative that clinicians “make a point of asking clients about their expectations” (Roth & Worthington, 2011, p. 23). This means that clients are given a say regarding their therapy and the techniques that are used in it. Just as the client perspective is taken into consideration in order to provide meaningful objectives and strategies in therapy, the student perspective should be taken into consideration in order to provide meaningful teaching and learning. In order “for teachers to understand the ways in which their practice influences student learning, they needed to invite and listen to students’ accounts of their learning experiences” (Kane & Chimwayange, 2014, p. 53). Student-faculty collaborative course design is one method to incorporate the student voice in teaching and learning; however, more is needed than methods for incorporating student voice. In order to truly incorporate student voice, a modification in professors’ views of students and who is the “expert” and holds the “power” in the classroom is needed. Delpit (1988) suggested that “the teacher cannot be the only expert in the classroom” and “to deny students their own expert knowledge is to disempower them” (p. 288). In SLP therapy, it is perfectly acceptable to respond to a client’s questions by saying “I don’t know. I’ll do some research on the topic and give you the information at our next session” and still “maintain credibility” (Roth & Worthington, 2011, p. 23). However, as Robert revealed in this study, professors “have been conditioned over the years that we are supposed to be the people that know.” This leads some professors to hold the opinion of themselves as the “experts” when it comes to teaching and learning, and feel that they are in a position of “power” over students. When professors’ hold the opinion of themselves as the “expert source” they portray the view of their “personal power” which has the effect of “disempowering one’s students” (Delpit, 1988, p. 288). Delpit (1988) proposed that “the only way to learn what it might feel like to be someone else and the only way to start the dialogue” is

to put one's own opinions "on hold" as we process information in light of "our beliefs" (p. 297). In order to do this, it is necessary to "keep the perspective that people are experts in their own lives" and "learn to be vulnerable enough... to allow the realities of others to edge themselves in our consciousness" (Delpit, 1988, p. 297). For faculty members, this means that in order to accept students as the "expert" regarding their learning experience, it is necessary for faculty to abandon the view of themselves as the "expert" in a position of "power" over students and open themselves up to the idea of placing themselves in the potentially "vulnerable" situation that might present itself with the incorporation of student input. This also means that students are not the only learners in the classroom, and professors also need to consider that they can learn from their students (Fielding, 1999). In order to incorporate student voice, there is an "acknowledged awareness of the possibility of mutual learning" in which students and professors "can be both teachers and learners" (Fielding, 1999, p. 23). This may be uncomfortable for some faculty members; however, the focus of professors should be effective teaching and learning, and the only way to provide this is to incorporate the student voice.

For professors who feel uncomfortable or are unsure of how to incorporate student voice into teaching and learning, academic developers could provide guidance and assistance for navigating this new territory. Academic developers could help professors find ways to build partnerships with students and provide guidance throughout the collaborative process (Bovill et al., 2011). The use of academic developers could also serve as a potential means to address concerns regarding the maturation level of students. In a research study by Cook-Sather (2008), professors were provided with "advice, support, and other consultation" (p. 474), and the student consultants were "supported in weekly reflective meetings" (p. 474). Therefore in order to address concerns regarding student maturation levels, academic developers could be used to aid

with student selection and provide support for the participants involved in collaborative endeavors.

*Teach students about teaching.* It is necessary to share information with patients during the therapeutic process in order to promote patient ownership and generalization of skills into everyday life. This includes information regarding their disorder, information regarding how a particular activity is going to help them achieve their goals, as well as information regarding therapy techniques and how they can be used in everyday life. In fact, Roth and Worthington (2011) stated that clinicians should give their clients “a clear rationale regarding the purpose of *each* activity” (p. 23). Doing so will help to “minimize client anxiety and confusion” and “intervention tends to be less effective if clients do not understand why they are being asked to perform particular tasks” (p. 23). Teaching should not be any different, and “part of a faculty’s responsibility should be to let students in on the tricks and truths of the learning trade” (Hutchings, 2005, p. 2). It is not enough for students to learn about the field of SLP, they also need to understand the way in which SLPs “think and why they make the choices that they do” (Brackenbury et al., 2014, p. 78). Sharing the rationale behind various teaching methods can help to increase students’ awareness to how those teaching methods connect to clinical application (Brackenbury et al., 2014). Ginsberg (2007) found that teacher effectiveness is increased when teachers share their “view of students, the teaching-learning process, and their educational philosophies” (p. 21) and concluded that “transparency allows the students to understand and appreciate their faculty, creating greater connections, motivations, and opportunities for learning” (p. 22). Being transparent with students would also allow students to offer enlightened input on courses. This could address concerns regarding the amount of knowledge students possess, and make faculty more open to collaborating with students. If collaborating with

