

Problem Statement and Significance:

Enrollment in online universities has grown exponentially in recent years. In response, online virtual employee teams working in online universities have grown in popularity and demand. Some institutions of higher education, as well as other organizations, launch virtual teams without providing the necessary training to adequately support team members, leading to reduced productivity, revenues, morale, and even loss of employees (DeRosa & Lepsinger, 2010; Thaly & Sinha, 2013; Zayani, 2008). Therefore, virtual teams fail as often as they succeed because they are often not managed or led properly (Anantatmula & Thomas, 2010; Mancini, 2010; Panteli & Tucker, 2010; Ogren, 2016).

If leaders are not conscious of the intricacies of managing virtual teams and how to mitigate challenges and potential failure, institutions of higher education may lose productivity and students may be negatively impacted. To diminish the high failure rate of virtual teams, up to 71%, (Gelbard & Carmeli, 2009; Morgan et al. 2014), more information and evidence is needed.

Recommendations for future research:

#1: A recommendation for future research would be to duplicate this study focusing on virtual leaders attached to a particular educational institution. Findings from such a study could shed light on how specific institutions train and prepare (or do not) their new virtual leaders

#2: Qualitative research should be conducted with the employees being led by virtual academic leaders; administrative and faculty.

- Input from the employees being led by virtual leaders can provide a wholly different perspective and contribute to the body of literature surrounding successful, academic, virtual leadership behaviors. What may be assumed as a successful leadership trait to the leader may prove to be unappealing to the virtual employee and faculty member on the receiving end of the behavior

Contact information:

Dr. Erin Alward: erin.alward@phoenix.edu, 407.393.2630

Dr. Yvonne Phelps: Yvonne.phelps@phoenix.edu, 602.769.5848