

2012

DISTANCE EDUCATION SURVEY RESULTS

TRENDS IN eLEARNING: TRACKING THE IMPACT OF eLEARNING AT COMMUNITY COLLEGES



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IN FOCUS: THE YEAR IN REVIEW 2012

THE GREAT RECESSION CONTINUES

By Christine Mullins, Executive Director, Instructional Technology Council

Recovery from the Great Recession has been slow and elusive. Most campus administrators have survived the worst of the recession, with no further cuts made to their department funding levels, but they have only experienced meager attempts to increase budget allocations. In its recent survey report, the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) noted that, “although enrollment stabilized in 2012, the reduction in state and local support combined with an increase in inflation contributed to a nine percent decrease in state and local support per student in constant dollars from 2011. Per student support in 2012 is \$5,896, the lowest level in the 25 years.”¹

Participants in this ITC survey reported that distance education enrollments grew by 6.52 percent from fall 2011 to fall 2012. This pace was slower than in previous years (fall 2007 to 2008 saw a 22 percent increase), but the increase distance education saw surpassed the overall 2.64 percent decline in student enrollment that the entire student population (including those enrolled in face-to-face classes) at colleges experienced.

The economic downturn has had a measureable impact on the number of students attending college. During the peak of the recession, students and workers inundated community colleges in order to enhance their job skills, while college administrators worked frantically to meet the student demand by expanding their online course and program offerings. The situation is not as frantic or dire as it was several years ago, but since tuition does not pay for all of the operation costs at a community college, the decrease in state funding has meant that colleges continue to struggle to address chronic problems of student retention, course quality, ADA compliance, faculty training, student preparedness and accreditation-based assessment.


THE RISE OF MOOCS

It is hard to believe that massive open online courses (MOOCs) only became a newsworthy phenomenon in the summer of 2012, when professors at several big name institutions (Harvard University, Massachusetts Institute for Technology, MIT, Stanford University and Yale University), began partnering with Coursera, Udacity and EdX to offer free online courses to as many as 160,000 students per course. Whether each university’s motive was an altruistic attempt to teach students in developing countries, an effort to keep up with other universities, or a means to publicize their traditional online credit-based course offerings, universities have invested a great deal of money into these courses, for which they do not receive student tuition dollars. Many argue that they are financially unsustainable.

MOOCs challenge the traditional academy and advocate for a more savvy, cost-effective and relevant way to prepare students. MOOCs hold a great deal of promise. For example, in October 2012 the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation offered to fund the creation of ten high-quality MOOCs to engage students in general and developmental education.² However, controversy over MOOCs reigns. Distance educators fear that the tendency for naysayers to confuse MOOCs with traditional online learning could negatively impact distance education, at a time when online student completion rates, student-teacher interaction, and quality assessments at community colleges are higher than ever.

¹ “State Higher Education Finance FY 2012,” March 2013, State Higher Education Executive Officers. <http://www.sheeo.org/sites/default/files/publications/SHEF-FY12.pdf>.

² Visit http://www.insidehighered.com/sites/default/server_files/files/MOOC%20RFP%20and%20Application.pdf for more information.



Many educators are concerned that the student completion rate for MOOCs is extremely low and the courses lack the student support services necessary to help students succeed. A survey of MOOC professors found that the average student enrollment in a MOOC is 33,000, with a 7.5 percent average passing rate.³ Only 350 of approximately 12,700 Coursera users who registered for a MOOC on bioelectricity from Duke University took the final exam—a dropout rate of 97 percent.⁴

Josh Kim, director of learning and technology at Dartmouth College, writes that MOOCs could actually increase costs for community colleges, because “the wraparound services that students need to be successful are both costly and hard to monetize. At my college, for example, students pay by the credit hour for the courses they take, but the library and the tutoring center are free and all you can eat. If we outsourced the classes but kept the support, the entire economic model would collapse.”⁵

Meanwhile, in early February, the American Council on Education advised its 1,800 member colleges that they can be comfortable conferring credit on students who have passed five MOOCs offered through Coursera. Stephen Kolowich writes that “whether colleges take the council’s advice, however, is an open question.”⁶

Many community colleges are exploring ways to offer credit to students who take MOOCs. For example, the University of Southern New Hampshire began offering competency-based associate degrees in general studies in January 2013. For \$5,000, the college will assess whether students have 120 competencies to earn an associate degree.⁷ Several community colleges are using LearningCounts, an affordable online portfolio assessment service the Council of Adult and Experiential Learning offers, to review a student’s prior learning assessment.

Meanwhile, California State Senator Darrell Steinberg is not the only lawmaker who has touted MOOCs as the cost-effective way for cash-strapped states and colleges to meet the growing student demand for inexpensive or free online courses.⁸ The legislation he sponsored in March 2013 (SB 520) sets a concerning precedent, since it proposes to force colleges to accept credits students receive from taking courses that are not regionally accredited, and which faculty have not thoroughly reviewed or vetted.

EDUCATORS CONVINCED SENATE TO DROP PROVISION TO RESTRICT FINANCIAL AID FOR ONLINE STUDENTS

Distance educators at community colleges received a scare in July 2012, when the Senate included language in its FY 2013 appropriations bill (S. 3295) that would have eliminated the ability of fully-online students to use Pell grant funding to pay for their living expenses, even though face-to-face students would have continued

³ “The Professors Who Make the MOOCs,” by Steve Kolowich, March 18, 2013, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. <http://chronicle.com/article/The-Professors-Behind-the-MOOC/137905>.


⁴ “Measuring the MOOC Dropout Rate,” by Ry Rivard, March 8, 2013, *Inside Higher Ed*. <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2013/03/08/researchers-explore-who-taking-moocs-and-why-so-many-drop-out>

⁵ “MOOCs as Work-Arounds,” by Matt Reed, March 13, 2013, *Inside Higher Ed*. <http://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/confessions-community-college-dean/moocs-work-arounds>

⁶ “American Council on Education Recommends 5 MOOCs for Credit,” by Steve Kolowich, Feb. 7, 2013, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, <http://chronicle.com/article/American-Council-on-Education/137155/>

⁷ “A Disruption Grows Up?” by Paul Fain, Oct. 1, 2012, *Inside Higher Ed*. <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2012/10/01/competency-based-education-may-get-boost>

⁸ “California Bill Seeks Campus Credit for Online Study,” by Tamar Lewin, March 12, 2013, *New York Times*. <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/13/education/california-bill-would-force-colleges-to-honor-online-classes.html>



to be entitled to receive this benefit. This restriction would have reduced the federal financial reimbursement to each online student by an average of \$1,400. The language would have hurt online community college students in particular, since their tuition rates are much lower than those who attend four-year institutions—low enough so that money is left over from the amount they receive from the Pell Grant program to pay for living expenses.

In March 2013, the Senate eliminated this language when it passed its continuing resolution to fund the federal government through September 2013. ITC thanks the American Association of Community College’s legislative staff for their time and work lobbying on this issue, as well as the ITC members and other community college representatives who contacted Congress on behalf of their students, to convince them to reinstate this important benefit for online learners.

FINANCIAL AID FRAUD RINGS

In September 2011, the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) released a report⁹ which alerted the community to the presence of an increasing number of organized fraud rings, in which individuals applied for and received financial aid to take online courses, without any intention of completing the courses. In October 2011, the Department sent higher education institutions a “dear colleague” letter, which stated that “detecting fraud before funds have been disbursed is the best way to combat this crime. We therefore seek the help of institutions and advise that you take the following additional actions to identify and prevent the kind of student aid fraud identified in the IG’s report.”

Examples of measures and policies institutions have created to combat these perpetrators include:

- Creating an interdepartmental “fraud squad” to monitor potential illegal activity;
- Providing enhanced training to student financial aid staff, giving them the confidence to deny financial aid to suspicious students;
- Creating a policy to deny aid to suspicious individual(s);
- Waiting two weeks before dispersing financial aid;
- Giving students partial financial aid payments throughout the term, instead of one lump sum;
- Recording unsatisfactory academic performance;
- Looking twice at individuals who have multiple addresses, similar IP or home addresses, and are part of unusual student enrollment clusters;
- Creating a system for faculty to report similar student assignments that may indicate fraud;
- Requiring students to attend an orientation when they enroll; and,
- Requiring students to provide a copy of their high-school transcript when they enroll.¹⁰

⁹ Visit <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oig/invtreports/l42l0001.pdf> for more information.

