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Educational Leadership

A Case Study of Student and Faculty Satisfaction with Online Courses  
at a Community College

**Abstract**

Over the past decade, there has been a significant increase in the number of student enrollments in higher education online courses. This is a national and state trend that has also occurred at Diablo Valley College (DVC), a large suburban community college in northern California. During fall semester 2007, a case study methodology explored the online course experiences of (a) adult students enrolled in a 3-4 unit full-semester online course, and (b) faculty of online courses. Personalized student survey hyperlinks were emailed to each student concerning a specific online course. A general faculty survey link was emailed to each online instructor. Student and faculty surveys included three general types of questions (a) background characteristics, (b) activities and perceptions, and (c) recommendations and overall satisfaction. After the semester was over, individual course grades and demographic information was linked to individual student survey results.

The vast majority of students and faculty are satisfied or very satisfied with online courses, but a significant percentage of students are non-satisfied (25%). The primary reason that students take online courses is for scheduling flexibility. Descriptive statistics and analysis is provided for 59 student survey items and 51 faculty survey items. Factor analysis and Cronbach's Alpha testing demonstrated that the student survey provided a valid and reliable measure of satisfaction with online learner interactions.

Qualitative and quantitative analyses demonstrated significant findings: (a) student success in online courses is significantly associated with student satisfaction, (b) there is a significant difference in satisfaction between successful versus non-successful students for each learner interaction: instructor, content, learners, self, and interface, (c) instructor interactions are the most strongly correlated to overall satisfaction, (d) successful students are much more satisfied with self-interactions than non-successful, (e) contrary to the literature, there was no significant difference in retention based on orientations, prior online experience, computer skills, student support, unit load, student age, or hours worked, and (f) there was a significant difference in success based on working fewer than 30 hours per week or being age 30-34.

The last chapter includes recommendations for improving student and faculty satisfaction, and thus, success with online courses.