



RESEARCH BRIEF: DISTANCE EDUCATION COURSE EVALUATIONS FALL 2011

Overview: In fall of 2011, the Crafton Hills College (CHC) Distance Education (DE) Committee in collaboration with the Office of Research and Planning (ORP) administered an online course evaluation to students who were enrolled in an online or hybrid course. The purpose of this brief is to summarize the findings from participants who completed an evaluation.

Summary of Findings:

- 49% of the respondents reported taking 1-3 classes this semester.
- 48% of the respondents reported working 21 or more hours per week.
- 46% of the respondents indicated that they typically devote 4-6 hours per week to the DE course.
- Respondents agreed that the instructor posted the syllabus in a timely manner (mean = 3.86) and gave assignments and exams related to the learning objectives of this course (mean = 3.82).
- Respondents agreed that the instructor provided opportunities for student input/class discussion (mean = 3.78), treated students in an unbiased manner (mean = 3.75), and was sensitive to gender and multi-cultural concerns (mean = 3.74).
- 93% would recommend their DE course to another student and 96% of the respondents would recommend the instructor to another student.
- Internet resources (mean = 2.72), followed by the required assignments, instructor-generated content, and group projects (mean = 2.67 each) were rated as the most useful resources.
- 58% of respondents suggested video lectures as a useful resource for future DE courses.

Methodology: All students enrolled in a DE course at CHC in fall of 2011 were given access to the evaluations via an online link provided by their instructor. There were 12 instructors teaching 19 DE sections with a total of 549 students who received a grade-on-record (GOR). GOR is defined as students who earn A, B, C, D, F, P, NP, I or W. Of these students, 166 students (from 11 DE sections taught by 7 different instructors) completed the online survey, representing an overall response rate of 30%. Table 1 presents the number of submitted evaluations compared to the actual number of GOR's by instructor and by course section.

The evaluation explored the following five themes:

- Student Characteristics
- Course Components
- Instructional Approach
- Student Satisfaction
- Resources

Responses to questions related to course components, instructional approach, and student satisfaction were recorded on a four-point scale (4= Strongly Agree, 3= Agree, 2= Disagree, 1= Strongly Disagree). Responses to questions related to resources were recorded on a three-point scale (3=Very Useful, 2= Useful, 1= Not Useful). In addition, there was an option to choose "Not Applicable" as a response to all scaled questions. All "Not Applicable" responses were excluded from findings in this brief.

Table 1: Response Rate by Instructor and Course

Instructor	N	#	Response Rate
Allen	32	47	68.1%
Brink	0	66	0.0%
DiPonio	0	48	0.0%
Downey	0	30	0.0%
Hansler	6	21	28.6%
Hogrefe	14	41	34.1%
McCambly	0	33	0.0%
McConnell	58	83	69.9%
McLaren	0	33	0.0%
Pace-Pequeño	24	38	63.2%
Petrovic	5	30	16.7%
Urbanovich	27	79	34.2%
Total	166	549	30.2%

Course	N	#	Response Rate
ART-100-70	0	33	0.0%
ART-102-70	5	30	16.7%
CD-105-70	0	33	0.0%
CIS-101-70	24	38	63.2%
CIS-140X2-70	19	26	73.1%
CIS-142X2-70	13	21	61.9%
ENGL-101-70	6	21	28.6%
ENGL-102-70	0	24	0.0%
ENGL-102-71	0	24	0.0%
JOUR-135-70/SPEECH-135-70	14	41	34.1%
MUSIC-103-70	34	49	69.4%
MUSIC-120-70	24	34	70.6%
PHIL-103-70	0	33	0.0%
PSYCH-100-70	0	30	0.0%
PSYCH-111-70	0	33	0.0%
SPEECH-100-70	13	29	44.8%
SPEECH-125-70	14	23	60.9%
SPEECH-174-70	0	27	0.0%
Total	166	549	30.2%

N = Number of students who submitted an on-line course evaluation. # = Number of students who earned a grade on record. Response rate= the percent of students who participated by completing an evaluation (N/#)

As illustrated in Table 2, the ratios of male to female respondents were equal at 48% each. The majority of respondents were between 18 and 24 years old (55%) and of European-American ethnicity (44%). In addition, 46% of the respondents reported spending 4-6 hours on their DE course and 48% of respondents reported working 21 or more hours per week. Respondents were most likely to be enrolled in 1-3 classes this semester (49%), while 48% had taken only one online class at CHC.