¹⁰ Visit <http://ifap.ed.gov/dpcletters/GEN1117.html> for more steps institutions can take to deter these crimes.

The OIG report could have far-reaching implications for distance education as Congress creates regulations that could hurt legitimate distance learning practices in an attempt to reign in these fraudulent operations. This may be especially concerning when Congress reauthorizes the Higher Education Act in 2014. The Senate's July 2012 proposal to restrict aid for online students probably originated as an attempt to limit the amount of financial aid these fraud rings can steal from the Department of Education.

STATE AUTHORIZATION FOR INSTITUTIONS OFFERING DISTANCE EDUCATION TO OUT-OF-STATE STUDENTS

If an institution is offering postsecondary education through distance or correspondence education to students in a State in which it is not physically located, the institution must meet any State requirements for it to be legally offering postsecondary distance or correspondence education in that State. We are further providing that an institution must be able to document upon request by the Department that it has the applicable State approval.

—Oct. 29, 2010 Amendments to the Higher Education Act Program Integrity Issues, State Authorization, Section §600.9

Distance educators continue to see the ramifications of the proposed state authorization regulation, even though the U.S. Court of Appeals and the U.S. District Court both ruled that the Department of Education lacks the authority to enforce it, because it did not follow the proper rule-making procedures in 2010.

Most educators did not know state regulations were on the books to approve out-of-state institutions. Most state agencies had also turned a blind eye. In other states, no such laws existed. However, the Department of Education's proposal opened the eyes of many state regulators, as they learned that an increasing number of institutions were teaching online courses to students within their borders. Most states were unprepared to respond to the onslaught of institutions seeking state authorization, and others saw their newfound authority as an opportunity to shut out competing out-of-state institutions, or charge institutions steep fees to teach within their borders. On Jan. 31, 2013, the Department of Education issued a "dear colleague letter" to state agencies, reminding them to have their approval procedures in place by July 1, 2014, so institutions can work through their processes.¹¹

The State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) has created several invaluable directories, which they update regularly, to help institutions comply with state regulations. The directories offer the following information: state-by-state agency and contact information; data on the types of educational providers they authorize; exemptions; physical presence policy (triggers); application processes; associated fees; interstate reciprocity agreements; contact information for consumer/student protection and student complaints; legislative or regulatory changes; and enforcement measures.¹²

Some ITC members have said they found the state application process to be less daunting than they had anticipated—they discovered few out-of-state students enrolled at their colleges and the application process was relatively simple. Meanwhile, larger institutions that enroll students in all 50 states have reported devoting more than two full-time staff members to navigating the process, and anticipate spending up to \$200,000 a year to fund this effort. It has proven to be particularly difficult to obtain state authorization from Alabama, Arkansas, Maryland, Massachusetts and Minnesota, due to inordinately high fees to teach students within their boundaries, and to burdensome application procedures and reporting requirements.

¹¹ Visit <http://www.wcet.wiche.edu/wcet/docs/state-approval/FINALGEN-13-04StateAuthorization.pdf> for more information.

¹² Visit www.sheeo.org/stateauth/stateauth-home.htm to access these recourses.

An ITC member shared the following three steps their college is following to comply with the regulations in states where they teach out-of-state students.

1. Create a process to identify out-of-state students enrolled at the institution. One might limit the search to students who a. have a permanent out-of-state address, b. pay out-of-state tuition, c. are only enrolled in fully-online courses, and d. have been allocated financial aid.
2. Create an application process to obtain state authorization from those states in which students reside.
3. Contact the states in which those out-of-state students reside.

Three national initiatives are underway to create a voluntary state authorization reciprocity agreement, in which state governments would recognize accredited online courses offered to their residents by out-of-state institutions, and not impose any additional fees, quality assurances or paperwork on institutions. These initiatives include:

1. SARA, State Authorization and Reciprocity Agreement—led and funded by the President’s Forum, the Lumina Foundation, the Council of State Governments, and Excelsior College.
2. W-SARA—led and funded by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE).
3. Commission on Regulation of Postsecondary Distance Education—led and funded by the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities (APLU).

Although differences and questions remain, the three initiatives hope to create a single document to which state governments and institutions can subscribe. The state in which the institution resides would be responsible for ensuring participating colleges and universities follow accreditation procedures and respond adequately to student complaints. Four regional compacts would administer the process and ensure compliance – the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE), the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC), the New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE), and the Southern Regional Educational Board (SREB).

The framers hope to have a single document in place by December 2013, so states can begin their approval processes for the agreement.



OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES AND eTEXTBOOKS

College faculty and administrators are increasingly concerned that the rising cost of printed textbooks is making college too costly for many students. Meanwhile, the availability of affordable high-speed Internet services, and the prevalence of smartphones, mobile devices and laptops among students, have made it easier for students to access and take advantage of lower-cost eTextbooks and free open education resources (OERs).

Several national initiatives are underway to raise awareness and support for OERs. Foundations such as the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation have funded several freely-available OER repositories. National initiatives include the Creative Commons—creativecommons.org, OpenCourseWare Consortium—www.ocwconsortium.org, Community College Consortium for Open Educational Resources—oerconsortium.org, MERLOT—www.merlot.org, Open Course Library, Saylor Foundation—www.saylor.org, Kaleidoscope Project—www.project-kaleidoscope.org, OpenLearn—www.open.edu/openlearn, and Open Culture—www.openculture.com.

There have also been similar efforts to make scientific journals and research freely available. For example, in February 2013 Congress introduced the Fair Access to Science and Technology Research Act (FASTR), which “would require federal agencies with annual extramural research budgets of \$100 million or more to provide the public with online access to the research articles stemming from that funded research, no later than six months after publication in a peer-reviewed journal.”¹³ This legislation is still working its way through Congress at the time of this report’s publication.

STUDENT AUTHENTICATION

When it reauthorized the Higher Education Act in 2008, Congress required institutions offering distance education and correspondence education to “have processes in place through which the institution establishes that the student who registers in a distance education or correspondence education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the course or program and receives the academic credit.”

In its rulemaking proceeding, the Department of Education clarified that accrediting bodies only need to require “institutions to verify the identity of a student who participates in class or coursework by using, at the option of the institution, methods such as—a secure login and pass code, proctored examinations, and new or other technologies and practices that are effective—in verifying student identification.” This allows institutions to continue using the process they typically use to authenticate their online students within their course management system—a login and password—rather than impose a more rigorous or costly method.¹⁴

Confusion about this issue continues. In accordance with this law and regulation, community colleges have relied on a unique username and password to comply with this provision. However, some are turning to contracted solutions from vendors, some of whom incorrectly convince administrators that they need to impose such stringent student monitoring systems to comply with the law. Many educators are concerned that a virtual proctoring solution could be costly and violate student privacy rights.

Attempts to reign in the financial aid fraud rings could result in changes to the Higher Education Act when Congress reauthorizes this regulation in 2014.

¹³ “FASTR Introduced in U.S. Congress to Drastically Expand Public Access to Federally Funded Research,” by Timothy Vollmer, Feb. 14, 2013, Creative Commons, <http://creativecommons.org/weblog/entry/36699>.

¹⁴ Visit www2.ed.gov/policy/highered/leg/hea08/index.html for more information.

ITC SURVEY HISTORY

The Instructional Technology Council (ITC) board of directors created its annual distance education survey in the fall of 2004, to respond to the growing need for national data related to distance learning program creation and development and to track key issues for faculty and students. Distance education practitioners have used data from the U.S. Department of Education and the annual series of reports by Sloan-C, but the landscape lacked a reliable source of longitudinal data gathered on a regular basis. The ITC Survey is designed to fill that gap, particularly given the relative “newness” of online instruction. Core survey questions have remained consistent; however, ITC added additional questions on the use of assisted, hybrid and live interactive video courses in 2008, questions pertaining to student authentication in 2009, questions about state authorization in 2011 and questions about the open educational resource movement in the most recent survey.

