



## RESEARCH BRIEF: DISTANCE EDUCATION COURSE EVALUATIONS SPRING 2012

**Overview:** In spring of 2012, the Crafton Hills College (CHC) Distance Education (DE) Committee in collaboration with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, Research and Planning (OIERP) 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:

- 53% of the respondents reported taking 1-3 classes this semester.
- 41% of the respondents were taking their first online course.
- 39% of the respondents reported working 0 hours per week; 40% reported working 21 or more hours per week.
- 42% of the respondents indicated that they typically devote 4-6 hours per week to the DE course; 35% indicated that they spent 1-3 hours per week on the course.
- Respondents agreed that the instructor posted the syllabus in a timely manner (mean = 3.88) and gave assignments and exams related to the learning objectives of this course (mean = 3.85).
- Respondents agreed that the instructor returned test and assignment grades/evaluations in a reasonable length of time (mean = 3.80) and was sensitive to gender and multi-cultural concerns (mean = 3.78).
- 89% would recommend their DE course to another student and 94% of the respondents would recommend the instructor to another student.
- Textbooks and workbooks, required assignments, and the online grade book (mean = 2.72 each) were rated as the most useful resources.
- 63% of respondents suggested video lectures as a useful resource for future DE courses.

**Methodology:** All students enrolled in a DE course at CHC in spring of 2012 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 505 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, 101 students (from 11 DE sections taught by 7 different instructors) completed the online survey, representing an overall response rate of 20%. Table 1 presents the number of submitted evaluations compared to the actual number of GOR's by instructor and by course section.

**Table 1: Response Rate by Instructor and Course**

<b>Instructor</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>Response Rate</b>	<b>Course</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>Response Rate</b>
Allen	24	29	82.8%	ART-100-70	0	27	0.0%
Brink	11	65	16.9%	ART-102-70	0	27	0.0%
Carroll	0	49	0.0%	CD-105-70	0	31	0.0%
DiPonio	0	20	0.0%	CIS-101-70	6	33	0.0%
Downey	1	31	3.2%	CIS-140X2-70	0	28	0.0%
Flynn	0	23	0.0%	CIS-141X2-70	0	21	0.0%
Hansler	10	21	47.6%	CIS-141X2-71	16	19	84.2%
McCambly	0	54	0.0%	CIS-143X2-70	8	11	0.0%
McConnell	36	45	80%	ENGL-101-70	10	21	47.6%
McLaren	0	31	0.0%	ENGL-101-71	0	23	0.0%
Pace-Pequeño	6	33	18.2%	ENGL-102-70	0	20	0.0%
Urbanovich	13	82	15.9%	ENGL-102-71	0	21	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	101	505	20.0%	MUSIC-103-70	36	45	80.0%
				PHIL-103-70	5	34	14.7%
				PSYCH-100-70	1	31	3.2%
				PSYCH-111-70	6	31	19.4%
				SPEECH-100-70	6	25	24.0%
				SPEECH-125-70	4	30	13.3%
				SPEECH-100-71	3	27	11.1%
				<b>Total</b>	101	505	20.0%

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/#)

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.

As illustrated in Table 2, there were slightly more females (50%) than males (47%) who completed the survey. The majority of respondents were between 18 and 24 years old (52%) and of European-American ethnicity (50%). In addition, 42% of the respondents reported spending 4-6 hours on their DE course and 40% of respondents reported working 21 or more hours per week. Respondents were most likely to be enrolled in 1-3 classes this semester (53%), while 41% had taken only one online class at CHC.

**Table 2: Distance-Education Student Demographics and Characteristics**

<b>DE Student Demographics</b>					
<b>Gender</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Female	50	49.5	African American/Black	2	2.0
Male	47	46.5	American Indian/Native Alaskan	4	4.0
Transgender	1	1.0	Asian American	6	5.9
Missing	3	3.0	European American/White	50	49.5
Total	101	100.0	Hispanic/Latino	16	15.8
			Multi-Racial	3	3.0
<b>Age</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	Other	18	17.8
18-24	52	51.5	Unknown/Missing	2	2.0
25-30	14	13.9	Total	101	100.0
31-35	11	10.9			
36-40	7	6.9	<b>Hours spent on course per week</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
41 and above	17	16.8	1-3 hours	35	34.7
Total	101	100.0	4-6 hours	42	41.6
			7-9 hours	11	10.9
<b>Hours at work this semester</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	10 hours or more	10	9.9
0 hours per week	38	37.6	Unknown/Missing	3	3.0
1-10 hours per week	5	5.0	Total	101	100.0
11-20 hours per week	15	14.9			
21-30 hours per week	14	13.9	<b># of CHC online classes taken</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
31-40 hours per week	5	5.0	1 online class	41	40.6
40 or more hours per week	21	20.8	2 online classes	23	22.8
Unknown/Missing	3	3.0	3 online classes	16	15.8
Total	101	100.0	4 online classes	9	8.9
			5 or more online classes	11	10.9
<b># of all classes this semester</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	Unknown/Missing	1	1.0
1-3 classes	52	51.5	Total	101	100.0
4-6 classes	47	46.5			
Unknown/Missing	2	2.0			
Total	101	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, students agreed or strongly agreed with every statement in this section. Specifically, the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the instructor posted the syllabus in a timely manner (mean = 3.88). In addition, the majority of respondents indicated that assignments and exams were related to course learning objectives (mean = 3.85). On the other hand, students were somewhat less likely to feel that the instructor organized the schedule effectively to promote learning (mean = 3.66).

