

DO YOU REALLY THINK YOUR ONLINE COURSE SERVES THE STUDENTS LIKE YOUR TRADITIONAL COURSE? ASSESSMENT OF MARKETING AND MANAGEMENT WEB-BASED COURSES

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ABSTRACT

The headlines read, “*College education hit with severe budget cuts and lower enrollments.*” Your college memorandum states, “*Increase SFTEs by offering more online marketing and management courses.*” Indeed, our courses have been and will continue to be repackaged for the place bound student. However, how do we as educators really assess the value and integrity of online courses? Are they different from the traditional classroom? Do you really think your online course serves the students like your traditional course?

This special session reviewed the literature and presented anecdotal experiences and findings from faculty teaching online, hybrid and traditional courses. Participants also received handouts to take with them to help guide their online course assessments. The three areas discussed were course development and implementation assessment, interaction assessment, and teaching effectiveness.

COURSE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES AND ASSESSMENT

When creating a new online course there are two ways to approach the curriculum development and the design of the course learning environment: reinvent the wheel or apply best practices. Keinath and Blicker (2003) and Quality Matters (2008) have developed checklists for educators to help insure some consistency in online course quality. Implicit in these assessment checklists is the notion that there are some true differences in how students learn using different types of course delivery methods. Boettcher (2007) presented ten core learning principles using a fourfold framework that can be used by online course developers. Panel members discussed the literature and current trends as well as shared personal experiences in developing and assessing new courses in light of traditional classes.

INTERACTION ASSESSMENT

How much interaction is enough? Who should be interacting? Why is interaction important? The level

and quality of student interaction and impact on the student learning has a direct correlation with success in online courses. Social presence is the degree to which an individual is perceived as “real” in a facilitated environment (Richardson & Swan, 2003). Research indicates that the more students perceive that they are involved in a course, the more they perceive that they are learning. This conclusion is quantified using test performance, grades, and student satisfaction (Roblyer & Ekhaml, 2000). Roblyer and Ekhaml (2000) developed an assessment instrument to measure this interactivity, “Rubric for Assessing Interactive Qualities of Distance Learning Courses.” This has been used over the years as a tool to help guide faculty in developing more interactivity within a distance education course. The panelists discussed the concept of social presence and the importance of student-to-student interaction and student-to-faculty interaction. The panel also shared successful techniques they have used to enhance the online students’ learning experience.

TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS ASSESSMENT

At some point when online offerings grow, administrators and instructors alike begin to question the use of traditional teaching assessment tools in online classes. Palloff and Pratt (2003) disapproved of use of traditional assessment tools, suggesting they fail to assess the instructors’ ability to build learning communities for self-directed learners. They posited that online class evaluation tools should accomplish three things when assessing faculty members: measure their abilities to engage students, give meaningful feedback to students, and respond effectively to students’ needs. In response, Saleh and Lamkin (2008) created and tested an evaluation tool which was designed to assess these three areas. The presenters discussed the necessity of a specific evaluation designed for online classes and the challenges faced when implementing traditional evaluation tools in this environment.

References Available on Request