The ITC board has conducted ITC’s annual survey in late October and November since the fall of 2004. In the fall of 2006, ITC distributed the survey to the full membership of the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) for the first time. Subsequent surveys have included the AACC membership on years ending in an even number. The 2012 survey ended this practice, due to uneven response rates from AACC members.

SURVEY METHOD

Distance education practitioners developed and reviewed the survey questions to ensure the data and information generated is of value to distance learning administrators and faculty. The authors divided the questions into four categories: general information, administrative issues, faculty issues, and student services.

ITC e-mailed the survey to member representatives at its 375 member institutions. ITC received 142 completed responses, or responses from 38 percent of ITC members. The completed surveys were reviewed to ensure that a representative sample of institutions had participated. The review confirmed an acceptable response rate, and an acceptable distribution of completed surveys, from a range of institution sizes and locations. For all percentages included in this report, “no answer” responses are not listed—consequently, data will not always equal 100 percent.

Typically, the distance education administrator completed the survey on behalf of his or her institution. A longitudinal review established a strong continuity amongst completers—70 percent of the annual submissions have come from the same campuses during the eight years of the survey.

DISTRIBUTION OF RESULTS

The ITC will mail a printed version of the survey to ITC members and to the community college presidents of all AACC-member institutions. ITC will also post an electronic version of the results on its Web site, at www.itcnetwork.org.

2012 SURVEY RESULTS

GENERAL INFORMATION

Institutions Surveyed. More than 93 percent of respondents identified themselves as associate’s colleges (84.67 percent) or associate’s dominant colleges (8.03 percent).¹⁵

Distance Education Enrollment Growth. ITC asked respondents to report comparative enrollment trends in distance education from fall 2011 to fall 2012, the most recent full year of available academic data. Campuses reported a 6.52 percent increase in distance education enrollments—a number that is lower than in previous years, but substantially higher than the total overall enrollment at their institutions, where enrollment totals declined by an average of 2.64 percent.

The ITC results confirm two major trends. For the past decade, online learning has been the predominant source of higher education enrollment increases. Additionally, the growth rate in online student enrollment has slowed: from a high of 22 percent from fall 2007 to 2008, to 8.2 percent from fall 2010 to 2011, to a modest six percent growth rate from fall 2011 to 2012.

The 8.2 percent enrollment growth rate ITC members reported last year, in fall 2011, corresponds with the slowdown the Babson Group reported in “Changing Course: Ten Years of Tracking Online Education in the United States,” which was published in January 2013 and examined online learning at four-year institutions in fall 2011. They document a 9.3 percent increase in the number of students who took at least one online course. As in ITC’s survey, while the online learning growth rate has slowed, it well exceeded a 0.1 percent decline in overall higher education student enrollment in 2011. The report found that more than 6.7 million students took at least one online course during the fall 2011 term.

ITC asked respondents to identify factors which contributed to the increased eLearning enrollments. As the table below demonstrates, impacts related to the economic downturn are subsiding:

TABLE 1. Reasons Cited for Increased eLearning Enrollments

Reason	2012	2011	2010
Economic downturn	18 percent	22 percent	37 percent
Typical distance education growth	28 percent	28 percent	39 percent
New enrollment initiative	9 percent	14 percent	12 percent
Don’t know	11 percent	7 percent	5 percent
Other	21 percent	13 percent	7 percent

¹⁵ For information on institutional classifications, visit http://classifications.carnegiefoundation.org/descriptions/ugrad_program.php.

Direct Report Line. In 2012, more than 74 percent of respondents indicated they reported to the vice president of academic affairs or to an academic dean. This figure has increased by two percentage points each year for the past two years, supporting the trend that distance educators are increasingly reporting to the academic, rather than to the technology, side of the institution. This year no one indicated reporting directly to their college's president, a decline from three percent in 2011 and six percent in 2010. As in 2011, three percent reported to a vice president for technology. Three point five percent reported to a non-academic dean (down from 7.5 percent in 2011), and four percent reported to an instructional technology administrator.



- “Training is a major challenge. Our department has three full-time employees. We serve more than 10 thousand students, 424 faculty, and 250 staff. We do our absolute best at offering training in multiple formats, and at staggered times and locations, but it is a constant uphill battle. We are also facing a pending LMS migration in fall 2014 as we are an ANGEL client. Our options are being studied by an interdepartmental committee led by my office.”
- “Rise of the MOOC, competency-based instruction, textbook costs, and vendors promoting services directly to faculty are of special concern.”
- “Moving from a focus on growth to a focus on quality and results. This is a challenge and an opportunity!”

—2012 ITC Survey Respondents

ADMINISTRATIVE QUESTIONS

Challenges. ITC asked respondents to rank the major challenges their distance education program faces. From 2005 to 2010, the number one challenge was the need to provide training and technical assistance to support staff. In 2011, providing adequate support services for distance education students emerged as the number one challenge and retains this distinction in 2012. This may be because budget cuts have forced many campuses to reduce student services staff.

Other trends of interest include:

1. There is a clear, pressing need to assess distance education courses for quality. This has ranked in the top three challenges since 2009. Most distance education administrators lack the authority to select faculty, courses and their content; schedule course offerings; and evaluate courses.
2. Distance educators have an additional responsibility to respond to the new recent federal engagement in online learning, especially as it relates to state authorization, financial aid compliance, and student authentication.
3. Distance educators are less concerned about staffing, operating and equipment budgets and space issues than they have been in the past.
4. Faculty, student, and organizational acceptance for online learning continue to rank at the bottom of the list of distance education administrators' concerns.

TABLE 2. Greatest Challenges for Distance Education Programs Administrators

Range for responses—1 is the most challenging, 8 is the least challenging

Challenge	Rank 2012	Rank 2011	Rank 2010	Rank 2009	Rank 2008	Rank 2007	Rank 2006	Rank 2005	Rank 2004
Adequate student services for distance education students	1	1	3	2	2	2	3	5	2
Adequate assessment of distance education classes ¹⁶	2	2	2	3	—	—	—	—	—
Support staff needed for training and technical assistance	3	7	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Operating and equipment budgets	4	4	4	4	3	3	2	2	3
Adequate administrative authority	5	8	5	5	4	5	4	4	5
State authorization regulations ¹⁷	6	11	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Student authentication ¹⁸	7	10	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Compliance with new financial aid attendance requirements ¹⁹	8	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Adequate space for training and technical assistance	9	9	6	7	6	6	6	7	7
Faculty acceptance	10	5	7	6	5	4	5	3	4
Organizational acceptance	11	6	8	8	7	7	7	6	6
Student acceptance	12	12	9	9	8	8	8	8	8

Learning Management System Usage. In 2011 and 2012, 52 percent of ITC’s Survey respondents used Blackboard Learn, which purchased Web CT in 2005 and Angel Learning in 2009, as their learning management system (LMS) solution. These totals suggest that Blackboard may have stemmed the steady decline in its market share since 2004, when Blackboard and WebCT served nearly 98 percent of colleges.

Seventy percent of respondents indicated they do not plan to change their LMS, which is up substantially from the 56 percent who reported this in 2011. In 2012, 29 percent of respondents indicated they were considering switching their LMS in the next few years, which somewhat lower than the 33 percent response rate the ITC Survey has seen since 2004. Undoubtedly, many campuses suffer from “migration-fatigue,” after having gone

¹⁶ Adequate assessment of distance education classes was introduced as a new option in 2009.

¹⁷ “Student authorization regulations” was introduced as a new option in 2011.

¹⁸ “Student authentication” was introduced as a new option in 2011.

