STUDENT PRESENCE AND FACULTY AVAILABILITY IN FULLY ONLINE COURSES:

IS ALIGNMENT REQUISITE?

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Reduce Transactional Distance

Immediacy and Presence

Arbaugh (2010) determined that teacher presence and instructor immediacy behaviors were positively associated with student perception of learning in online graduate courses.

Communication and Compassion

Orso and Doolittle (2011) note that students believe communication, availability, and compassion to be the most important characteristics of a quality online instructor.

Availability and Learning Satisfaction

Students expect faculty to be present and available during an "all hours" time frame and also align online faculty presence with their learning satisfaction (Kang & Im, 2013; Ke, 2010).

Faculty Perspective vs. Student Perspective

Course Access

Bailie (2015) found that half of faculty surveyed believed they should access their online course once a day excluding weekends as compared to 25% of surveyed students who found these parameters to be sufficient.

Email Responses

A majority of faculty and students believe a 24-hour time frame for an email response was acceptable, although a fourth preferred a 12-hour time frame (Bailie, 2015). In a previous study of online students, 52% expected faculty to respond to emails within 12 hours of receipt (Bailie, 2014).

Email Responses

Chang, Hurst, and McLean (2016) noted that 46% of student respondents had the expectation that faculty would return a response within hours of receipt of their email.

Understanding Expectations

Instructional immediacy behaviors, such as availability, presence, communication, and compassion, serve as elements to reduce transactional distance.

Understanding student course usage is imperative to align with their needs.

Image from https://mentoringgroup.com/ideas-about-mentoring.html

Other Considerations

- Undergraduates prefer more computer-mediated instructional immediacy, which refers to "instructional communicative behavior displayed through CMC [computer mediated communication] that makes students feel physically or psychologically closer to their instructors" (Christen, Kelly, Fall, & Snyder, 2014, p. 38).

- According to Christen et al., (2014), "females rely more on interactive and cohesive messages" (p. 31).

- Female students value faculty participation and like having various ways to contact faculty (Gonzalez-Gomez, Guardiola, Rodriguez, & Alonso, 2012).

Delivering quality online education to prelicensure undergraduate nursing students incorporates the challenge of providing best practices in regard to caring behaviors and social presence to enhance student learning and success (Plante & Asselin, 2014).

Quality

Student Presence and Questions

Student Presence:

Student login is obtained through course activity reports through the Blackboard learning management system (LMS). These reports can portray student presence in a course over days, weeks, and semesters.

Questions to Ponder:

Is faculty availability seen as a greater necessity on higher student activity days?

Is the typical Monday through Friday schedule sufficient faculty presence?

Is an expanded, seven-day schedule of faculty availability better suited to match student presence on their course LMS?

Purpose
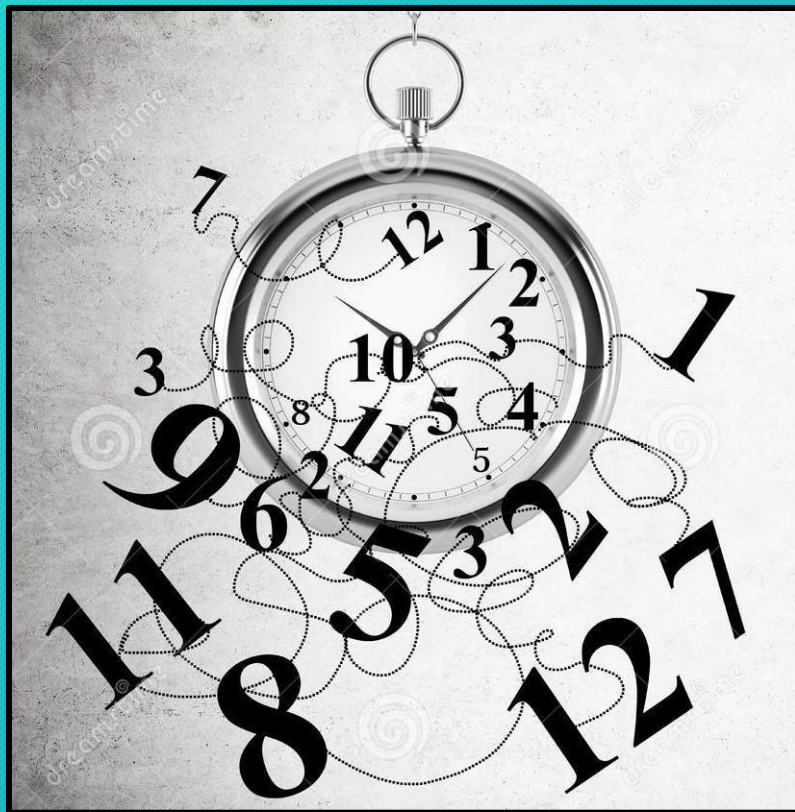
The purpose of this study is to identify times and days of course usage in Blackboard LMS by students enrolled in three different clinical courses in an LPN to BSN program to form recommendations for online faculty presence and availability.