**Table 3: Course components and instructional procedures**

<b>Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements:</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
The instructor posted a syllabus for this course in a timely manner	100	2	4	3.88	.36
The instructor gave assignments and exams that were related to the learning objectives of this course	100	2	4	3.85	.36
The instructor allowed sufficient time for assignments to be completed	100	1	4	3.79	.48
The syllabus accurately described what was involved in the course	100	2	4	3.78	.50
The method of grading for this course was clearly stated in the syllabus with an outline of assignments.	100	1	4	3.78	.52
The instructor used explanations that were clear and understandable	99	1	4	3.75	.52
The instructor demonstrated knowledge of course subject matter	100	1	4	3.74	.56
All course materials were posted in a timely manner	100	1	4	3.70	.58
The instructor inspired interest/excitement in the subject matter	97	1	4	3.70	.60
The instructor organized the schedule effectively to promote learning	100	1	4	3.66	.64

Respondents evaluated the instructional approach and techniques on social support, fairness, and reliability (see Table 4). Most respondents agreed (i.e., responded either with a 3 or 4) that the instructor returned test and assignment grades or evaluations in a reasonable length of time (mean = 3.80) and that the instructor was sensitive to gender and multi-cultural concerns (mean = 3.78). In addition, respondents agreed that the instructor provided opportunities for student input and class discussion and was open to other people’s viewpoints (mean = 3.75) and that the instructor responded to student communication as described in the syllabus (mean =3.74). However, students

were somewhat less likely to agree that the instructor's grading system was fair or that the exams were fair and understandable (mean for each = 3.68).

**Table 4: Instructional approach and techniques**

<b>Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements:</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
The instructor returned test and assignment grades/evaluations in a reasonable length of time	98	2	4	3.80	.45
The instructor was sensitive to gender and multi-cultural concerns	89	1	4	3.78	.56
The instructor provided opportunities for student input/class discussion and was open to other people's viewpoints	99	1	4	3.75	.52
The instructor responded to student communication within the guidelines described in the course syllabus	97	1	4	3.74	.53
The instructor was available to help students and made it clear how to contact him/her outside of class	97	1	4	3.72	.63
The instructor allowed group interaction or assigned group projects	91	3	4	3.71	.45
The instructor applied course material to the real world	94	1	4	3.71	.63
The instructor made an effort to help students succeed in the course	97	1	4	3.70	.58
The instructor treated students in an unbiased manner	97	2	4	3.70	.56
The instructor's system of grading was fair	98	1	4	3.68	.60
The exams were fair and understandable	97	1	4	3.68	.57

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= 3.67), would recommend the online course experience to another student (mean= 3.62), and learned as much as they would have in a face-to-face course (mean = 3.58). On the other hand, fewer students agreed that communication with classmates was as frequent when compared with face-to-face courses (mean=3.29).

**Table 5: Course satisfaction**

<b>Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements:</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
I had to work at least as hard in this course as I would have in a traditional face-to-face course	98	1	4	3.67	.68
I would recommend the online course experience to another student	92	1	4	3.62	.68
I found that I learned at least as much in this online course as I probably would in a face-to-face course	91	1	4	3.58	.76
I would choose to take another online course	92	1	4	3.52	.89
This course was more convenient to take than a traditional face-to-face course	88	1	4	3.49	.82
Without the availability of this course via Internet, I would not have been able to enroll in this course/program	90	1	4	3.48	.80
I communicated at least as much with other students in this online course as I would in a face-to-face course	93	1	4	3.29	.95

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 textbooks or workbooks, required assignments, and the Online Grade Book very useful (mean = 2.72). In contrast, online lectures (mean=2.63) were more often rated as not useful to a student’s distance education learning experience; however, most students rated the online lectures as useful. In addition, 39% of the respondents chose not applicable when asked to rate the usefulness of group projects, and 20% of respondents chose “not applicable” when asked to rate usefulness of online lectures.