¹⁹ “Compliance with new financial aid attendance requirements” was introduced as a new option in 2011.

through at least two costly and time-consuming LMS migrations during the past nine years. A high percentage of Angel Learning licensees have chosen to stay with Blackboard, after the company promised to provide continued technical support despite the 2009 takeover. Meanwhile, nine percent of ITC Survey respondents have adopted this year's newcomer, Instructure Canvas, as their new learning management solution.

Seventy-six percent of respondents said their college restricts the number of LMS platforms their campus will support, while only 67 percent reported that they did so in 2011. Table 3 summarizes the response pattern over the past six years. The LMS market continues to reflect a degree of consolidation and maturing, with adoption of open-source solutions plateauing and a number of smaller learning management systems disappearing from the list.

TABLE 3. Learning Management System Usage

	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007
Blackboard Learn	35 percent	30 percent	26 percent	26 percent	38 percent	39 percent
Blackboard WebCT ²⁰	2 percent	7 percent	10 percent	10 percent	20 percent	39 percent
Blackboard Angel Learning ²¹	15 percent	15 percent	10 percent	—	—	—
Angel Learning ²²	—	—	—	13 percent	11 percent	9 percent
Desire2Learn	15 percent	13 percent	8 percent	7 percent	5 percent	4 percent
Moodle	14 percent	11 percent	9 percent	6 percent	11 percent	10 percent
Instructure ²³	9 percent	—	—	—	—	—



- “The college administration at my institution does not seem to understand the importance of eLearning as a way to grow the college. Our college is still acquiring land and talking about bricks and mortar as a way to expand the reach of the college. In recent budget cuts the eLearning department was singled out despite the fact their flexible delivery of courses generates additional FTE for the college.”
- “Our biggest challenge will be to continue to grow our online programs, since many full-time faculty members are planning to retire.”
- “We struggle with federal regulation compliance, getting full-time faculty to comply with quality assurance processes, getting faculty to generate more distance courses, and obtaining oversight and administrative authority to enforce quality on distance courses.”

—2012 ITC Survey Respondents

²⁰ A rapidly declining number of colleges have used WebCT for their LMS since Blackboard acquired the company in 2005. Nevertheless, two percent of respondents still use WebCT even though Blackboard no longer provides technical support.

²¹ Blackboard purchased Angel Learning in the fall of 2009.

²² Blackboard purchased Angel Learning in the fall of 2009.

²³ Instructure launched Canvas in 2011.

Accessibility Compliance. Fewer administrators who responded to this question are confident that their online courses are compliant with Section 504²⁴ and Section 508²⁵ of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, since ITC began asking survey participants about the accessibility of their online classes in 2008. On June 29, 2010, the Department of Justice and Department of Education sent college presidents a joint “dear colleague letter” that questioned whether electronic book readers are accessible to students who are blind or have low vision. Making sure online courses are accessible to students with disabilities has always been an important challenge for distance educators.²⁶

TABLE 4. Accessibility Compliance

	Completely or Mostly Compliant	Somewhat or Partly Compliant
2012	52 percent	44 percent
2011	53 percent	39 percent
2010	43 percent	28 percent
2009	54 percent	21 percent
2008	73 percent	26 percent

Online Degrees. ITC defines an online degree program as one in which at least 70 percent of the coursework is delivered online. In 2012, 90 percent of respondents reported that they are offering at least one distance education degree program, an increase of 12 percentage points over 2011 (78 percent) and 24 percentage points over 2010 (66 percent). This represents a noteworthy uptick of the number of institutions offering distance education degrees. Chart 1 displays the breakdown of degree types offered at community colleges:

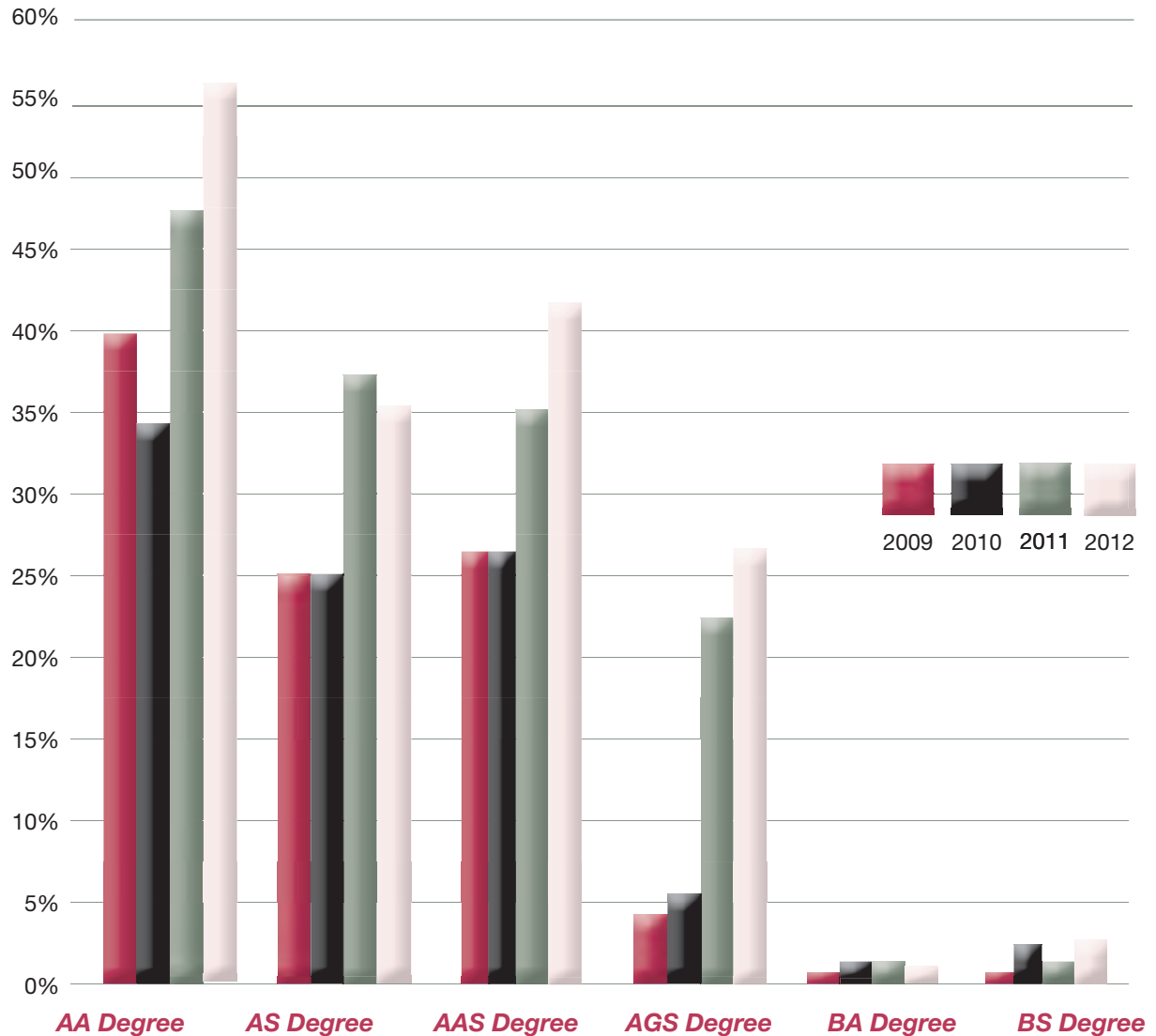
²⁴ Section 504 states that “no qualified individual with a disability in the United States shall be excluded from, denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under” any program or activity that either receives Federal financial assistance or is conducted by any Executive agency or the United States Postal Service.

²⁵ Section 508 requires federal electronic and information technology to be accessible to people with disabilities, including employees and members of the public.

²⁶ See the “dear colleague letter” the Department of Education and the Department of Justice sent college presidents at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-20100629.html>



CHART 1. Types of Online Degrees Programs at Community Colleges



Online Certificates. Eighty-one percent of respondents indicated that their institution offers an online certificate option, where at least 70 percent of the coursework is delivered online. This area of online delivery will continue to increase in importance, as more community colleges focus on student completion rates.