students, students should be provided with knowledge regarding course design methods and teaching pedagogy in the early stages of the collaborative course design process. This not only has implications for collaborative course design but for *all* areas of teaching and learning. Consequently, professors could share their rationale and proposed benefits of their teaching and learning methods. If students understand the purpose behind what the professor is aiming to accomplish, they would be better able to provide meaningful and constructive feedback, which could improve the current student feedback process.

*Incorporating students as collaborative partners.* ASHA has adopted evidence-based practice as a framework for services in SLP. Evidence-based practice is defined as an “approach in which current, high-quality research evidence is integrated with practitioner expertise and client preferences and values into the process of making clinical decisions” (ASHA, 2005). In order to incorporate evidence-based practice into clinical decision-making, clinicians need to “recognize the needs, abilities, values, preferences, and interests of individuals and families to whom they provide clinical services, and integrate those factors along with best current research evidence and their clinical expertise in making clinical decisions” (ASHA, 2005). This requires involving clients and their caregivers as “active participants” in determining “their highest priorities” and “target selection” (Roth & Worthington, 2011, p. 23). In order to involve clients as “active participants” (Roth & Worthington, 2011, p. 23), SLPs need to collaborate with their clients and their clients’ caregivers. Collaboration is included in the framework for speech language pathology practice and is a necessary part of service delivery in SLP (ASHA, 2016). As a result, a clinician would not decide what goals are most important for a client in his everyday life, or how the client will achieve those goals, without ever consulting the client. However, what and how students are going to learn is decided for them, not with them, which is in opposition to



the clinical framework for service delivery in SLP. In order to provide “evidence-based education” (Ginsberg et al., 2012), the same framework used for evidence-based practice should be utilized in teaching and learning. Currently, professor expertise is usually incorporated with evidence supporting teaching and learning methods, excluding an important piece of the puzzle: students’ views of teaching and learning. In order to create “significant learning experiences” (Fink, 2003), teachers should “encourage teacher and peer dialogue around learning” (Fink, 2003, p. 35). Consequently, for teaching practices to align with the evidence-based practice framework in SLP and provide “significant learning experiences” (Fink, 2003), student input should be incorporated along with the professor’s expertise and an evidence base.

Collaboration with students would not only provide an “evidence-based education” (Ginsberg et al., 2012), but it would also provide students hands on experience with collaboration, which is necessary to professional development in SLP. While employing methods to enhance collaborative skills that reflect real life application is an area of difficulty faced by SLP programs and faculty members, various methods have been proposed in order to promote peer collaboration (Epstein, 2016; Friberg et al., 2013; Goldberg, 2015; Hadley & Fulcomer, 2010). However, in professional practice SLPs collaborate not only with their peers but also with individuals in varying positions of expertise and status (ASHA, 2016; Goldberg, 2015; Johnson, 2013; Justice & Purcell, 2003). The participants in this study acknowledged that collaborative course design would provide students with hands on experience collaborating with peers. However, they did not discuss that collaborative course design would also include collaboration with those in higher positions of power: faculty members. Collaborative course design would provide more than just peer collaboration; it would also provide the opportunity to collaborate with those in different positions of power and expertise, thus more closely resembling real life

application. Johnson (2013) argued that the development of peer collaboration is a skill that should be acquired sooner rather than later; however, the participants in this study discussed the importance of “teamwork” in the “masters’ curriculum.” Collaborative course design could be used with undergraduate students to provide a way to encourage collaboration prior to the masters’ level.

Not only would this type of collaboration provide a well-rounded experience, it would also offer faculty members the opportunity to lead by example. Simply expressing the importance of collaboration to students is not sufficient; professors “need to teach them how to work with other professionals” (Pickering & Embry, 2013). Through student-faculty collaboration faculty could not only convey the importance of collaboration, but they could lead by example and show students how to collaborate. Collaborating with students would promote the affective area of Bloom’s (1956) *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*. If students see that professors are leading by example and collaborating *with* them, instead of having students only collaborate with each other, it would help students move beyond awareness of the importance of collaboration to the belief that collaboration is a vital component of patient-centered care (Kraithwohl et al., 1964). If students are expected to collaborate, and collaboration is a vital component of practice in SLP, then it would stand to reason that faculty members could promote this skill by incorporating collaboration with students.