Table 2: Distance-Education Student Demographics and Characteristics

DE Student Demographics					
Gender	N	%	Ethnicity	N	%
Female	79	47.6%	African American/Black	7	4.2%
Male	80	48.2%	American Indian/Native Alaskan	1	0.6%
Unknown/Missing/Other	7	4.2%	Asian American	15	9.0%
Total	166	100.0%	European American/White	73	44.0%
			Hispanic/Latino	45	27.1%
			Multi-Racial	2	1.2%
			Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0	0.0%
			Other	20	12.0%
			Unknown/Missing	3	1.8%
			Total	166	100.0%
Age	N	%			
18-24	92	55.4%			
25-30	34	20.5%			
31-35	14	8.4%			
36-40	7	4.2%			
41 and above	14	8.4%			
Unknown/Missing	5	3.0%			
Total	166	100.0%			
DE Student Characteristics					
Hours at work this semester	N	%	Time on this course per week	N	%
0 hours per week	44	26.5%	1-3 hours	60	36.1%
1-10 hours per week	16	9.6%	4-6 hours	76	45.8%
11-20 hours per week	22	13.3%	7-9 hours	16	9.6%
21-30 hours per week	39	23.5%	10 hours or more	12	7.2%
31-40 hours per week	20	12.0%	Unknown/Missing	2	1.2%
40 or more hours per week	20	12.0%	Total	166	100.0%
Unknown/Missing	5	3.0%			
Total	166	100.0%			
# of all classes this semester	N	%	# of CHC online classes taken	N	%
1-3 classes	82	49.4%	1 online class	76	45.8%
4-6 classes	80	48.2%	2 online classes	35	21.1%
7-9 classes	1	0.6%	3 online classes	22	13.3%
Unknown/Missing	3	1.8%	4 online classes	9	5.4%
Total	166	100.0%	5 or more online classes	16	9.6%
			Unknown/Missing	8	4.8%
			Total	166	100.0%

Next, the survey was divided into three sections and students were asked to rate their level of agreement with statements about usefulness, timeliness, and accuracy of course content and pedagogy to capture the perceived level of satisfaction with online courses.

Referring to Tables 3, 4, and 5; the first column lists the statements, the second column (i.e. “N”) shows the number of Distance Education students who responded to the item, the column entitled “Min” shows the lowest response on the scale, the column entitled “Max” shows the highest response on the scale, the column “Mean” shows the average rating, and the last column shows the standard deviation. Students rated whether or not they agreed with the statements on a four point Likert scale as follows:

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Agree
- 4 = Strongly Agree

If the Min (i.e. lowest) score was a “3”, that means that none of the students disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. If the Max score was a “4”, that means that at least one student strongly agreed with the statement. As an illustration, if the mean score was 3.65, that would indicate that, on average, students either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. All tables are arranged by Mean score in descending order and exclude not applicable responses.

Findings: As illustrated in Table 3, on average, all students agreed or strongly agreed with every statement in this section. Specifically, all of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the instructor posted the syllabus in a timely manner (mean = 3.86). In addition, the majority of respondents indicated that assignments and exams were related to course learning objectives (mean = 3.82). On the other hand, students were less likely to feel that the instructor inspired interest/excitement in the subject matter, or organized the schedule effectively to promote learning (mean=3.63).