The Undergraduate: The LPN

The majority of students are nontraditional and are enrolled part-time. The student body has a mean age of 37 years, is 92% female and 40% ethnically diverse.
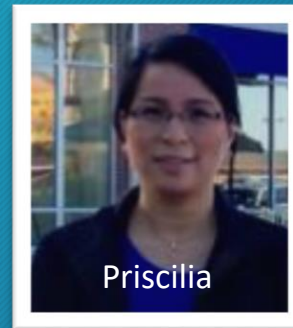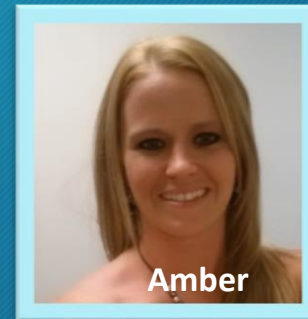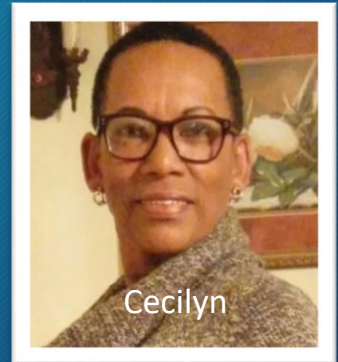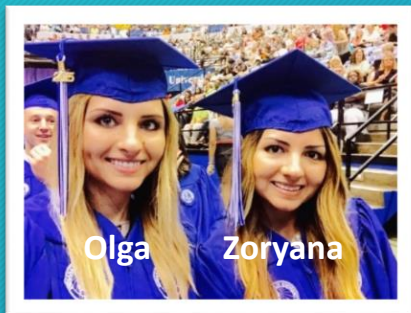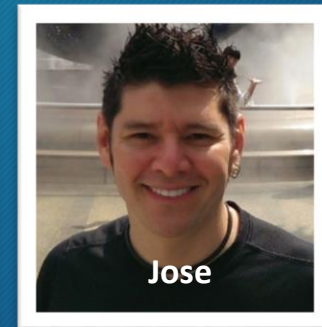
FAMILY

SCHOOL

WORK

HOME

Nontraditional Student

Research

The attempt of this study is to capture time spent in a Blackboard course for the simple purpose of determining days and cumulative hours of use for a class as a whole.

There was no attempt to collect information on time spent by specific students or what information was accessed within the Blackboard LMS.

1. Institutional Review Board (IRB) determination of exempt status.

2. Archival data was collected from three fully online clinical nursing courses in an LPN to BSN nursing program over six consecutive semesters (Fall and Spring semesters) from Fall 2013 through Spring 2016.

3. These homogenous courses included NURS 338, "Mental Health Nursing," NURS 324, "Nursing Care of Adults II," and NURS 424, "Nursing Care of Adults III." All courses have a clinical component.

Data Collection

Five specific blocks of time per semester were chosen.

| WEEK(S)	BLOCK	NOTE
Weeks 1-3	Block 1	**Assumption: students may spend more time in a new course**
Weeks 7-9	Block 2	**Assumption: students are settled in and acclimated to their course**
Weeks 12-14	Block 3	**Assumption: end of semester busyness could be reflected**
Week 15	Block 4	**Required Study Week (no major assessments are to take place)**
Weeks 1-16	Block 5	**Cumulative time spent during the entire semester**

