

- 9 percent have accessed sites involving illegal drugs.
- 5 percent have accessed Internet sites describing how to manufacture illegal weapons.
- 2 percent manufactured a fake ID based on information found on the Internet.
- 18 percent accessed someone else's e-mail account without the other person's knowledge.
- 9 percent sent a threatening e-mail message to someone.
- 62 percent have used Napster or similar programs to download music (MP3 files) from the Internet.
- 2 percent think that they may be addicted to online gambling.
- 4 percent have used the university's computers to download pirated software.

- 29 percent have used the university's computers to play computer games.
- 16 percent consider themselves to be addicted to the Internet.
- 15 percent support the idea of having universities limit students' access to controversial Web sites.

Conclusions

The results of this study should help administrators, faculty, and staff recognize that their campus networks are being used for nonacademic purposes. Currently, some institutions have formal policies outlining appropriate Internet usage, while other institutions take a hands-off approach. Opponents of limiting access or blocking controversial Web sites often cite academic freedom or freedom of speech for not

interfering with how students use the Internet.

Clearly there are Internet controversies — not only about content, but also about how to handle the filtering or regulate the content. Results from this survey establish that many students regularly use the Internet in controversial ways. The results of this study can help us understand how our students use the Internet. The data has implications for administrators, educators, and society.

The complete article is available online at <<http://www.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/CSD1618.pdf>>. *e*

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Evaluating Distributed Learning at Metropolitan Universities

Researchers explore student and faculty issues in courses with varying degrees of Web presence, along with effective teaching and learning

By **Charles Dziuban** and **Patsy Moskal**

For the past six years, a team of investigators at the University of Central Florida's (UCF's) Research Initiative for Teaching Effectiveness (RITE) have examined student and faculty issues in the online environment, focusing on maintaining a sustainable and objective evaluation. Assessment results must be relevant to the initiative and provide useful information to faculty, students, and university administrators.

This article summarizes results from UCF's ongoing distributed learning impact evaluation, previously published in *Metropolitan Universities*.¹ Obtain additional information on RITE activities at UCF on the Web <<http://pegasus.cc.ucf.edu/~rite>>.

The Research Protocol

We are exploring both student and faculty issues in courses that UCF offers with varying degrees of Web presence: fully online, Web-enhanced with reduced face-to-face class time, and Web-enhanced with no reduced seat time. Investigators compare student success and withdrawal rates in Web courses to their face-to-face counterparts. They also examine student cognitive style using measurement protocols developed and validated during more than 12 years of research at UCF. Finally, they examine and document changes in approaches to learning as students transition to the online environment.

As the distributed learning initiative evolves, researchers examine the impact

of online teaching on faculty's academic role. This line of investigation includes examining perceived workload and class interaction in online courses compared with similar face-to-face sections. Faculty also discuss changes in their personal theories of teaching after they experience the online environment.

Both students and faculty provide input about their perceptions of Web course strengths and weaknesses, and determine if they would attempt this mode again. The evaluators also solicit success strategies and advice from students and faculty to use as resources for their new online peers.

Probably the most important research component at UCF involves individual faculty research on effective teaching

and learning. The RITE researchers provide technical and logistical support to instructors who pursue their own areas of investigation. Researchers sometimes connect faculty members with colleagues who share similar interests from other colleges and departments. This strategy works well and forms pockets of common instructional research agendas across disciplines.

Evaluation Findings

After six years of investigation in online teaching and learning, RITE researchers can now examine trends in faculty and student data. The researchers have found some consistent results:

- Students report high satisfaction with Web courses, both fully online classes and courses that feature a combination of face-to-face and online instruction.
- Students who report a learning style that indicates high energy and a high need for approval populate Web-based courses most frequently.
- The academic discipline of Web courses emerges as the best predictor of student success.
- Students withdraw from Web-based courses for a variety of reasons, many of which are unrelated to technology.
- Faculty substantially modify teaching methods when they convert their courses into a Web-based format.
- Courses that feature both a Web and face-to-face presence produce comparable or superior success rates when compared to similar face-to-face or fully online courses.

Conclusion

Research is an essential aspect of the University of Central Florida's distributed learning initiative. Because we initiated the evaluation from the onset of offering Web courses, we've experienced demonstrable impact. Early in the process, for example, we found that students who registered for fully online courses also enrolled in face-to-face classes. This finding led to the development of our "M" course model — a combination of face-to-face and Web-based learning that maximizes facility use while maintaining or improving stu-

dent-learning outcomes. Warehousing success and withdrawal rates for more than 75,000 students lets us identify and follow trends for gender, ethnicity, course level, department, and other variables. In addition, with such databases we have data readily available to answer questions from administrators, legislators, and outside organizations.

Disseminating evaluation results and working cooperatively with other UCF units helps resolve many unanticipated and sometimes undesirable side effects found in Web teaching and learning. For example, our early surveys of faculty indicated that novices initially encountered a flood of e-mails from students. In response, our faculty can now share solutions to these common problems through a series of brown-bag lunches sponsored by Course Development and Web Services. Currently, instructors are exploring the ramifica-

tions of transforming an entire program to the online environment rather than converting a course or two to the Web-based format. Using qualitative and quantitative approaches to evaluation, we continue to assess our distributed learning program's impact on students, faculty, and the institution. *e*

Endnotes

1. C. Dziuban and P. Moskal, "Evaluating Distributed Learning in Metropolitan Universities," *Metropolitan Universities*, 12 (1) (Indianapolis: Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI), 2001).

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