Table 3: Course components and instructional procedures

Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements:	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
The instructor posted a syllabus for this course in a timely manner	166	3	4	3.86	.35
The instructor gave assignments and exams that were related to the learning objectives of this course	165	2	4	3.82	.40
The instructor demonstrated knowledge of course subject matter	164	1	4	3.77	.49
The instructor allowed sufficient time for assignments to be completed	166	2	4	3.75	.49
The syllabus accurately described what was involved in the course	166	1	4	3.73	.51
The method of grading for this course was clearly stated in the syllabus with an outline of assignments	166	1	4	3.69	.56
All course materials were posted in a timely manner	166	1	4	3.69	.61
The instructor used explanations that were clear and understandable	163	1	4	3.64	.61
The instructor inspired interest/excitement in the subject matter	164	1	4	3.63	.58
The instructor organized the schedule effectively to promote learning	163	1	4	3.63	.64

Respondents evaluated the instructional approach and techniques on social support, fairness, and reliability (see Table 4). All respondents agreed (i.e., responded either with a 3 or 4) that the instructor provided opportunities for student input/class discussion (mean = 3.78). All but one

respondent agreed that the instructor was sensitive to gender and multi-cultural concerns (mean = 3.74). In addition, respondents agreed that the instructor treated students in an unbiased manner (mean = 3.75) and was sensitive to gender and multi-cultural concerns (mean = 3.74). However, students were less likely to agree that the exams were fair and understandable (mean=3.58).

Table 4: Instructional approach and techniques

Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements:	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
The instructor provided opportunities for student input/class discussion and was open to other people's viewpoints	166	3	4	3.78	.42
The instructor treated students in an unbiased manner	157	2	4	3.75	.47
The instructor was sensitive to gender and multi-cultural concerns	141	2	4	3.74	.46
The instructor was available to help students and made it clear how to contact him/her outside of class	164	1	4	3.71	.56
The instructor responded to student communication within the guidelines described in the course syllabus	166	1	4	3.67	.62
The instructor's system of grading was fair	166	1	4	3.66	.57
The instructor applied course material to the real world	164	1	4	3.66	.60
The instructor made an effort to help students succeed in the course	163	1	4	3.64	.58
The instructor allowed group interaction or assigned group projects	149	1	4	3.64	.61
The instructor returned test and assignment grades/evaluations in a reasonable length of time	163	1	4	3.64	.64
The exams were fair and understandable	165	1	4	3.58	.65

Respondents rated the convenience of and satisfaction with DE courses (see Table 5), and agreed that they worked at least as hard in the DE course as in a traditional course (mean= 3.56), would recommend the online course experience to another student (mean= 3.54), and would choose to take another online course (mean = 3.46). On the other hand, communication with classmates was not perceived to be as frequent when compared with face-to-face courses (mean=3.05).

Table 5: Course satisfaction

Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements:	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
I had to work at least as hard in this course as I would have in a traditional face-to-face course	156	1	4	3.56	.74
I would recommend the online course experience to another student	156	1	4	3.54	.85
I would choose to take another online course	158	1	4	3.46	.94
I found that I learned at least as much in this online course as I probably would in a face-to-face course	155	1	4	3.43	.92
This course was more convenient to take than a traditional face-to-face course	155	1	4	3.42	.90
Without the availability of this course via Internet, I would not have been able to enroll in this course/program	153	1	4	3.37	.92
I communicated at least as much with other students in this online course as I would in a face-to-face course	150	1	4	3.05	1.06

Table 6 is a compilation of the resources and course components ranked by perceived usefulness in the opinion of the respondents using a three point Likert scale of very useful=3, adequately useful=2, and not useful=1. Students were more likely to find online resources (mean=2.72), required assignments, and instructor-generated content (mean=2.67) to be very useful. In contrast, discussion boards (mean=2.54) were more often rated as not useful to a student's distance education learning experience. In addition, 34% of the respondents chose not-applicable when asked to rate the usefulness of group projects.

Table 6: Evaluating resources and components used in DE courses

Please rate the usefulness of the following?	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Internet resources	162	1	3	2.72	.46
Required assignments	166	1	3	2.67	.50
Instructor-generated content e.g. PowerPoints, videos, podcats, etc.	160	1	3	2.67	.55
Group projects	109	1	3	2.67	.55
Online gradebook	160	1	3	2.66	.58
Textbook(s)/Workbook(s)	164	1	3	2.65	.55
Online lectures given by the instructor	137	1	3	2.64	.57
Quizzes and exams	162	1	3	2.62	.59
Discussion boards	159	1	3	2.54	.66

Respondents were asked to choose which components they would consider to be useful and recommend be incorporated into future online courses. As illustrated in Table 7, Video lectures were cited by the greatest percentage of respondents (58%) and instructional videos on using Blackboard by the lowest percentage (23%).