Data Collection: Login Activity
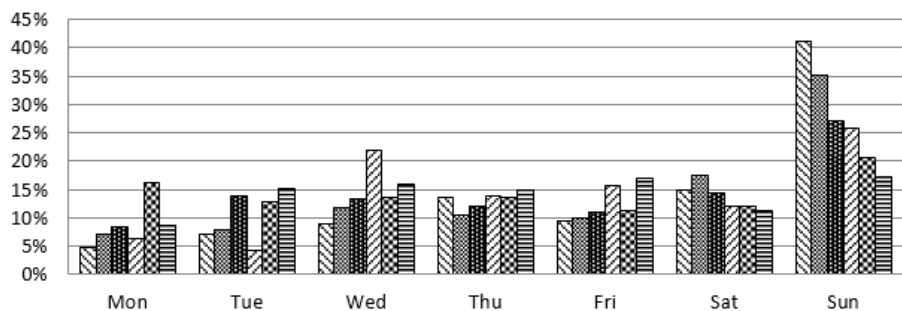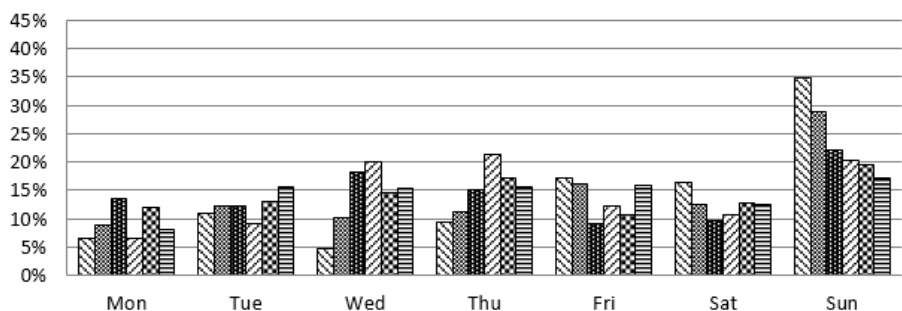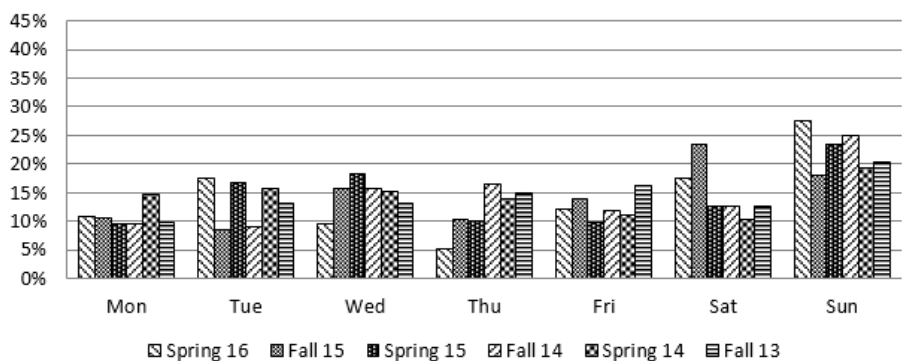
Percentage of time students spent in LMS each day of the week in NURS 338, NURS 324, and NURS 424 for Weeks 1–3 for each of the six semesters analyzed.
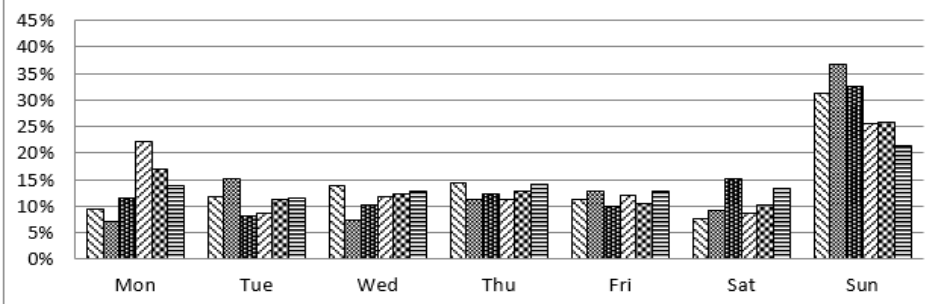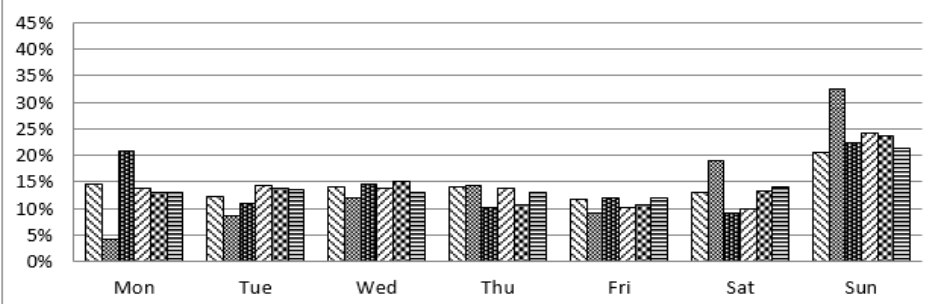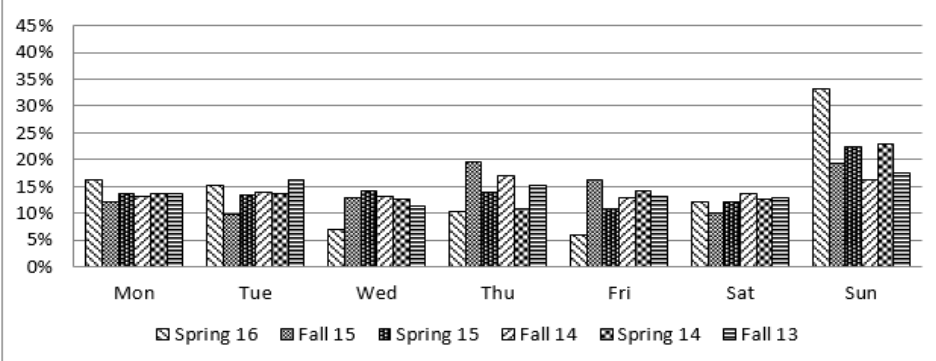