



All Colleges Online Course Satisfaction Survey Report

Spring 2009

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Table of Contents

Overview and Purpose	2
Methodology.....	2
Survey Population	2
Implementation	2
Instrumentation.....	2
Analytical Plan	2
Student Profile	3
The Findings	5
Student Preparation for Online Course	5
Student Experience in Online Course.....	5
Technical Support	6
Communication.....	6
Perception of Online Learning.....	6
Future Services	6
Student Comments	6
Appendix A: Survey Instrument	7
Appendix B: Tables.....	12
Appendix C: Student Comments	21

Overview and Purpose

The purpose of this survey project is to collect additional information about students who took online courses in the spring 2009 semester. This report was created to measure students' perceptions and opinions about elements involved in online courses such as preparation, experiences in the course, technical support received, communication with the instructor and classmates, learning, and future needs.

Methodology

Survey Population

To be eligible for the study a student had to be enrolled in an online course at City College, Mesa College, Miramar College or ECC as of first census in the 2009 regular spring semester. Students who dropped the course or never attended were excluded.

Implementation

The data collection methodology for the online course satisfaction survey was an online survey. A pre-notification email was sent to students in March informing them of the forthcoming online student satisfaction survey. Students received a survey invitation sent by the Office of Institutional Research and Planning in March 2009. Students were instructed to access the survey directly from a URL link in the survey invitation. Students were allowed access to the survey for approximately two weeks. In an effort to increase survey response rates, two reminder emails with direct access to the survey were sent to the survey population. Additionally, Online and Distributed Learning posted notifications to inform students to check their emails for an invitation to the survey. A notification was posted to the Blackboard and pop-up notifications were posted as students logged into their online courses.

It should be noted that students were permitted to complete a survey for each college they were enrolled in. Therefore, data for all colleges may include duplicated records of individual students. Thus, the unit of analysis for this study was the survey response itself and not the individual respondent.

Instrumentation

The Office of Institutional Research and Planning referenced the previous 2008 Online Course Satisfaction survey and collaborated with the Dean of Online and Distributed Learning to develop and confirm the survey questions. The survey instrument contained 26 questions and took approximately 4 to 5 minutes for students to complete. The survey contained 11 single response questions using Likert scales of helpfulness and agreement, 11 single response categorical questions, 2 multiple response questions, and 2 open-ended questions in which a student could provide verbatim responses. Several categorical questions allowed a student to provide a verbatim response in lieu of a categorical response. A copy of the survey is provided in Appendix A.

Analytical Plan

Analyses of demographic questions included in the Student Profile included two comparison groups: the survey respondents and the general online student population. Responses to demographic questions in the satisfaction survey were

compared to demographic information provided by the general online student population in their college applications. Analyses of remaining questions were provided for survey respondents only and were grouped into themes to elicit further comparison. Students' comments to the open-ended questions were provided verbatim in Appendix C.

Data tables are provided by section in Appendix B. Please note that within the tables, *Percents* include all students who completed a survey. *Valid Percents* include only those students who responded to the question and do not include question nonresponse or responses of 'Not Applicable'. Most of the narrative utilizes data from *Valid Percents*; however, in questions with a large proportion of nonresponse and/or not applicable, *Percents* are also noted.¹ Also note that individual response categories may not total 100% due to rounding.

Student Profile

Of the 12,158 surveys that were sent to students, 1,079 surveys were returned, yielding a 9% response rate. The response rate does not provide statistical representativeness of the population of online students served within the San Diego Community College district and is lower than previous online survey response rates of the online student population (18% in 2008 and 13% in 2007). However, this may in part be due to an atypical increase in the number of student surveys conducted during spring 2009 for the accreditation self-studies. In forthcoming years, response rates would likely revert to the range seen in previous years. Consequently, the generalizability of the data was determined via a comparison of the survey respondents to the general online student population using 5 characteristics: college distribution, online format of courses taken, age, gender and ethnicity.

- Mesa College students comprised 40% of all students who completed surveys, City College/ECC students comprised 32% and Miramar students comprised 28% of all students who completed surveys. (See Table 1.) This was proportionate to the percentage of students who enrolled in online courses across colleges (Mesa 38%, City 33% and Miramar 29%).
- When asked if the online course(s) taken in spring 2009 was fully online, partially online, or both fully online and partially online, the majority of students who responded reported their course(s) as online only (84%). (See Table 2.) This was similar to fully online course enrollment by the general online population (82%).
- The greatest percentage of students who responded were between the ages of 18 to 24 (29%), followed by students 25 to 29 (22%) and 30 to 39 (21%). (See Table 3.) Respondents between the ages of 18 to 24 were underrepresented (29%) compared to the general online population (46%). Respondents between the ages of 40 to 49 (15%) and 50 and above (12%) were overrepresented compared to the general online population (8% and 4%, respectively).
- The majority of respondents reported their gender as female (68%). (See Table 4.) This was comparable to the general college population (61%).
- Almost half of the respondents reported their ethnicity as White (49%), 16% were Latino, 13% were Asian/Pacific Islander, 8% reported 'other', 7% were

¹ Reporting tables with *Percents* and *Valid Percents*, and narrative from *Valid Percents* represents a departure from previous reporting methods. Previous year's reports included tables and narrative presenting *Percents* only.