**Institutional change.** Changes regarding faculty views of students, teaching, and learning are only a starting point. Institutional changes are necessary to support the inclusion of students in their education. Two areas that could benefit from modifications include the preparation and development of faculty as well as a reassessment of where institutional expectations should really lie.

***Faculty preparation and development.*** While discussing what information he would like to have regarding collaborative course design, Robert revealed that professors “are taught to learn content and to use that towards research and so on, but we are really not taught to be teachers, and I think that is true probably for most of the disciplines on this campus.” Robert further explained, “that it is just expected that if you are smart and you know the material, then you should be able to teach it.” Robert’s statements are consistent with what has been stated in the research. Ziegenfuss and Lawler (2008) acknowledged that professors are trained to be specialists in their field, but they are not trained to be professors. Fink (2003) stated that “the most limiting factor” of successful teaching is course design, as many professors have “little or no training in how to design courses” (p. 1). Robinson and Hope (2013) shared that professors are often not provided with any type of organized instruction about how to be teachers. This is also true of teaching in SLP, as SLP professors are not always provided with a strong foundation in teaching methods (Hadley & Fulcomer, 2010). Being a specialist in a certain field does not mean that one is a specialist regarding effective teaching and learning (Brackenbury et al., 2014; Ziegenfuss & Lawler, 2008). It is alarming that professors, who are responsible for preparing and educating our future leaders, are not always taught how to do this. The lack of instruction for professors is not without consequences. Possible implications involve a lack of teaching development, a decrease in student performance, and could reduce successful interactions between faculty and students (Robinson & Hope, 2013).

Not only are faculty often not taught how to teach, but they do not always have assistance available when it comes to enhancing their teaching (Ginsberg, 2010). In the field of SLP, ASHA (2005) highlighted the importance of continuing education as part of an evidence-based practice. ASHA (2005) stated that SLPs must “acquire and maintain the knowledge and skills that are

necessary to provide high-quality professional services, including knowledge and skills related to evidence-based practice.” However, teaching does not have the same equivalent that oversees and sets standards of practice (Ginsberg, 2010). Some universities include centers for teaching and learning that offer resources for professors to prepare and improve their teaching, but this is not standard at every university (Ginsberg, 2010). This means that faculty members looking to enhance their teaching must figure out how to do so on their own and unfortunately, not all faculty members turn to what the research says regarding teaching and learning when shaping their teaching methods (Brackenbury et al., 2014). Instead, many faculty members develop their teaching methods according to what they themselves experienced as students (Brackenbury et al., 2014). Just as clinical decision-making in SLP is evidence-based, teaching needs to be also, not only in the field of SLP, but in general (Brackenbury et al., 2014; Ginsberg, 2010; Ginsberg et al., 2012). The scholarship of teaching and learning (SOTL) provides an evidence base in order to assist in the development of professors in higher education (Ginsberg, 2010). Yet, given that there is not a teaching equivalent of ASHA to guide standards in teaching, the standard of evidence-based education is dependent on faculty awareness of the need for such practice.

Both the lack of training for faculty members and assistance for professional development indicate that institutional changes are needed to address the current problems in these two areas. Attention needs to be paid to the development of professors, and Ph.D. students should be provided with instruction in teaching methods and planning as part of their educational program. Professors also need to be provided with institutional support for professional development and should be held to the same standards that are required for clinical skills in SLP. Instead of only viewing a professor’s success as a teacher in relation to peer and student evaluations, success should also be considered in light of the evidence behind the teaching

methods used and the relationship to the values of the profession in which they are educating students (Ginsberg, 2010).

***Institutional expectations.*** The participants in this study expressed reluctance to collaborate with students due to limitations imposed by institutional expectations. The participants shared that there are numerous expectations placed on them, including teaching expectations, research expectations, and service expectations. Some participants were reluctant to use student-faculty collaborative course design because they felt it might pose a risk to meeting their institutional obligations and thought that collaborating with students may threaten their chances of receiving recognition. The participants also felt that collaborative course design could be more time consuming, and as course design is already time consuming, they questioned whether it would be realistic given their numerous institutional expectations. The participants shared that not much time is allotted for course design, and as a result professors generally work from the same outline when designing their courses. Lastly, the participants were more concerned with the type of “product” that they would produce with collaborative course design, rather than the process itself. Course design is an essential aspect of effective teaching and learning, yet this information reveals that some professors do not spend a great amount of time making adjustments to course design and view successful teaching and learning in terms of the type of product achieved (Fink, 2003). This information suggests that in order to make time for the numerous institutional expectations, important aspects of teaching and learning have been put on the back burner. This also suggests that professors’ tendency to define success in terms of the “product” attained is not in accord with the process of teaching and learning. Bovill et al. (2011) acknowledged that “professional requirements” could pose a challenge for collaborative course design (p. 141). The “professional requirements” of professors are important, but the number one