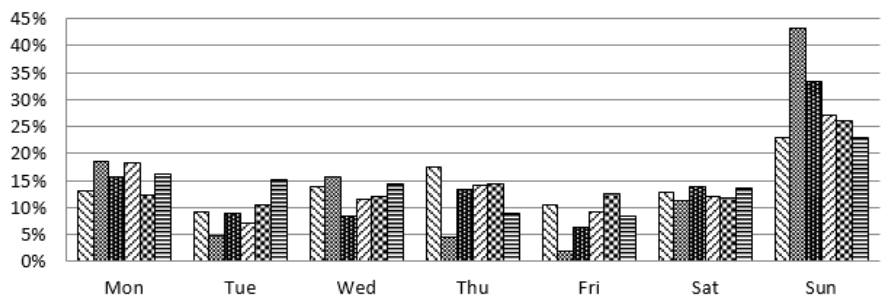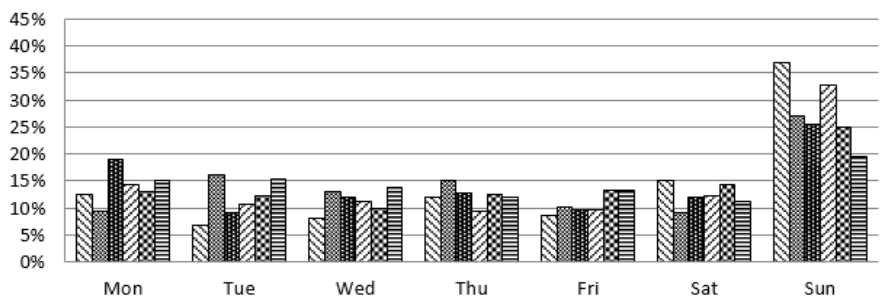
Percentage of time students spent in LMS each day of the week in NURS 338, NURS 324, and NURS 424 for Weeks 7–9 for each of the six semesters analyzed.
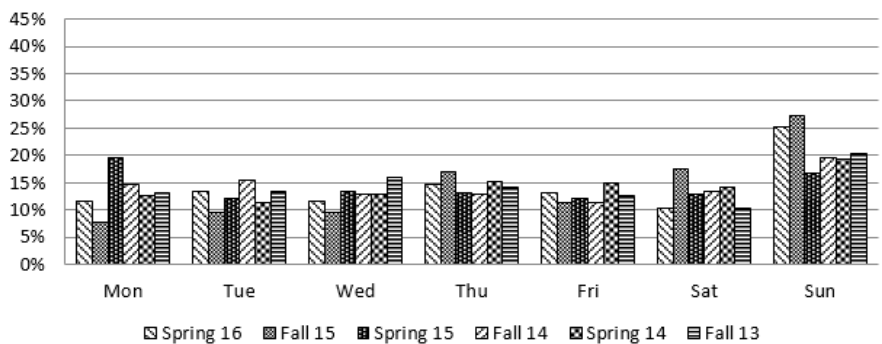
Percentage of time students spent in LMS each day of the week in NURS 338, NURS 324, and NURS 424 for Weeks 12–14 for each of the six semesters analyzed.