Table 7: Suggested components for future DE courses

Which would you like to see more of in future DE classes?	N	%
Video lectures	77	58
Website links related to course content	71	53
Videos on related course content from a variety of sources	68	51
Instructor podcasts	63	47
Chat rooms	59	44
Instructional videos on how to use Blackboard	30	23

As shown in Table 8, out of the 166 respondents, 96% would recommend the instructor to another student and 93% would recommend the DE course to another student.

Table 8: Course and Instructor recommendation

Would you recommend this course to another student?	N	%	Would you recommend this instructor to another student?	N	%
Yes	155	93	Yes	159	96
No	11	7	No	7	4
Total	166	100	Total	166	100

Finally, respondents were asked to leave any comments or suggestions for improvement of online and hybrid classes. The following feedback from 34 (21%) of the respondents is categorized into the following themes; compliments, timing/pacing impressions, communication, and other. All identifying information has been removed to protect confidentiality.

Compliments (N = 18)

- Did a great job going over the basics of the course. The course was able to define terms such as TCP, UDP, and learn some new terms as well. Doing a good job Professor.
- This course was an excellent course to take. Thank you!
- Very Great Class, the work in class along as homework is very simple as long as you pay attention. Instructor doesn't micro manage what you do in class which is nice considering some of us in the class is slightly advanced within the chapters or maybe even course. I would Highly recommend this course to anyone interested in [Subject].
- [Name] is a great teacher. She is available and works with students if they need additional consideration. I wish that I could take this class again face-to-face. I learned a lot with the online class, but I think I may have learned more only because it was [Course].
- Loved this course and thanks for everything!
- The class was a bit unorthodox, being my first hybrid class I have taken. However, I found the situation to be easily adapted to. The assignments were different and creative, which I personally enjoyed.
- I enjoyed this class and it was very interesting sometimes. This class is very good if you're interested in [Subject].
- Teacher is very nice and understanding.
- Great class, one of my better online classes that I've taken.
- I really enjoyed the instructor, even via an online course, his enthusiasm for [Subject] and teaching was clearly apparent.
- I really liked her as a teacher and I think she did a great job teaching the lessons that needed to be taught. This was a good class and I would recommend it to other people.
- The instructor was excellent, and she explained everything very well.
- Amazing Professor and class!
- Professor [Name] is an exceptional teacher. All the material covered was relevant and informative, including examples and illustrations that developed the ideas. He was also kind, patient and understanding of fellow students. If the opportunity presented itself again I would take this course in a heartbeat.
- This instructor is awesome!
- Best teacher I had in Jr. College. I have been a student for two years. This teacher grades the students upon effort they put into their work. I COMPLETELY DID TERRIBLE on a [Assignment] and I still got a "b". It was like he knew I tried hard anyways because I did. Most other teachers would not have given me a good grade despite the hours of effort I put into the project.
- [Name] is an excited teacher who loves to teach and loves to get his students to think outside of the box. I enjoyed his class a lot and would recommend him to anyone who needs to take a [Subject] class.
- [Name] is awesome and am grateful to have experienced him and this class after being out of school for nearly 15 years!!!

Timing/Pacing (N = 5)

- The pace of this course is perfect. I feel we are given just enough time to learn the material, but not too much time that we put off doing work. The way in which we are

tested on the material is very effective. I enjoy the tutorials that we have for learning the different Microsoft office programs. I also very much so enjoy the SAM website. The SAM projects and quizzes have also been a very effective learning tool for me! I am very pleased with this course. At first I was a little bit worried about learning computer based material online, and I was worried about not having an instructor face to face, but taking this course online was the only way in which I could take this course. After the first week of this online course, I am very pleased. And am much more willing to take online classes! Seeing as this was my first online class, I am curious to see if other online classes will be taught in this manner or if it is just that Professor [Name], is the reason as to why this online class was as enjoyable and effective as it has been for me.