priority of any educational institution should be effective teaching and learning. In order to promote and support effective teaching and learning, an emphasis needs be placed on this aspect at the institutional level. This means that professors need to be provided with the necessary time to focus on course design as well as time to research effective teaching and learning methods. Also, the view of successful teaching in terms of the resulting “product” of a course is one that requires re-examination. Kolb (1984) proposed the concept of “experiential learning,” which defines learning as a dynamic process, and one learns through adjustment of thoughts and behaviors shaped by one’s experiences. Kolb (1984) stated that “the tendency to define learning in terms of outcomes can become a definition of nonlearning” (p. 26) because by defining learning in terms of the product, it takes away the idea that learning is a dynamic “process.” Therefore, successful learning includes learning how to learn, as opposed to reciting information. As a result, a change in the institutional views of successful teaching and learning is needed in order to promote the concept of successful learning as a “process” rather than in terms of a “product.” It is only with educational support that changes in the current state of education can be enacted in order to provide education that is focused on the needs of the student population, and is therefore meaningful and successful.

### **Limitations/Delimitations of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate SLP faculty perspectives of student-faculty collaborative course design. It was hoped that exploration of faculty perspectives would identify potential obstacles and facilitators to student-faculty collaborations and information that faculty would need to implement student-faculty collaborative course design. The researcher also sought explanations as to why information regarding education is seldom sought from students. Due to the qualitative nature of this study and the small sample size, the results of this study cannot be

generalized to faculty across all varieties of institutions. Further research on this subject would be beneficial in order to generalize findings.

One limitation of this study is that the data may not be representative of all university types (i.e. data may be gathered from mostly public universities which would not represent private or research universities). There are several delimitations to this study. The first delimitation is that this study focused on faculty member perspectives and did not take into account student perspectives. Future research on both faculty and student perspectives would provide a more complete analysis of student-faculty collaborative course design. Another delimitation of this study is that it addressed faculty member perspectives in SLP departments. Therefore, the findings of this research are most applicable to the field of SLP. Lastly, data only reflect schools in the Midwest due to the nature of the interviews (i.e. traveling to university sites and conducting face-to-face interviews). Future research in other geographic regions would be necessary to provide a complete representation of perspectives.

### **Directions for Future Research**

The participants identified information that they would need before implementing student-faculty collaborative course design and proposed ideas for implementation of collaborative course design, which have implications for future research. The participants in this study had many questions regarding how collaborative course design would work. While previous research has proposed several methods for executing student-faculty collaborative course design (Bovill et al., 2011; Mihans et al., 2008), a model of best practice and suggestions for customization has not been proposed. The participants specifically had questions regarding: which students to select, how many students to incorporate, when to begin the process, how to resolve conflict, the amount of input to give students, learning outcomes, and student

perspectives. In order to provide a model for collaborative course design that is evidence based, more research is needed regarding the effectiveness of the different methods that have been used for implementation as well as student perspectives of collaborative course design.

While not specifically asked, the participants shared suggestions for how they would implement collaborative course design, which included gaining students' trust, starting out slowly, and selecting students. To begin, the participants suggested that in order to gain student trust, the rationale for collaborative course design should be shared with students. Previous literature has discussed the importance of rapport building with collaborative course design (Bovill et al., 2011), however it has not addressed the importance of sharing the rationale with students, or methods for doing so. Research regarding methods for gaining student trust when using collaborative course design would be beneficial and could be incorporated into a proposed model of collaboration. Secondly, the participants suggested that starting out "slowly" by having students "design an aspect of the course" would be less burdensome than designing a whole course. This suggestion is consistent with previous suggestions by Bovill et al. (2011), however more research regarding different ways to begin incorporating student input would be beneficial for professors who are interested in collaborating with students but are not ready to take on collaborative course design. Lastly, the participants offered differing ideas regarding which students to involve in a collaborative course design process. Some participants suggested that "retrospective" student feedback that incorporated students in re-designing a course that they have previously taken, or involving students who have already graduated and are working in the field of SLP, would be beneficial. Other participants felt that prospective feedback would be useful as a better product could be achieved or as a potential way to help students who are struggling academically. Although various methods for student selection in collaborative



endeavors have been used (Bovill et al., 2011; Cook-Sather, 2008; Mihans et al., 2008), more research regarding the outcomes and effectiveness of incorporating retrospective and prospective student feedback would be useful. Specific topics that could be examined include the benefits of selecting students who have taken a course versus students who have not taken the course, benefits of incorporating students who have graduated and are working in the field, retrospective versus prospective student feedback, and the potential usefulness of collaborative course design in helping students who are struggling academically.

