Effects of Instructor Immediacy and Online Course Design in Student Satisfaction and Successful Course Completion

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Introduction

The withdrawal and failure rates for online classes and student satisfaction of online courses at a technical college in Wisconsin are identified as problems for which a solution needs to be found. This Doctor of Nursing Practice Capstone Project addressed the issue of student success and satisfaction in online courses in an effort to develop ways to improve student outcomes. The effects of course design and instructor presence on students’ success in online courses is currently being researched by educators. Further research that is specific to each institution is also needed. This capstone was an effort to bring evidence based practice to a technical college in Wisconsin.

Objectives

Project objectives were to compare student satisfaction and the rate of successful course completion (with a grade of C- or better) for the fall 2011 online Medical Terminology course to the fall 2010 online Medical Terminology course and all other fall 2011 online courses offered at a technical college in Wisconsin using the current student satisfaction survey tool.

Methods

- Literature review supported further investigation
- IRB approval was obtained
- Instruction in the online course management system completed

Fall 2011 Medical Terminology course was redesigned with all course materials for each week in one folder

- Project was implemented
- Student course completion was calculated by a simple count of those students that enrolled in the course and those that completed the course with a C- or better
- Chi-square tests were run to determine statistically significant differences
- Student satisfaction was evaluated utilizing the college’s current survey tool sent via email to all students in fall online 2011 courses
- Previous survey data from fall 2010 Medical Terminology course was obtained
- Surveys were completed and data tallied through IBM SPSS Statistics online software.

- Only the relative five point Likert scale (1=Strongly Agree 2=Agree 3=Disagree Somewhat 4=Disagree 5= Not Applicable) questions were reported in the surveys.
- Survey answers were combined to form separate scales
- Cronbach’s alphas were run to measure reliability of survey scales
- One-way ANOVAs, and t-tests were run on each scale and p-value was evaluated using a Bonferroni adjustment

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Fall 2010 Online</th>
<th>Fall 2011 Online</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not successfully complete</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successfully Completed</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of student satisfaction surveys sent:

- 685 students in all fall 2011 online courses
- 24 students in the fall 2011 online Medical Terminology course
- 24 students in the fall 2010 online Medical Terminology course (previously done in 2010)

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Fall 2010 Online</th>
<th>Fall 2011 Online</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did not complete survey</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed survey</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Analysis of the survey results found no statistical significance
- Lack of statistically significance is likely related to the very small sample sizes for the two online Medical Terminology groups (8 responses-2010 group, 9 responses-2010 group)

Conclusion

The literature search identified some components of successful online courses are sites that are easy to navigate and instructors that provide feedback in a timely fashion. Although the capstone project was based on the results of the literature search, the increased rates of successful course completion cannot be attributed to the capstone interventions.

- Course design and instructor feedback may have a significant impact on student success and satisfaction in online courses warranting further studies
- The results of further studies may improve student outcomes benefiting not only the students but the college as well

References