- I feel that the professor was wonderful and very helpful in a timely manner. The only problem I have with this class is that I don't feel that SAM accurately grades our projects I also feel that the tests and Quiz's would grade us on questions we did not cover during our tutorial or projects. I became very frustrated with the testing material, in my opinion we shouldn't be held accountable for material that was not covered in the book or during the tutorial. The Chapter tests however did cover all material covered in the chapter. Thank you!!
- This class is fun and greatly interesting but must be on top of things moves fast.
- It was a very interesting course that does require time, but it is also a very pleasant way to learn about [Subject].
- I personally need to ask questions and like the energy of face to face meetings. My first on line class. Liked the instructor but felt I could have gotten more out of a regular class. I did learn but realize I don't like the format personally. I feel like this class actually required more work submitted than if I actually went to class. Actually a hard class.

Communication (N = 6)

- I liked the course. The only problem I had was being able to contact the professor.
- Emailed the instructor the first week of class, and never got a reply. A bit odd considering that's my only way to directly communicate with him on a personal level.
- There have been a few occasions that I emailed or left a message on the discussion board that were never responded to.
- This instructor was very helpful when it came to re-setting blackboard exams but was no help when it came to helping with course material. I would also recommend having local instructors in the same "time zone" for availability!
- Although I know my professor faced health issues this semester that made it difficult to administer an online class, this made some important factors of the course very inconvenient at times. One was the very slow grading process of papers, which was problematic because I when it came time to write the next paper I didn't know how well I did on the first and see if my writing style/format was correct. My professor also didn't post much on the Blackboard grade book, and grades could only be accessed by contacting and asking her. Therefore it was very difficult for most of the semester, before I checked my grade with the professor personally, to know how I was doing grade-wise. Another problem was the sometimes long gaps between assignments or Blackboard notifications/announcements. I have to give the professor the benefit of the doubt, though, because Blackboard wasn't functioning properly for most of the semester, which made some of the professor's actions very difficult and frustrating. Overall, this was an easy course, but I felt I didn't learn much and won't retain much of the course information in the future. Another important thing to do in this course, especially the Blackboard failures, was to always check your student e-mail address. My professor often sent out notifications via

e-mail and wanted responses stating if you received it. This wasn't a problem for me, but I think it might be problematic for students who don't check their e-mail as much as they should. This should be written and emphasized in the course syllabus.

- This was actually harder than having a face to face course and I communicated more here than face to face.

Other (N = 6)

- Online courses are not my thing. I would've done way better in an actual classroom than in an online class. The instructor however was really helpful with the exception of my SAM projects. I should be earning way more points for my projects. I asked her to check my projects for word but instead she only told me that what I got was what I got. This left me very furious and that I am not looking forward to repeating this class because of the SAM issue.
- Some of the course materials are outdated and though still in use being replaced with newer more secure and efficient methods. This is not the fault of the school or instructor it lies with the provider of the course materials.
- I really felt the grading system was horrible. For example when asked what my grade is in the class instead of getting the answer I need I would get replies like "Your weekly discussions are to plain or vague, you need to post replies that contribute to the discussion". What does that mean? That sounds like a vague explanation and or not my answer. Another problem I had was the test because first 30 minutes to take the test is a realistic time regardless if you read the chapter or not because the second test we took had questions that didn't even involve the chapters there were required to read. The other thing with the test is my grade because I know I got all the answers right and when I asked the professor about my grade I was told "You got 100%" but my grade on blackboard was like around 7 points out of 20, and when I asked if I can have it changed I was told " the test was more like a trial version to see how the test work out" and that is understanding but not for my grade book because it still affected my overall grade in the class. I still have stuff not graded and I continue to ask for an explanation or something I'm not getting any responses. My main problem I had was either very vague or no responses to my emails was very frustrating.
- I had difficulty with the software provided in the course material, specifically that it prematurely expired, which severely disrupted the latter two thirds of the semester. The help I was given with this issue, (from both the instructor and the on campus computer lab) was, essentially, that it was too bad and to go try and find another copy of the software.
- I clicked N/A on the face-to-face questions because I have been privately schooled from Pre-K through High School. We also only have one car in my household and my dad works during the day so I have only taken online course. I have no basis for comparison on how a face-to-face course might differ from an online course. I imagine it would be similar however as I said I have no basis for comparison which is my only reason for clicking N/A.