African American, 6% were Filipino and less than 1% were American Indian/Alaskan Native. (See Table 5.) The ethnic groups of students who responded were representative of the general online population.

While survey respondents varied in age compared to the general online population, the majority of the group's characteristics were comparable to the general online population. Thus, the group of students who completed surveys did provide representativeness which allowed for generalizing the results to the entire population.

The Findings

For reporting purposes, results are not referred to in question order; rather they are clustered into 6 general areas:

- (1) Student Preparation for Online Course
- (2) Student Experience in Online Course
- (3) Technical Support
- (4) Communication
- (5) Perception of Online Learning
- (6) Future Services

Student Preparation for Online Course

- When asked if they had previously taken an online course at SDCCD in the past two years, among students who responded, the majority of students (70%) responded that they had taken a course at SDCCD. (See Table 6.) Approximately one in five (22%) responded that they had taken an online course at another college in the past two years. (See Table 7.)
- Most respondents (70%) felt they had sufficient information about online course requirements prior to enrolling (36% agreed and 34% strongly agreed). Sixteen percent responded neutrally. (See Table 8.)
- When asked how helpful the Online Learning Readiness Assessment was, 504 (47%) of the respondents who completed surveys did not respond or responded 'not applicable'. (See Table 9.) Among those who did respond with the level of help they received, 62% felt the Online Learning Readiness Assessment was helpful and 22% rated its' helpfulness neutrally.
- When asked how helpful the WebCT orientation was in preparation for an online course, 573 (53%) of the respondents who completed surveys did not respond or responded 'not applicable'. Among those who did respond with the level of help they received, 59% felt the WebCT orientation helpful and 28% rated its' helpfulness neutrally. (See Table 10.)

Student Experience in Online Course

- Half of the respondents (50%) reported they enrolled in two or more online courses during spring 2009. (See Table 11.)
- Among specific reasons offered as the cause of students' online course withdrawal, personal reasons (23%) was mentioned most frequently. (See Table 12.) A course that was too time consuming (21%), a personal or work scheduling conflict (18%), not enough instructor feedback (16%) and a course that was too difficult (15%) were also frequently mentioned reasons for students' online course withdrawal.
- Forty-seven percent of the respondents reported visiting their online course a few times a week and a similar amount reported visiting their online course once or more a day (47%) (See Table 13.)
- Sixty percent of respondents spent 4 or more hours logged into their online course per week and forty percent spent 3 or fewer hours logged into their online course per week. (See Table 14.)
- When asked the reason why they took their online course, students who responded most often reported an intention to transfer to a four-year college

(41%), followed by a desire to apply the course toward their AA/AS degree (31%). (See Table 15.)

Technical Support

- Nearly three quarters of the respondents (74%) agreed that they had a positive experience using the online course tools and 14% rated their experience neutrally. (See Table 16.)
- When asked if the respondents were able to obtain needed help from Technical Support, 395 of the respondents who completed surveys (37%) did not respond or responded 'not applicable'. Among those who did respond, 63% agreed that they were able to obtain the help they needed and 23% remained neutral. (See Table 17.)

Communication

- Three in four respondents (75%) agreed that they could communicate effectively with their classmates and 17% of respondents rated communication with their classmates neutrally (17%). (See Table 18.)
- The majority of respondents (73%) agreed that they were able to communicate effectively with their instructors, while 16% disagreed. (See Table 19.)

Perception of Online Learning

- The majority of respondents (71%) agreed that the number of students in the course was appropriate, while 23% had no opinion on the matter. (See Table 20.)
- Nearly three quarters of the respondents (74%) agreed that the online format was an effective way to learn and 14% responded neutrally. (See Table 21.)
- Nearly three quarters of the respondents (76%) reported enjoyment of the online learning method, while equal proportions of the respondents reported neutrally or were dissatisfied with the online learning method (12% each). (See Table 22.)

Future Services

- A large proportion of respondents (68%) would be likely to take another online course rather than a traditional on-campus course if given the choice. (See Table 23.) However, 17% of the respondents felt it would be unlikely that they would take another online course rather than a traditional on-campus course, and 15% were undecided.
- Among potential services or support mentioned as beneficial, counseling was mentioned most frequently (41%), followed by tutoring (36%) and library services (28%). (See Table 24.) However, nearly one-quarter of respondents (23%) noted that they had no need for additional services or support.