Class Hosting. ITC confirmed that most colleges outsource the hosting services (i.e. servers) for their online classes to a third party, or use the services of a consortium. This trend could reflect budget and staffing reductions at a growing number of institutions. In addition, LMS solutions increasingly stipulate that the college uses the company's Web site to access their course materials. The survey found that:

- Thirty-six percent of respondents own and maintain their own servers—unchanged from 2011, but down from a high of 50 percent in 2008.
 - Fifty-three percent of respondents reported that they outsource their server needs to a third party. This is up eight percent from 2011 (45 percent) and up 17 percent from 2010 (36 percent).
 - Eleven percent of respondents shared servers with others, such as a state system, district or consortium, which is unchanged from 2011.
- “Ensuring online materials are compatible with mobile devices. Keeping up-to-date with new technology.”
 - “Our greatest challenge has been a significant reduction in fiscal resources, which has limited support for faculty and staff development and funding to create new curriculum and programs. We have strong campus-wide support for online learning, but we have been doing it so long that it has become a routine. We are sometimes overlooked as a focus for continuous improvement. We need to find new spark for something we feel we’re already doing quite well.”
 - “Growing competition for online courses from other colleges and universities.”

—2012 ITC Survey Respondents



Course Equivalency Accreditation standards require that distance education courses are at least equivalent than those taught in a face-to-face environment, in terms of content and rigor. Ninety percent of respondents to the 2012 survey identified their online classes as equivalent (83 percent) or superior (7 percent) to traditional instruction. This is up ten percent from 2011, when nearly 80 percent of respondents indicated their online classes were “equivalent” or “superior” to traditional instruction at their campus. Responses to this question over time have continued to affirm a strong trend of equivalency to traditional instruction.

Distance Education Fees. In 2012, 51 percent of respondents indicated they charge students an additional per-credit fee to take a distance education course. This was a 12 percent increase over 2011 (39 percent). For those campuses that do charge a student distance education fee, the average charge was \$12 per credit and \$30 per course.

This trend likely reflects the need for community college to generate revenues to support licensing, technical support, and selected student services solutions. Many universities are transitioning their distance education programs to self-supporting budgets. Although this fosters an entrepreneurial strategy, it also separates the distance education efforts from the main campus, which may be detrimental in the longer-term.



- “Identifying and implementing a cost- and technically-effective student authentication system will continue to be a challenge, especially when Congress could implement more onerous rules on this issue when it reauthorizes the Higher Education Act.”
- “Every proposed change must go before committees for approval before implementation, which is a very slow process.”
- “Challenges to program development include faculty resistance to creating institutional guidelines for quality improvement, identity protection, and the inclusion of science labs. Helping the college think strategically about an area that has historically been emergent and sporadic in nature may bring a bit of culture shock. The college has created a five-year plan that has rigorous timelines for full online degree program development. Pushing too hard too fast may be traumatic for the college.”

—2012 ITC Survey Respondents



DISTANCE EDUCATION COURSE FORMATS

Five years ago, ITC introduced several questions to the survey that pertained to blended or hybrid and Web-facilitated courses. The survey defined a blended or hybrid course as one in which 30 to 79 percent of the content is delivered online, with online discussions and some face-to-face meetings. A Web-facilitated course (also known as Web-enhanced or Web-assisted) is a face-to-face program that incorporates the Web to facilitate activities; one to 29 percent of content is delivered online. Instructors often post the syllabus and assignments within a learning management system (LMS) or on a Web page.

TYPE OF COURSE FORMATS OFFERED

Respondents identified the formats their technology-delivered credit courses use. Survey respondents could identify more than one format. Their responses are summarized below:

- Sixty-two percent offer completely online courses
- Fourteen percent offer blended or hybrid courses
- Twenty-nine percent offer Web-assisted courses
- Less than one percent offer cable/telecourse courses
- Less than one percent offer other forms of telecourse classes
- Four percent offer live interactive video courses

Blended/Hybrid Courses

- In 2012, 63 percent of respondents increased the number of blended or hybrid courses they offered each term, a percentage that increased from 55 percent in 2011 and 53 percent in 2009, but declined from 75 percent in 2010.
- Twenty-eight percent offered the same number of blended or hybrid courses each term, an increase from 22 percent in 2011 and 18 percent in 2010.
- Three percent reported they are offering blended or hybrid courses for the first time. Newcomers numbered two percent in 2011 and six percent in 2010.
- Three percent did not offer blended or hybrid courses in 2012.

Web-Assisted, Web-Enhanced, Web-facilitated Courses

- In 2012, 84 percent of respondents increased the number of Web-assisted, Web-enhanced or Web-facilitated courses they offered each term.

This percentage increased from 69 percent in 2011, 81 percent in 2010 and 77 percent in 2009.

- Nine percent offered about the same number of Web-assisted, Web-enhanced or Web-facilitated courses they offered each term, consistent with the past several years of reporting.

Interactive Video Courses

Given the focus on online courses, many surveys have overlooked more established technologies, such as interactive video classrooms. Recent budget cuts at many campuses have inspired administrators to take advantage of the assets they already have. Respondents' descriptions of their use of live interactive video is summarized below.

- Forty-one percent of respondents have deactivated their network or have never offered live interactive video courses, compared to 25 percent in 2011 and 2010, and 40 percent in 2009.
- Twenty-seven percent offer the same number of live interactive video courses each term, compared to 25 percent in 2011 and 2010.

- Eighteen percent have reduced the number of live interactive video courses they offer each term, compared to 17 percent in 2011 and 2010.
- Fourteen percent have increased the number of live interactive video courses they offer each term, compared to 17 percent in 2010 26 percent in 2009.



- “Student access to broadband Internet...is still an issue in rural areas.”
- “We struggle to overcome the belief among some faculty and students that online classes are easier to teach or pass.”
- “Retirement of key personnel when no one on staff is adequately prepared for the transition.”
- “Student demand for services far outweigh our capacity to meet the demand.”

—2012 ITC Survey Respondents

Massive Open Online Courses, MOOCs

For the first time, the ITC Survey included a question about respondent plans to use massive open online courses (MOOCs). As would be expected with something so new, campuses are cautious in their approach. Many community colleges are skeptical that a large-enrollment solution is appropriate for campuses that believe in smaller, more personalized instruction.

- Forty-two percent of respondents reported they have no plans for incorporating MOOC content into their online courses.
- Forty-four percent reported they are beginning to explore options for incorporating MOOC content into their entire courses.
- Less than one percent reported they are offering course credit or certificates for completing MOOCs.

Open Educational Resources, OERs

For the first time, the ITC Survey asked survey participants about their use of open educational resources (OERs) on their campuses. OERs are defined as freely-accessible, openly-formatted and -licensed materials and media that educators use for teaching, learning, assessment and research purposes. Efforts to develop open textbooks are a

major undertaking for the OER movement.

What level of impact do you expect OERs will have at your institution in the next three to five years?

- Thirty-six percent of respondents anticipate a significant impact
- Sixty percent anticipate very little impact
- Four percent anticipate no impact

What roadblocks do you anticipate for the adoption of OER solutions at your institution?

- Sixty-seven percent of respondents indicated concern about the time faculty need to locate and evaluate OERs
- Sixty-six percent indicated concern about a lack of faculty awareness
- Forty-five percent indicated concern about the credibility of sources
- Twenty-one percent indicated concern about the lack of ancillary materials
- Fourteen percent indicated the concern about a resistance from administration



- “Getting faculty to attend training sessions.”
- “Managing the growth of existing courses, both online and hybrid.”
- “Expanding online enrollment to meet student demand, without sacrificing quality.”

—2012 ITC Survey Respondent

FACULTY QUESTIONS

Challenges. Each year, the ITC Survey asks administrators to rank the greatest faculty-related challenges they face. For the first six years of the survey, addressing faculty workload issues was their major challenge. Although training replaced this concern in 2010, workload issues emerged again as the key concern in 2011. In 2012, the newly-added challenge of engaging faculty to develop online pedagogy proved to be number one. Table 5 shows which issues have been consistently ranked as areas of concern.