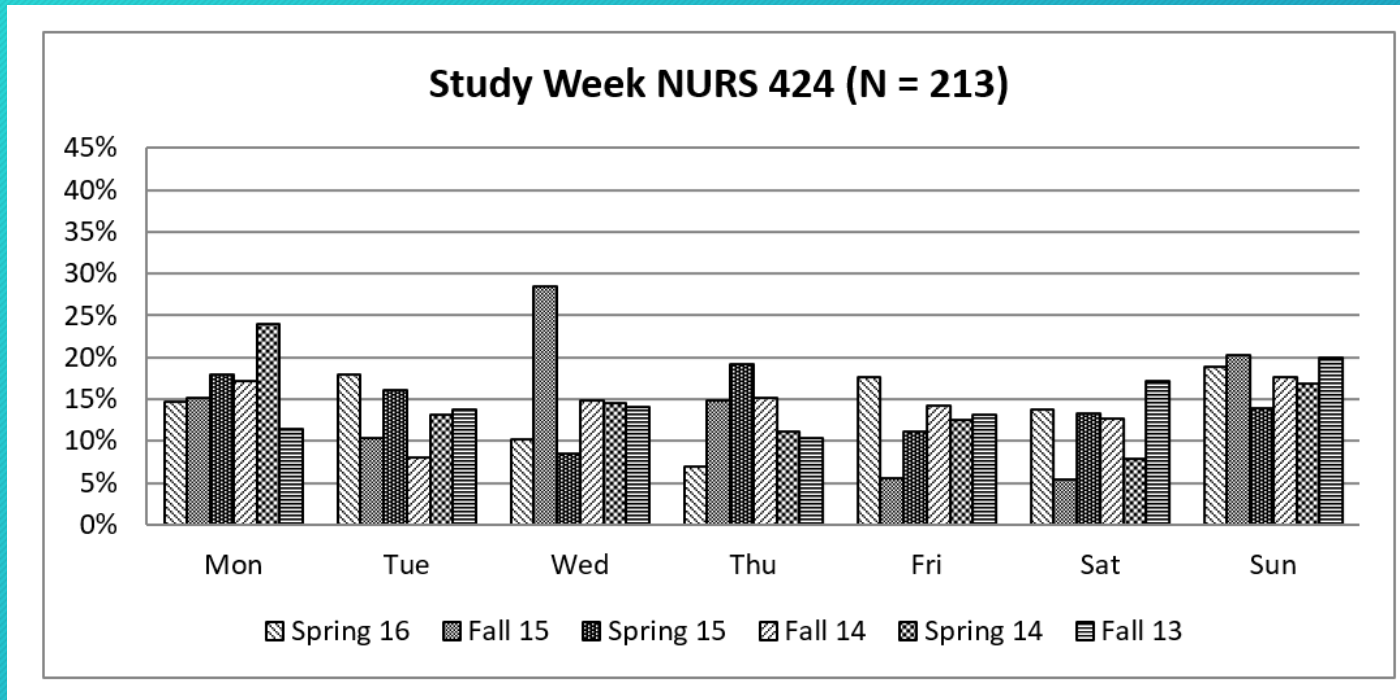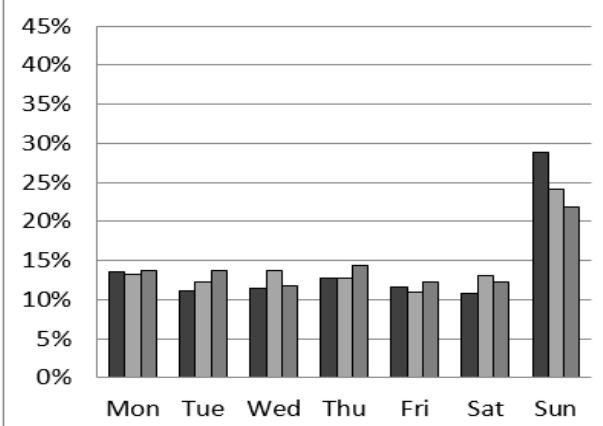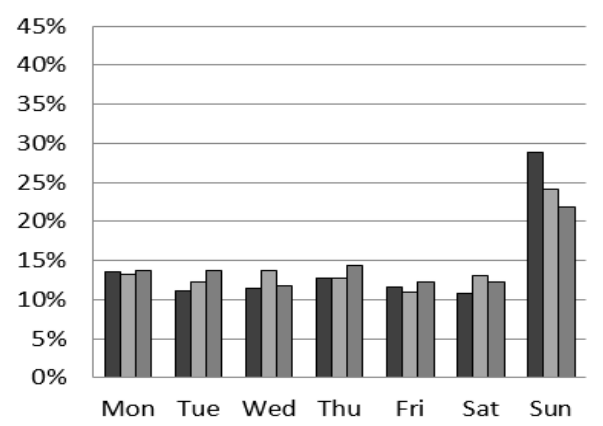Percentage of time students spent in LMS each day of the week in NURS 338, NURS 324, and NURS 424 during Study Week for each of the six semesters analyzed.
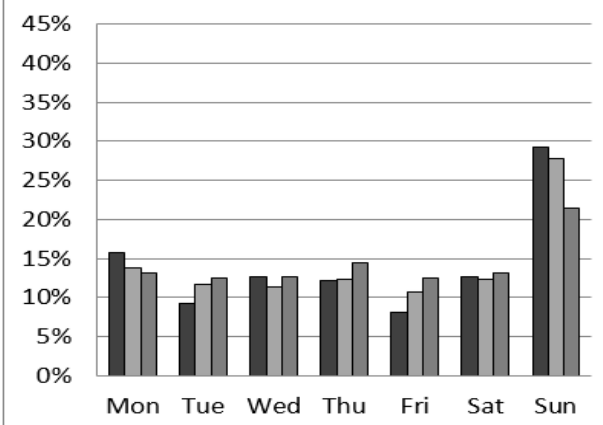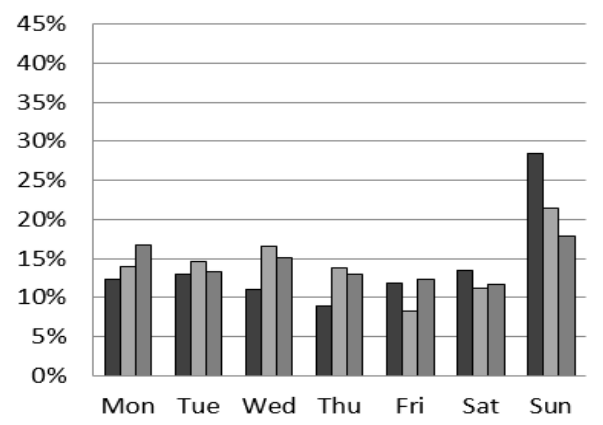
Percentage time students spent in the LMS each day of the week, for