Chapter 5
Student Profile and Its Effects on Online and Hybrid Courses

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ABSTRACT
This chapter is based on a longitudinal descriptive study that identifies the types of students enrolled in a Management Information Systems class offered in face-to-face and online delivery modalities over 15 semesters. The study used a total sample of 622 students where 296 students were enrolled in the face-to-face control section and 326 students were enrolled in the online experimental sections. The study profiles the demographics of students including: student type (traditional undergraduate or adult), age, gender, ethnicity, Myers Briggs personality profile, religion, citizenship, marital status, academic family generation, academic major, academic standing (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior), and grade point average (GPA). The study findings include: (1) adult students dominated the online delivery modality. (2) African American and Hispanic female adult students prefer taking online courses compared to face-to-face. (3) Forty percent of the students enrolled in online delivery modality were of extravert type. (4) The majority of the first generation students were enrolled in face-to-face delivery modality. Recommendations include short modules, use of different exercises in order to accommodate various learning styles. The chapter and the study results will assist administrators and faculty members to make better decisions by understanding the student population type.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-60566-852-9.ch005
Personally, I think online classes should be limited to a manageable size and that professors should be required to analyze students’ papers. If we are not guided, how will we learn? How can we expect to hold an executive position if we are not offered a professor’s perspective on our thought process? How can we live up to the “MBA” standard if we are not challenged to think by our professors? So far I’ve learned the most from you. Every professor should be judged by the standards you have for yourself and for your students.

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INTRODUCTION

In order to meet the information age requirements, Universities implement a three prong approach (see Haag & Cummings 2008 for Run-Grow-Transform framework). They Run by streamlining their operational processes within tight budgets. They Grow by offering innovative services and courses to different segments of the student population, such as certificates in certain concentrations, and they Transform by changing their course delivery modality from face-to-face classroom to online and hybrid delivery modalities.

The new delivery modalities represent unanswered questions. Theoretically, the idea of moving to online and hybrid course delivery modality is a brilliant strategy because it solves the major problem of satisfying enrollment growth, it eliminates the need for classroom and parking spaces, and it gives strategic competitive advantage to universities. However, have all the critical success factors been defined to insure the success of the transformation or is this going to be another case study of the “dot-com” or “dot-bomb” failure (Rhoades-Catanach, 2003)?

One of the reasons for the dot-com industry failure is that organizations expected to succeed in e-commerce while practicing their brick and mortar business processes. Most of all, organizations did not understand and study their customers’ needs before designing and launching their e-commerce sites. The question remains would higher education survive this transformation?

Did higher education study their online students? Do post-secondary educational institutions know how they are satisfying their students’ needs? In a face-to-face class delivery modality faculty members often walk into the classroom and fine-tune their teaching strategies and agendas based on the students’ body language. However, the body language factor is missing from online courses. Would a “one style fits all” strategy fit in online education? How could they personalize their lectures if they do not know who their students are? What are the students’ mind sets? For example, there are many studies that identify first generation students on campuses (Cushman, 2006), Bishop compared the self efficacy of first generation students to that of second generation students (Bishop, 2008); yet, no one is addressing first generation students’ needs in online classes.

The chapter has two objectives: first, to analyze who is enrolled in a face-to-face and an online course of Management Information Systems. The second is to make specific recommendations to administrators to make better strategic decisions and to faculty to fine tune their course development in order to satisfy the appropriate student population needs.

BACKGROUND

There is an increased demand for post-secondary education since employers started requiring college degrees as a prerequisite for job applicants. This change resulted in having junior colleges and universities overflow with adult students who are coming back to finish their degrees. Online education is very appealing to such students be-