

## Spring 2021 Reflection

The spring of 2021 allowed me the chance to focus on my hopeful dissertation topic, as we began to talk as a cohort about things like comprehensive exams, dissertation committees, and defenses. It all got very real this semester, which was a bit intimidating. However, I also enjoyed seeing the work I had been doing for years come to fruition, as my pre-prospectus draft became more structured than ever before and my work on my literature review began. In the spring semester, my last semester of official coursework, I was enrolled in Research Seminar III and Research Seminar IV. I did find it odd that the two courses sort of morphed together into one class of projects and preparation, but I enjoy Dr. McBrayer's teaching, and this helped me really dig into the semester's work. Covid had the cohort still meeting once a month remotely, as opposed to our monthly in-person meetings, but our cohort found structure with weekly writing days. The main products for this semester were our final pre-prospectus draft, an updated three-minute slide, a presentation of this online portfolio, and a mock pre-prospectus defense. There were still some unknowns about my potential study, and I think these unknowns made me nervous, but I made some real progress on my literature review, as my prospectus was getting close to completion.

When the spring semester began, my pre-prospectus included a background that had become more of a literature review, totaling about seventy-one pages. With guidance from Dr. McBrayer, I decided to move that work over to a new document and start adding to it as my lit review. I find that I love this part of the dissertation process, the researching and synthesizing of the research currently out in the field of peer educators. The main bulk of work being done this semester was in Research Seminar III, where we worked on our pre-prospectus draft and submitted versions of it as we progressed. Additionally, I had a mock pre-prospectus defense in March. Research Seminar IV required continued work on our online portfolios and an updated version of our three-minute thesis presentation. My technology skills are not up to par with what some of my peers have, so the portfolio was something I was concerned with from the beginning of the program. I have worked on it each semester as we went through classes, and for that reason, I had little left to do this current semester. I have since added my website to my CV and will be using it as a professional tool for the future. Having guest speaker Dr. Jensen speak about infographics got my mind racing with options of representing my research in an infographic. My previous three-minute thesis presentation did not do this, but improvements were made this semester.

One of the challenges with this past semester was staying committed to my work when it sometimes seemed I was ahead of others. Our cohort scheduled weekly writing days every Saturday and these helped tremendously. As I near the end of my official coursework in the program, I hope that the support of my cohort can continue, as I know relying on each other for support has been part of the reason for any successes I have had while in this program. Outside of school, I have been working to stay current in my field. After submitting a proposal for a covid-related book chapter, I was preliminarily accepted; when I was not doing schoolwork, I was busy with this project and other professional development events through organizations in which I serve as a leader. My commitment this semester has been to devote a set number of hours each week to school tasks, whether that time be lunch hours or weekend writing days. Spring 2021 semester was a unique semester in terms of the research classes, but it was also one that made the EdD seem ever more real and attainable.