each of the three courses, for all six semesters combined, for Weeks 1–3, Weeks 7–9, Weeks 12–14, and Study Week.
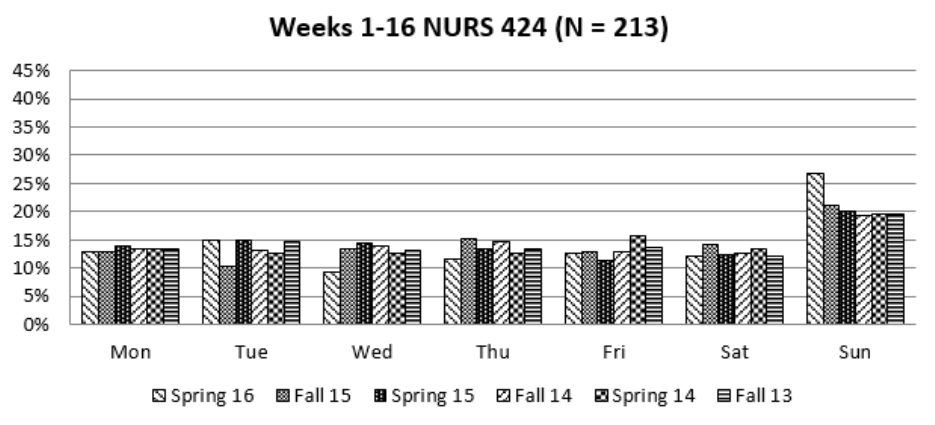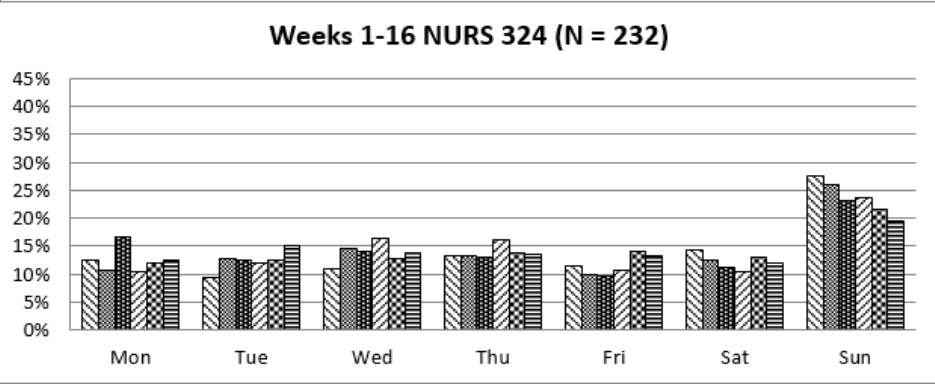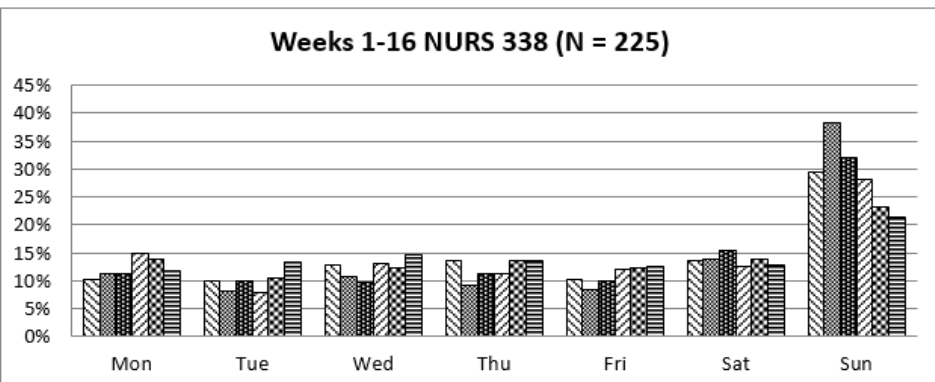
Percentage of time students spent in LMS each day of the week in NURS 338, NURS 324, and NURS 424 over the entirety of the semester (Weeks 1–16) for each of the six semesters analyzed.