TABLE 5. Greatest Challenges Administrators Face Regarding Distance Learning Faculty


Range for responses—1 is the most challenging, 8 is the least challenging

Challenge	Rank 2012	Rank 2011	Rank 2010	Rank 2009	Rank 2008	Rank 2007	Rank 2006	Rank 2005	Rank 2004
Engaging faculty in development of online pedagogy ²⁷	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Workload issues	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
Training	3	2	1	2	2	2	2	3	4
Evaluation of faculty	4								
Technical support	5	3	4	6	4	5	5	6	5
Buy-in to online instruction	6	5	5	4	5	4	4	4	3
Compensation	7	4	3	5	3	3	3	5	2
Intellectual property and ownership issues	8	6	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
Recruitment	9	7	6	3	6	6	6	2	6

²⁶ Engaging faculty in development of online pedagogy was introduced as a new question in 2012.



Faculty Training. To teach online, faculty must participate in distance education training programs at 72 percent of participating colleges, compared to 70 percent in 2011. This is a sharp increase from the 64 percent rate ITC Survey respondents reported from 2007 to 2011. The survey found:

- Sixty-five percent of respondents' institutions require more than eight hours of training
 - Seven percent require eight hours of training
 - Twenty-eight percent require less than eight hours of training
- 
- “We are making a serious effort to improve our compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act for all of the face-to-face and online courses our college offers. We are also looking for ways to meet student and instructor demands for mobile access to learning.”
 - “Having a mandatory tutorial in place for students to take prior to enrolling in an online course would greatly enhance online retention rates for newer students.”
 - “Another challenge is getting the advisors to ask students the right questions if they want to enroll in an online class.”

—2012 ITC Survey Respondents

Teaching Ratios for Online Instruction. The full-time/part-time faculty teaching ratio seems to have stabilized. In 2012, full-time faculty taught 60 percent of online sections (compared to 61 percent in 2011), while part-time faculty taught 40 percent of online sections. These results align with the historic full-time/part-time faculty ratio in most face-to-face classes at community colleges.

Faculty Location. Seventy-six percent of respondents reported that their faculty must work on campus, an increase from 70 percent in 2011 and 60 percent in 2012. Possible explanations could include a reduction in online course offerings or a growing concern that faculty must work within the college's state borders so they do not trigger out-of-state authorization requirements. Few campuses look beyond their own instructors to teach online. However, since most campuses have saturated their use of existing full-time faculty who want to teach online, many administrators are forced to turn to part-time faculty who can teach online to meet the ever-increasing student demand for online courses.

Limiting the Number of Classes Taught. In 2012, 37 percent of respondents reported that they work at colleges that limit the number of online class sections a full-time faculty member can teach during a given period. This percentage was 34 percent in 2011. For campuses that impose these restrictions, faculty are normally limited from teaching more than half of their overall teaching load each term online.



- “Evaluating course quality and instructor effectiveness, including implementing peer review, is a top concern and priority. eTextbooks offer an opportunity to offer universal, cross-platform solutions that are available to students.”
- “Lower overall student enrollment sometimes forces administrators to reduce the number of courses offered or place students in online classes when they would prefer to be in a face-to-face course.”
- “Some deans and department heads still question the validity of online coursework and degree programs.”

—2012 ITC Survey Respondents

STUDENT QUESTIONS

The ITC Survey affirmed that student demand for online courses and degree programs has continued unabated. Administrators continue to report a chronic gap between student demand for online learning and the number of online courses their colleges offer. Budget cutbacks have exacerbated this gap by forcing distance education administrators to reduce, rather than increase, the number of online class sections, because they cannot afford to hire the number of faculty needed to teach them or to provide the student services the new student population would need to succeed.

At the same time, administrators have complained that many students are unprepared to learn online. Despite growing up with technology, they often lack basic computer skills, misunderstand the online learning environment, and lack the study skills they need to succeed. These issues coincide with a national call to improve overall student retention and persistence rates.

Administrators continue to face the challenge of providing virtual student support services that are equivalent to on-campus, face-to-face offerings. These services include providing access to online library materials and support, tutoring and advising services, career counseling, campus testing centers, and technical help-desk support, among others. The concern over the ability to offer these services online will likely continue, since many of these areas have sustained budget cuts during the past four years, resulting in a decline in these accreditation-mandated services.



Table 6: Greatest Challenges for Students Enrolled in Distance Education Classes

Range for responses—1 is the most challenging, 8 is the least challenging

Challenge	Rank 2012	Rank 2011	Rank 2010	Rank 2009	Rank 2008	Rank 2007	Rank 2006	Rank 2005	Rank 2004
Orientation/preparation for taking distance education classes	1	1	2	1	2	2	1	1	1
Providing equivalent student services virtually	2	5	5	4	5	5	4	3	4
Assessing student learning and performance in distance education classes	3	2	1	2	1	3	2	2	2
Computer problems/technical support	4	4	4	3	3	4	3	6	3
Low student completion rate	5	3	3	6	4	6	5	4	6
Completion of student evaluations	6	6	6	5	6	1	6	5	5
Cheating	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	—	7
Recruitment/interest in distance education by students	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	7	8
Disruptive student behavior ²⁸	9	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—



- “The need to put emphasis on systems, policies, procedures, and overall infrastructure before increasing the quantity of online classes.”
- “The main challenge is that our vice president for academics does not support online education. We are waiting to hear the results from a study which an outside consultant is conducting on online education in the state.”

—2012 ITC Survey Respondents

²⁸ Disruptive student behavior was added as a new category in 2012.

Completion Rates. During the early years of distance education, retention and completion rates could easily fall below 50 percent. Studies consistently report that colleges have positively addressed this challenge, despite continued misconceptions. The ITC Survey participants reported that the gap between online and face-to-face student retention now averages only eight percent. In nine years of data, the trend in online retention continues to improve, but challenges remain, and addressing the gap is a major priority for many programs. In 2012, administrators reported the following information about distance education class retention rates.

- Four percent of respondents said retention is higher for online classes than for traditional instruction at their college, the same as in 2011.
- Forty-three percent said retention is comparable for online and traditional instruction at their college, compared to 40 percent in 2011.
- Fifty percent said retention is lower for online classes than for traditional instruction at their college, compared to 53 percent in 2011.

Traditional vs. Nontraditional Students. Given their reputation for being tech-savvy and technology-obsessed, many expect younger students to dominate online classes. However the ITC Survey has consistently confirmed that older students are just as likely to take online classes, especially since they value the access and flexibility online courses offer them. Many older students might not be as comfortable using technology as their more youthful counterparts, but they are often more motivated to succeed, and have higher GPA and completion rates than those who just graduated from high school. The ITC survey respondents noted:

- Forty-nine percent of their distance education students are traditional—age 18-25.
- Forty-seven percent of their distance education students are non-traditional—age 26+.

Gender. ITC has consistently confirmed that more women than men take online classes. The ITC survey respondents reported that:

- Sixty-five percent of their distance education students are female.
- Thirty-five percent of their distance education students are male.



Student Demand. Most distance education programs have failed to meet student demand for online instruction. However, in 2012 more online educators reported that they can meet this demand, a trend which seems to mirror the decline in student enrollment which most colleges and universities have experienced due to the economic recovery.

- Fifty-three percent of the respondents reported that student demand for distance education courses exceeded the online course offerings at their college in 2012, compared to 62 percent in 2011.
- Forty-seven percent reported that their college was meeting the student demand for distance education courses in 2012, compared to only 37 percent in 2011.

Student Authentication. When it reauthorized the Higher Education Act in 2008, Congress required distance education administrators to create “processes that establish that the student who registers in a distance education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the program and receives the academic credit.” The Department of Education’s corresponding regulations require that accreditors make sure

colleges “authenticate” their online students by requiring them to use a secure login and pass code to access their course materials, participate in proctored examinations, or use “any new or other technologies and practices that are effective in verifying student identification.” Since it first asked this question in 2008, the ITC Survey has found that nearly all campuses are fulfilling this requirement by using a system that requires students to use a secure username and pass code.

