A needs analysis was conducted to determine if there were any gaps in the communication to and from distance master’s students in the Instructional Systems Technology (IST) department at IU. There were some initial concerns by the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies, Elizabeth Boling, that initiated the analysis, the main one being centered on the informing of and discussion of a student’s program of study.

**Aim and Scope**

The aim of the analysis project was to identify the communication gaps and identify possible causes of those gaps. This project looked at factors solely dealing with the informing of and discussion of a student’s program of study. These factors included, but were not limited to, communication tools, resources, and the advising process. Potential strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities were identified, and form the basis of our recommendations.

**Project Methodology**

The beginning of the data collection phase was with a content analysis of things like the actual Program of Study form, the graduate bulletin, and the IST website. Additionally to a content analysis of the website, the team benchmarked it to University of Columbia Teachers College Instructional Technology and Media and Florida State University Instructional Systems Program websites.

The next data source we drew from was the human side of the gap: the students via an online survey—a survey distributed by email to 506 students and 506 students, forty-three faculty and two staff who responded to the survey. From the data collected, a SWOT analysis, and then a Force Field analysis were conducted.

**Final Production**

After analyzing the data of this project, the team outlined five recommendations for the client to implement.

- **Recommendations**
  - Standardize orientation materials and process.
  - Modify the content and functionality of the website.
  - Define the terminology “outside electives”.
  - Define an advisor’s role and responsibilities.
  - Use the advising tools in OneStart’s Student Center.