Percentage of time students spent in the LMS each day of the week, for each of the three courses, for all six semesters combined, over the entirety of the semester (Weeks 1–16).

The results of daily course usage by fully online nursing students enrolled in three separate clinical courses on an LPN-to-BSN track illustrate a clear pattern of extraordinarily consistent usage over six semesters for each course with remarkable consistency between courses.
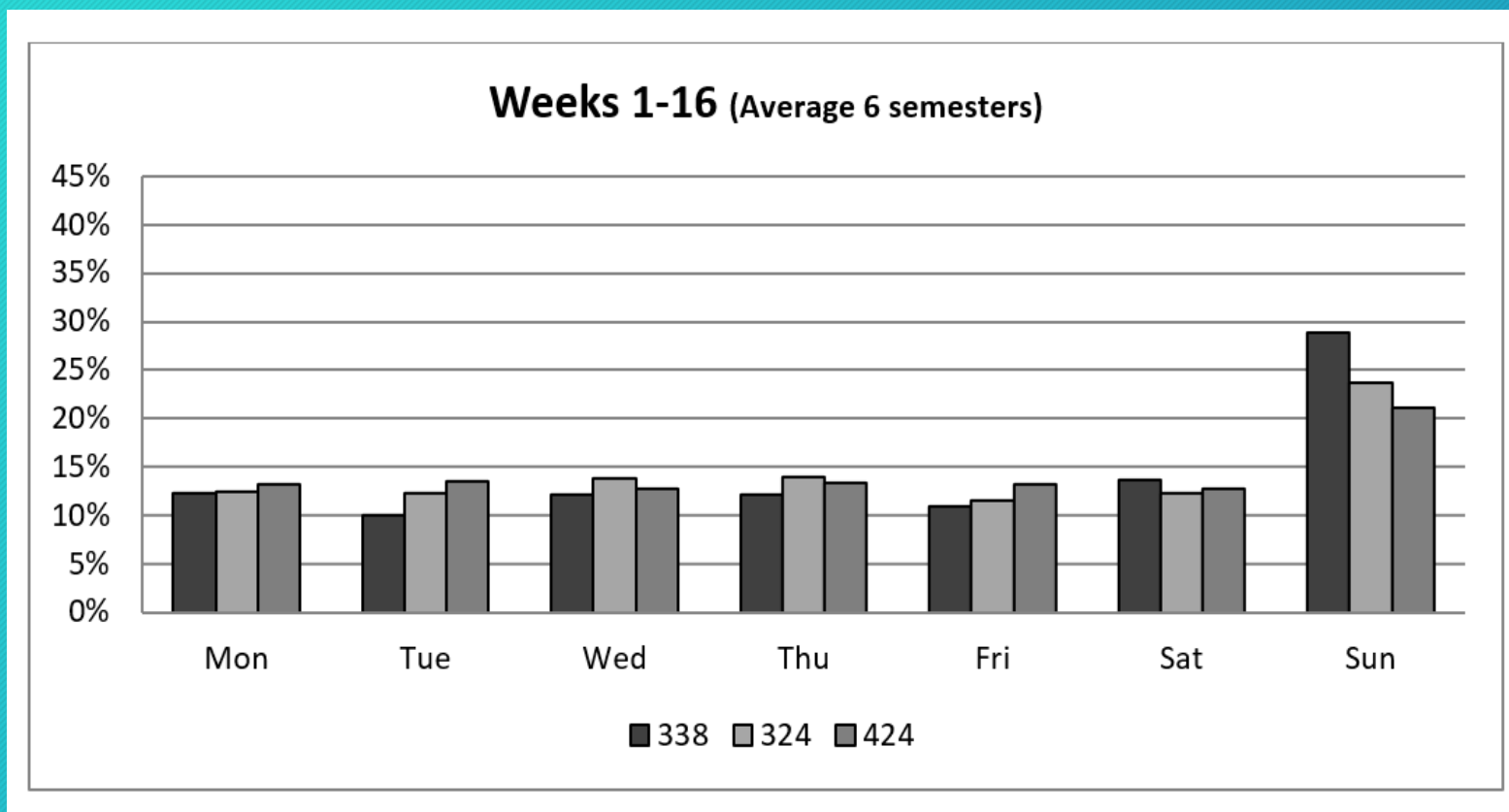
Students spend approximately twice as much time in Blackboard on Sundays as compared to other days of the week