Another area of research that is needed regarding collaborative course design is the potential clinical application for the field of SLP or other fields. The participants suggested that collaborative course design could provide clinical application and hands-on experience with collaboration and reflection. However, there is not research regarding the effectiveness of collaborative course design in the field of SLP. Research focusing on these aspects would not only add to the evidence base regarding collaborative course design, but could also promote the use of collaborative course design as a potential method for the development of clinical skills, which is currently a challenge faced by SLP programs (Friberg et al., 2013).

## **Conclusion**

In order to keep up with current trends in teaching methods and facilitate learning that is student-centered, professors need to incorporate student voices in their education (Bovill et al., 2011; Brackenbury et al., 2014; Carlile, 2012; Fielding, 1999; Fielding, 2001; Fleming, 2015; Ziegenfuss & Lawler, 2008). The results of this study indicate that faculty members are reluctant to place themselves in a potentially vulnerable situation and share control with students who they feel know very little about teaching and learning. The results of this study also reveal that faculty members are not always provided with proper training and preparation for teaching, nor do they

always receive institutional support to advance their teaching methods and develop evidence-based courses. The current views and practices of faculty members and educational institutions are barriers to effective and meaningful educational experiences. Viewing students in the same manner that SLPs view their patients is one suggestion for reducing the current barriers to successful education. Just as clinicians acknowledge the value of giving their patients a voice in therapy, professors also need to acknowledge the importance of giving students a voice in their education. It is hoped that if faculty members demonstrate the values that they teach, not only will students benefit, but also educational institutions will take note and begin to rethink their priorities. To keep up with the evolving needs of students and provide meaningful learning experiences, change is necessary.

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# RESEARCH @ EMU

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**UHSRC Determination: EXPEDITED INITIAL APPROVAL**

**DATE: May 19, 2016**

**TO: Lauren Mead  
Department of Speech and Language Pathology  
Eastern Michigan University**

**Re: UHSRC: # 893940-1  
Category: Exempt Categories 6 and 7  
Approval Date: May 19, 2016  
Expiration Date:**

**Title: Faculty Perspectives of Student-Faculty Collaborative Course Design**

Your research project, entitled **Faculty Perspectives of Student-Faculty Collaborative Course Design**, has been approved in accordance with all applicable federal regulations.

This approval included the following:

1. Enrollment of *up to 12* subjects to participate in the approved protocol.
2. Use of the following study measures: *interview questions and demographic questionnaire*.
3. Use of the following stamped recruitment materials: *recruitment email text*.
4. Use of the stamped *consent form*.

**Renewals:** This approval is valid for one year and expires on 5/18/17. If you plan to continue your study beyond 5/18/17, you must submit a Continuing Review Form by 4/10/17 to ensure the approval does not lapse.

**Modifications:** All changes must be approved prior to implementation. If you plan to make any minor changes, you must submit a **Minor Modification Form**. For any changes that alter study design or any study instruments, you must submit a **Human Subjects Approval Request Form**. These forms are available through IRBNet on the UHSRC website.

**Problems:** All major deviations from the reviewed protocol, unanticipated problems, adverse events, subject complaints, or other problems that may increase the risk to human subjects **or** change the category of review must be reported to the UHSRC via an **Event Report** form, available through IRBNet on the UHSRC website

**Follow-up:** If your Expedited research project is not completed and closed after **three years**, the UHSRC office requires a new **Human Subjects Approval Request Form** prior to approving a continuation beyond three years.

Please use the UHSRC number listed above on any forms submitted that relate to this project, or on any correspondence with the UHSRC office.