- Ninety-eight percent of survey respondents require student authentication.
- Two percent of survey respondents do not require authentication.

In 2012, ITC began asking survey respondents if their colleges were taking any additional steps to authenticate students, other than the secure login and pass code the Department of Education requires.

- Sixteen percent of the respondents’ institutions require students to take least one proctored exam.
- Eight percent use remote video proctoring.
- Five percent use a vendor-based identity verification solution.





OBSERVATIONS AND TRENDS

Since ITC began surveying its members in the fall of 2004, continuity in a number of response areas has emerged. Distance education administrators—regardless of their college’s geographic location, number of student enrollments, staffing or budget—face many of the same challenges. Some observations about trends across the past nine years follows below.

- Student demand for distance education courses at community colleges continues to grow—at a rate that is much greater than the demand for on-campus, face-to-face courses. However, the unprecedented growth of the past decade has slowed on many campuses, as overall student enrollment at many community colleges has declined due to the resurgent economy.
- As online instruction continues to mature, distance education administrators see a pressing need to address course quality and design, faculty training and preparation, course assessment, and improvements in student readiness and retention.
- Growth in the use of blended, hybrid, Web-assisted, Web-enhanced and Web-facilitated classes continues.
- The gap between distance learning and face-to-face student completion rates has significantly narrowed. Nearly half of the survey respondents indicated that they have achieved equivalency.
- Community college administrators are somewhat skeptical of the MOOC movement and are cautiously exploring ways to take advantage of this popular new online course model, perhaps through competency-based learning or personal learning assessment.
- Community colleges are looking for ways to use eTextbooks and open education resources to help cut the costs students face. They are also looking at ways to overcome real and perceived barriers to their use by faculty and administrators.
- The availability of virtual student services has declined in the past few years. This trend is likely due to the budget and staff reductions many community colleges have faced. Distance educators hope college administrators will see these services as a priority as budgets and staffing return to pre-recession levels, especially since accreditors increasingly expect online student services to be equivalent or superior to the college’s face-to-face, on-campus offerings.
- Many campuses continue to lack compliance with the accessibility requirements for online instruction outlined in sections 504 and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act.
- The learning management system (LMS) market continues to be volatile. Despite migration fatigue, nearly one third of campuses report that they intend to change their LMS in the next two years.
- Online program administration has shifted so that more academic administrators, such as deans and academic vice presidents, are responsible for distance education, rather than library services or the IT department.
- Nearly every distance education program authenticates distance learning students by requiring them to use a unique username and passcode.

IS YOUR PROGRAM TYPICAL?

Administrators always wonder how their program compares to those at other institutions. Is it typical or consistent with national trends? Highly-successful programs do not always reflect these generalized characteristics—variances often result from the culture of the institution or the role the distance education program is expected to play.

However, for most of the survey participants, their online program:

1. Is the institution's primary source for student enrollment growth.
2. Does not offer enough courses to meet student demand.
3. Enhances access to higher education, due to its increased flexibility and convenience.
4. Includes a nearly equal number of traditional and nontraditional students.
5. Enrolls more female than male students (in a 60-40 ratio).
6. Has staff that reports to the academic side of the institution, and specifically to a dean or more highly-ranked administrator.
7. Is under-staffed, working in cramped conditions with an inadequate budget.
8. Offers approximately 180 online classes/class sections each semester.
9. Offers a growing percentage of Web-assisted and blended or hybrid instruction.
10. Acts as a change-agent at the institution, prompting increased faculty training and professional development, a rethinking of teaching pedagogy, and the integration of technology into instruction.
11. Often leads the institution in dealing with issues of innovative course design, rigor, course quality, and keeping up with new insights as to how students learn.
12. Struggles to attain understanding, acceptance and support from campus leaders, who often lack direct experience with this method of teaching and learning, and often feel a generational disconnect.
13. Has little or no control over faculty recruitment, hiring, evaluation and retention.
14. Is overwhelmed by, and lacks the staff necessary to comply with, state and federal government regulations. It struggles to determine the best way to respond in the face of these obstacles.
15. Is making some progress with Section 504 and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act to serve students with disabilities.
16. Has developed strategies to improve overall course quality, consistency, retention and assessment – facets viewed as essential to the future success of online learning.

CONCLUSION

The ITC board of directors sincerely hopes this survey has proven its value to distance education practitioners during the past nine years. The ITC Survey has emerged as the only national survey designed to measure trends at community colleges. In addition, the survey questions are intended to produce data of immediate value to distance education administrators. The distance education landscape is constantly changing and the need for relevant and timely data and information is always important.

Distance education is new ground for most senior college administrators—who are often asked to support new staffing, space and budget requests with a fixed or shrinking budget. Many have little, if any, direct experience managing distance education programs. College administrators want to ensure they make the right decisions that will benefit their students, faculty, staff and greater community, and make the most of limited resources. It is our hope that the data presented in this report fosters a better understanding of ever-evolving world of distance education and becomes the basis for a data-driven discussion about the distance education program at your campus.

Each year, ITC engages in an aggressive campaign to get the survey into the hands of key administrators and distance education practitioners. This report is distributed to ITC members, community college presidents, attendees at the AACC annual convention, and is the subject of articles in numerous relevant publications. The ITC board will continue to do its best to empower decision makers with information they need.

I wish to thank all of the member institutions of the Instructional Technology Council (ITC) that participated in the 2012 survey. Special appreciation goes to the ITC board of directors, for their continued support of the project. Thanks also go to the members of the ITC survey committee, for their efforts to refine topic areas and help draft several new questions for each annual survey. I thank Travis Souza, WebCollege coordinator at Truckee Meadows Community College, for creating the online survey instrument and tabulating the data over the past nine years, and Christine Mullins, ITC's executive director, for her thorough work editing the survey—each and every year. Amy Weinfurter, ITC's membership services coordinator, was also instrumental in helping to proofread the survey.

Fred Lokken

ITC Board of Directors

Dean, WebCollege, Truckee Meadows Community College

Reno, Nevada

ABOUT THE INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY COUNCIL (ITC)

The Instructional Technology Council (ITC) is celebrating 36 years of providing exceptional leadership and professional development to its network of eLearning experts by advocating, collaborating, researching, and sharing exemplary, innovative practices and potential in learning technologies. An affiliated council of the American Association of Community Colleges since 1977, ITC represents higher education institutions in the United States and Canada that use distance learning technologies.

ITC members receive a subscription to the ITC list serv with information on what's happening in distance education, an electronic newsletter, discounts to participate in ITC's professional development Webinar series, distance learning grants information, updates on distance learning legislation, discounts to attend the annual eLearning Conference and Leadership Academy, and free access to ITC publications and research. Visit the ITC Web site at www.itcnetwork.org for additional information or to become an ITC member.

INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY COUNCIL PROGRAM ACTIVITIES MARCH 30, 2012 – MARCH 30, 2013

Advocated Congress to Drop a Senate Provision to Restrict Financial Aid for Online Students


- ITC worked with legislative staff from the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) to convince Congress to remove a proposal the Senate had included in its FY 2013 appropriations bill (S. 3295) that would have restricted the ability of fully-online students to receive Pell grant funding to pay for their living expenses, even though face-to-face students would have continued to be entitled to receive this funding.
- This restriction would have reduced the reimbursement for each online student by an average of \$1,400. It would have hurt community college students in particular, since their tuition rates are low enough that money is left over from their Pell Grant to help pay for these expenses.
- ITC informed its members of the impact of this proposed legislation and asked them to contact their congressional representative to convince them to reinstate this important benefit to online learners.