The results may indicate a need to define faculty workweek parameters, availability, and flexibility to align with student usage patterns within Blackboard.

Results
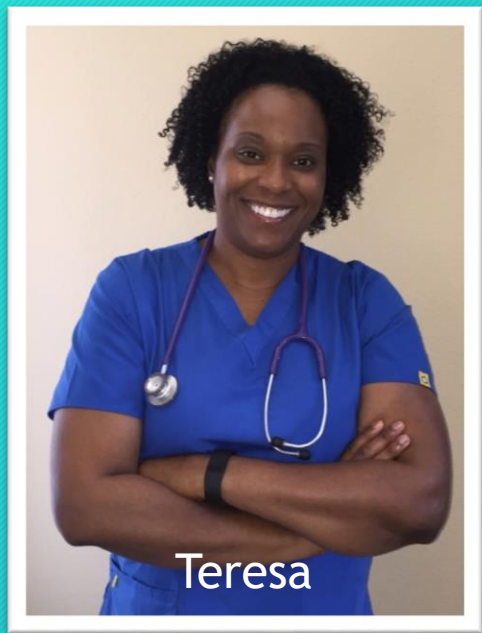
Faculty may need to consider how to respond effectively to students who use time outside of the normal workweek to complete course requirements and have little time during the workweek to interact effectively with faculty. Thus, adjustments to access by faculty may be necessary.

Determinations must be made to anticipate days of potential immediacy (for example, the due date for an exam) based on the witnessed (previous) submission timelines of the students.

Teresa

Action

Investigate student LMS usage patterns that have consistent due dates that do not fall on a weekend by proposing alternative scheduling options that do not use Sunday as a due date.

Analysis of nonclinical nursing courses may also provide further insight if the clinical component may be affecting LMS usage.

Other disciplines with a clinical or experiential learning component and more traditional schedule (Monday through Friday) should also be considered to determine if there is congruency in LMS usage.

Student populations with differing demographics, should be investigated utilizing qualitative research methods to gain a better understanding of their reasoning and their decisions regarding the use of their LMS.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

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