Student Comments

Students' comments to the open-ended questions are listed in Appendix C. Comments are listed verbatim and are edited with **** only in the case of derogatory language or to protect an individual's identity.

Appendix A: Survey Instrument

Online Course Student Satisfaction Survey -Spring 2009

Thanks for your participation! Please take a few minutes to answer some questions about our service. Your suggestions and opinions are important to us. **Your responses will be kept completely confidential.**

DIRECTIONS: Unless otherwise noted, please select only one answer per question. Select NEXT to move to the next screen.

1. During which session(s) did you take an online course?
 - Intersession 2009 only
 - Spring 2009 only
 - Both Intersession and Spring 2009

2. If you took any online courses in Spring 2009, please indicate if they were fully online, partially online, or both fully online and partially online courses. **[Online courses are considered *Fully Online* if they are 100% online with no meetings or exams on campus. Online courses are considered *Partially Online* if they have one or more meetings on campus.]**
 - Fully online only
 - Partially online only
 - Both fully online and partially online

3. What is your age?
 - Under 18
 - 18 to 24
 - 25 to 29
 - 30 to 39
 - 40 to 49
 - 50 and above

4. Are you male or female?
 - Male
 - Female

5. What is your ethnic background?
 - African American
 - American Indian/Alaskan Native
 - Asian/Pacific Islander
 - Filipino
 - Latino
 - White
 - Other

6. How many online courses at the San Diego Community College District (City, Mesa, or Miramar Colleges) did you enroll in during Spring 2009?
 - One
 - Two
 - Three
 - Four
 - Five
 - More than five

7. If you withdrew from any online classes you enrolled in for Spring 2009 please indicate the reason(s) why you withdrew. **(Select all that apply)**

- I did not need the course(s) (i.e. change of major, transferred, etc.)
- The course(s) did not fit into my course schedule
- The course(s) did not fit into my personal/work schedule
- Personal reasons (health, family, etc.)
- The course(s) was too difficult
- The course(s) was too time consuming
- There was not enough instructor feedback
- Blackboard was too difficult/problematic
- I had technical difficulties with the computer/web
- I prefer to take classes in person
- Other, please explain: _____

8. How many online courses within the San Diego Community College District (City, Mesa, or Miramar Colleges) have you taken in the past two years before Spring 2009?

- None
- One
- Two
- Three
- Four
- Five
- More than five

9. How many online courses have you taken at other colleges outside of the SDCCD in the past two years before Spring 2009?

- None
- One
- Two
- Three
- Four
- Five
- More than five

If you enrolled in more than one course during Spring 2009, please answer the following questions based on your experience with the online course that is most representative of your overall experience.

10. Why did you take this online course?

- Personal enrichment
- Apply toward AA/AS degree
- Apply toward certificate
- For career development
- Transfer to a 4-year university
- Other, please explain: _____

11. On average, how many hours per week do you spend logged into this online course during the semester?

- Less than 2 hrs/week
- 2-3 hrs/week
- 4-5 hrs/week
- 6 or more hrs/week

12. On average, how often do you visit this online course during the semester?

- Less than once a month
- Once a month
- A few times a month
- A few times a week
- Once every day
- More than once a day

Please indicate the **level of help you feel you received**.

		Very unhelpful	Unhelpful	Neither helpful nor unhelpful	Helpful	Very helpful	Not applicable
13.	If you completed the Online Learning Readiness Assessment before you took this course, how helpful was it in preparing you to take an online course?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14.	If you attended a Blackboard/WebCT orientation either online or on-campus, how helpful was it in preparing you to take an online course?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please indicate your **level of agreement**.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Not applicable
15.	I had enough information about online course requirements prior to enrolling.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16.	I have had a positive experience using the online course tools (such as, discussion board, class email, quizzes, calendar).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17.	I am able to obtain the help I need from Technical Support.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18.	The number of students enrolled is appropriate for this online course.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19.	I am able to communicate effectively with fellow students in this course.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20.	I am able to communicate effectively with my instructor in this course.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21.	The online format is an effective way for me to learn.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22.	I enjoy the online method of taking a course.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

23. If you were given the choice between an online course and a face-to-face on-campus course, how likely is it that you would take another online course?

- Very unlikely
- Unlikely
- Neither likely nor unlikely
- Likely
- Very likely

24. What elements of the online course were valuable to you?

25. What would you change about the course you took?

26. What additional online services or support would be beneficial? **(Select all that apply)**

- Counseling
- Orientation
- Placement Testing for English and Math
- Technical support
- Financial aid
- Library
- Tutoring
- No need for additional services or support
- Other, please specify: _____

Thank you for taking the survey! Please select [NEXT] to submit your responses.

Appendix B: Tables

Appendix C: Student Comments