Good luck in your research. If we can be of further assistance, please contact us at 734-487-3090 or via e-mail at [human.subjects@emich.edu](mailto:human.subjects@emich.edu). Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Kellman Fritz, PhD  
Chair  
University Human Subjects Review Committee

## Informed Consent Form

The person in charge of this study is Lauren Mead, a student at Eastern Michigan University. Throughout this form, this person will be referred to as the “investigator.” Her faculty adviser is Dr. Sarah Ginsberg.

### **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this research study is to discover faculty members in speech and language pathology program perspectives regarding faculty-student collaborative course design.

### **What will happen if I participate in this study?**

Participation in this study involves

- One one-hour interview discussing faculty perspectives on faculty-student course design
- A potential follow up interview lasting 30-60 minutes

I would like to audio record you for this study. If you are audio recorded, it will be possible to identify you through your voice. If you agree to be audio recorded, sign the appropriate line at the bottom of this form.

### **What are the anticipated risks for participation?**

There are no anticipated physical or psychological risks to participation.

The primary risk of participation in this study is a potential loss of confidentiality.

### **Are there any benefits to participating?**

You will not directly benefit from participating in this research.

Benefits to our field include adding to the research base for speech and language pathology educational programs.

### **What are the alternatives to participation?**

The alternative is not to participate.

### **How will my information be kept confidential?**

I will keep your information confidential by using a code to label data with the code linked to identifiable information in a key stored separately from data. Your information will be stored in a password-protected file on a password-protected computer. I will make every effort to keep your information confidential, however, I cannot guarantee confidentiality. There may be instances where federal or state law requires disclosure of your records.

Other groups may have access to your research information for quality control or safety purposes. These groups include the University Human Subjects Review Committee, the Office of Research Development, the sponsor of the research, or federal and state agencies that oversee the review of research. The University Human Subjects Review Committee reviews research for the safety and protection of people who participate in research studies.

I may share your information with other researchers outside of Eastern Michigan University. If I share your information, I will remove any and all identifiable information so that you cannot reasonably be identified.

The results of this research may be published or used for teaching. Identifiable information will not be used for these purposes.

**Storing study information for future use**

I would like to store your information from this study for future use related to faculty perspectives of faculty-student collaborative course design. Your information will be labeled with a code and not your name. Your information will be stored in a password-protected or locked file. Your de-identified information may also be shared with researchers outside of Eastern Michigan University. Please initial below whether or not you allow us to store your information:

\_\_\_\_\_Yes                      \_\_\_\_\_No

**Are there any costs to participation?**

Participation will not cost you anything.

You will be responsible for your transportation costs to and from the study.

**Will I be paid for participation?**

You will not be paid to participate in this research study.

**Study contact information**

If you have any questions about the research, you can contact the Principal Investigator, Lauren Mead, at lmead1@emich.edu or by phone at (248) 568-5050. You can also contact Lauren Mead’s adviser, Dr. Sarah Ginsberg, at [sarah.ginsberg@emich.edu](mailto:sarah.ginsberg@emich.edu) or by phone at (734) 487-2722.

For questions about your rights as a research subject, contact the Eastern Michigan University Human Subjects Review Committee at [human.subjects@emich.edu](mailto:human.subjects@emich.edu) or by phone at 734-487-3090.

**Voluntary participation**

Participation in this research study is your choice. You may refuse to participate at any time, even after signing this form, with no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may choose to leave the study at any time with no loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you leave the study, the information you provided will be kept confidential. You may request, in writing, that your identifiable information be destroyed. However, I cannot destroy any information that has already been published.

**Statement of Consent**

I have read this form. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and am satisfied with the answers I received. I give my consent to participate in this research study.

**Signatures**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Subject

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Subject

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

I agree to be audio recorded for this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Subject

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

I have explained the research to the subject and answered all his/her questions. I will give a copy of the signed consent form to the subject.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Person Obtaining Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Demographic Questionnaire

Please complete the following information:

1. Identify your Gender:
  - A. Male
  - B. Female
  
2. Identify your age:
  - A. 20-29
  - B. 30-39
  - C. 40-49
  - D. 50-59
  - E. 60-69
  - F. 70+
  
3. Select your education level:
  - A. MA/MS
  - B. Specialist
  - C. Doctorate
  
4. Please indicate where you completed your bachelor's degree (name/city/state of university)?
  
5. Please indicate where you completed your master's degree (name/city/state of university)?
  
6. Please indicate where you completed your doctorate, if applicable (name/city/state of university)?
  
7. What field of study is your doctorate in?
  
8. How many years of teaching experience do you have?
  
9. How many years have you been teaching at this university?
  
10. Please indicate all of the courses that you currently teach.