Informed and advocated on the Department of Education's proposed requirement that higher education institutions obtain state authorization to teach out-of-state distance learning students

- Created and regularly updated a special section on the ITC Web site with articles and resources to inform ITC members that higher education institutions that offer distance education courses to out-of-state students must meet state requirements to offer courses to their residents.
- In February 2012, issued a three-page policy statement on behalf of ITC and the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), which outlined the background and impact of this issue. The statement also included recommendations as to how community colleges could respond to the proposed requirements.
- On Dec. 4, 2012, hosted a Webinar presentation in which Marianne Boeke, from the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS), shared what she learned when she contacted every state agency to document their policies for authorizing out-of-state institutions that offer online courses to their residents.
- Worked with Pam Quinn, a member of the Commission on the Regulation of Postsecondary Distance Education, about ITC's position on the Commission's draft State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement.

Submitted comments to the Department of Education, and presented oral testimony at a Department of Education hearing on financial aid fraud rings

- On Jan. 27, 2012, participated in a President's Forum meeting on financial aid fraud. Published an article that summarized the Department of Education's position on this issue, and provided best practice steps that for-profit and non-profit institutions have used to combat these crimes. The article also included a discussion of technical issues and legal concerns.
- On May 31, 2012, submitted written comments on behalf of ITC members, stating the Inspector General's recommendation that the Department "seek statutory changes to [reduce] the cost of attendance



calculation for students enrolled in distance education programs under the HEA [Higher Education Act] to limit the payment for room and board” would discriminate against distance education students and reduce the amount of aid awarded to needy students. Summarized these proceedings for ITC members in an e-mail and on the ITC Web site.

Collaborated with other Washington-based agencies to promote access to broadband connections for community colleges and universities

- In 2010-13, ITC served as an active participant for the Schools, Health and Libraries Broadband Coalition (SHLB) to advocate on behalf of distance educators at community colleges, and inform ITC members about the ways the Obama administration’s broadband initiatives could help their distance learning operation.

Presented a pre-conference workshop on legislative issues at the Sloan Consortium International Conference on Online Learning

- Presented a pre-conference workshop, “Online Learning: Federal Legislation and Policy: What’s Here and What’s Coming At You?” in Orlando, Florida on Oct. 10, 2012.

Attended the first meetings of the congressional eLearning caucus


- Attended the first meetings of the Congressional eLearning Caucus on Jan. 6, 2012 and July 11, 2012, which were initiated by Kristi Noem (R-SD) and Jared Polis (D-CO). ITC’s executive director informed the participants about community colleges’ interest in distance education.

Authored and Distributed eLearning News

- Throughout the year, ITC staff regularly informed members about distance learning issues and trends via biweekly e-mail notices. The e-mails included short excerpts from articles on eLearning featured in *Inside Higher Ed*, *the New York Times*, *the Chronicle of Higher Education*, the blogosphere, and other news sources. ITC staff also sent members summaries and links to the latest eLearning research from the National Center for Educational Statistics, other Department of Education agencies, and the Sloan Foundation, among other sources.
- ITC archived past news updates on the members’ only section of the Web site, to enable distance education and online staff to quickly access and search for relevant information.

Hosted eLearning 2013 on Feb. 17-20, 2013 in San Antonio, Texas

- ITC’s annual professional development conference attracted 410 registrants and 28 exhibitors.
- The Alamo Colleges, which include Northeast Lakeview College, Northwest Vista College, Palo Alto College, St. Philip’s College and San Antonio College, served as the host institution.
- eLearning 2013 featured 58 professional development concurrent sessions, a day of pre-conference workshops, inspiring general session speakers, and an exhibit hall.
- Featured speakers at eLearning 2011 included: Tanya Joosten, interim director for the learning technology center and professor in the department of communication at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee; Dr.



Chris Bustamante, president of Rio Salado College; Cameron Evans, national and chief technology officer for U.S. education at Microsoft Corporation, and Dr. Mark Milliron, chancellor for Western Governors University Texas.

- eLearning 2013 attendees participated in the following pre-conference workshops:
 - “Designing High-Quality Online Courses for Student Success”
 - “Ensuring Your Institution’s Web Presence Works for All - Part I”
 - “Game On! Using Games in an Educational Environment”
 - “How’d You Do That? Tips and Tricks That Might Account for My 95 Percent Retention Rate”
 - “iPad 101 Workshop”
 - “La Vista Nueva: Change is Good”
 - “Making your Instructional Materials Web Accessible - Part II”
 - “Online Teaching: Redefining Training, Structure, and Tools,” and
 - “Opening Up Learning: The Why, What, How, and Who to Discovery and Adoption of High-Quality Open Educational Resources”
 - “Socrates in Cyberspace: Creating, Facilitating, and Assessing Critical Thinking in Online Environments”

Hosted 36 Weekly ITC Professional Development Webinars

- In 2012-13, ITC offered 36 weekly professional development Webinar presentations, which featured practical advice from distance learning experts for administrators, instructional designers and faculty members.
- Anne Arundel Community College provided ITC the use of its Blackboard Collaborate site for these presentations, which enabled presenters to showcase their Web sites, and share program, video and audio materials with Webinar participants.

Hosted the ITC 2012 Distance Education Leadership Academy

- ITC held the ITC 2012 Distance Learning Leadership Academy in Minneapolis, Minnesota on July 24-26, 2012.
- Eighteen participants worked with academy faculty and members of the ITC board of directors to understand their home institutions, create a sound leadership strategy for their environment, develop a leadership model to fit their institution, identify and acquire key tools for successful leadership in distance learning and gain a network of practitioners.

Authored and Distributed the 2012 *Distance Education Survey Results—Trends in eLearning: Tracking the Impact of eLearning at Community Colleges*

- In the fall of 2012, ITC surveyed its members on the state of distance education at community colleges. Members of the ITC board of directors created and reviewed the survey questions, to ensure it gathered the data and information useful to distance learning administrators and faculty.

- ITC published and distributed this report to ITC members, all of the member presidents of the American Association of the Community Colleges, and to members of the press. This publication is also freely available on the ITC Web site.
- The 2011 report was mentioned in articles featured in *Inside Higher Ed*, *the Chronicle of Higher Education*, *US News*, *OLDaily* by Stephen Downes, *Online Learning and Distance Education Resources* by Tony Bates, *TechEdge*, Indiana Pathways to College Network, the Education Commission of the States, and the University of Wisconsin Distance Education Certificate Program.

Authored and Distributed the Quarterly ITC Newsletter

- ITC published a quarterly online newsletter, featuring articles written by ITC staff, the ITC board of directors, and by ITC members. Articles written by ITC members covered distance learning best practices, activities and events at their institutions and in their region.

Distributed the 2013 ITC Awards for Excellence in eLearning

- ITC recognized the recipients of ITC's 2011 Awards for Excellence in eLearning at an awards luncheon on Feb. 19, 2013 during the eLearning 2013 conference in San Antonio, Texas. ITC staff organized the nomination process and recruited judging panels, which included members of the ITC board of directors, past award winners, and other ITC members, to review the candidates.
- Award categories included lifetime achievement, outstanding eLearning program, outstanding eLearning faculty, outstanding use of new technology and/or delivery system, outstanding student services, outstanding technical support and service, and outstanding eLearning student.

Hosted the ITC Forum at the AACC Annual Convention

- ITC sponsored the forum, "Advancing the Completion Agenda through Innovation and Technology," at the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) 2013 Convention in San Francisco, California on April 22, 2013.
- Presenters included Anne Johnson, dean of business, social sciences and online learning at Inver Hills Community College; Fred Lokken, dean for the TMCC WebCollege; Mickey Slimp, executive director for the Northeast Texas Consortium of Colleges and Universities (NETnet); and, Carol Spalding, president of Rowan Cabarrus Community College.
- Mickey Slimp, Northeast Texas Consortium of Colleges and Universities, served on AACC's Commission on Academic, Student and Community Development.
- Anne Johnson, Inver Hills Community College, served on AACC's Commission on Research, Technology and Emerging Trends.

Visit ITC's Web site, at www.itcnetwork.org, for more information about the Instructional Technology Council or to become a member of this national organization, whose mission is to provide exceptional leadership and professional development to its network of eLearning experts by advocating, collaborating, researching, and sharing exemplary, innovative practices and potential in learning technologies.

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