**Table 6: Evaluating resources and components used in DE courses**

<b>Please rate the usefulness of the following?</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
Textbooks/Workbooks	96	1	3	2.72	.50
Required assignments	99	1	3	2.72	.50
Online Grade Book	97	1	3	2.72	.55
Group projects	62	1	3	2.71	.49
Internet resources	97	1	3	2.70	.54
Instructor-generated content (e.g., PowerPoint, videos, podcasts, etc.)	97	1	3	2.69	.58
Quizzes and exams	99	1	3	2.68	.59
Discussion Boards	93	1	3	2.65	.56
Online lectures	81	1	3	2.63	.60

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 (63%) and instructional videos on using Blackboard by the lowest percentage (23%).

**Table 7: Suggested components for future DE courses**

<b>Which would you like to see more of in future DE classes?</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Video lectures	56	63
Videos on related course content from a variety of sources	44	49
Website links related to course content	43	48
Instructor podcasts	38	43
Chat rooms	34	38
Instructional videos on how to use Blackboard	20	23

As shown in Table 8, out of the 101 respondents, 89% would recommend the DE course to another student, and 94% would recommend the instructor to another student.

**Table 8: Course and Instructor recommendation**

<b>Would you recommend this course to another student?</b>			<b>Would you recommend this instructor to another student?</b>		
	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>		<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	90	89	Yes	95	94
No	11	11	No	6	6
Total	101	100	Total	101	100

Finally, respondents were asked to leave any comments or suggestions for improvement of online and hybrid classes. The following feedback from 44 (44%) of the respondents is

categorized into the following themes; compliments, communication, technology, and other. All identifying information has been removed to protect confidentiality.

### **Compliments (N = 28)**

- Good class!
- Love the class and GREAT instructor.
- This course and its instructor have exceeded my expectations and I look forward to working in the [name of field] industry.
- The most precise and concise instructor I have ever met. Extremely helpful and knowledgeable. [Instructor] is a very valuable asset for Crafton Hills College. I should know, I have a total of 17 years of school experience so far. Thank you, [instructor]!
- Keep up the awesome work. You're very clear and concise.
- Overall [professor] is a good instructor he's very knowledgeable and his multiple options grading system is fair, but as most students would say he goes way overboard on the grading of punctuation and grammar.
- The class was very interesting and fun. I learned a lot and was able to apply what I learned to examples in class and understand them better. The instructor is very good and the class is too.
- [Instructor's name] takes his time and if you are committed to the class and visit him in his office he gives you one on one time to guide you through his projects, and he is very easy to talk to and a nice interesting man.
- Over the years I have had trouble with [name of subject] class I have taken, but by taking this online course I have learned so much more than I would have in other [name of subject] classes and the instructor is an excellent educator as well.
- Professor [Name] is a great professor and I feel fortunate to have been able to take her course. She is patient with the slower learners; has high expectations of success; adapts and changes to meet her students' needs; tolerates mistakes, and is so kind and positive with her suggestions for better writing. She time after time made herself available for tutoring and assistance with all assignments, both in person and by phone. She was quick to return papers so we could have time to make revisions. Now, I only hope I have made no glaring errors, used correct sentence structure and punctuation! :)
- [Instructor] is very clear in setting expectations and what is required to meet expectations. I was happy to be able to enroll to her online course since I'd taken the prior course the Fall of 2011 and learned tremendously and achieved an "A" in that class.
- Professor [Name] is a professor who is flexible and has the willingness to be open minded. She expects nothing but greatness and values each and every student. She went above and beyond to make herself available, either in person or by phone, for tutoring or questions. When evaluating and grading papers she was upbeat and positive in her suggestions. Although many times I felt inadequate, she did nothing but uplift and encourage, making me want to do better. I feel fortunate to have been able to have her as my professor. :)
- This course was a little difficult for me only because I would misunderstand instructions on some assignments, but Professor [Name] made sure she clarified and helped me see what I was doing wrong and how to improve. I would recommend this course to someone who doesn't have a full load because you HAVE to be on top of everything to pass. Overall, I am happy I was able to get into the course and glad to have had an

instructor who I felt cared about the students understanding every aspect instead of criticizing or expecting us to keep up because it is an on-line course.

- I loved the course and the flexibility that it offered. The instructor was knowledgeable and very helpful.
- The instructor was great, and I would definitely recommend him. He was very understanding with issues related to BB. If I had the opportunity I would like to take an on-campus class with him.
- Great learning experience from this course!
- This teacher was not hard at all, he was nice and very understandable. I would recommend him all the way!
- Very fun and informative class with open discussions that involve the students in new views.
- Great class, I learned a lot.
- I felt the course was enjoyable & insightful. [Name] did a very good job of putting the course together.
- Very good class. I have learned a lot.
- This was my first semester taking an online course, and I loved it! Being a single Mom with a toddler, online classes make my life a little easier. :) And [Instructor's Name] is an outstanding instructor!!!
- The instructor was a delight. I learned much more than I expected.
- [Instructor's Name] is one instructor that makes you go above and beyond any form of reasoning you might have occurred in life. The topics for argument cause passion and anger at the same time with the end result being positive and uplifting.
- I'm more of a face to face person, online courses are not my favorite but this is just how I could make my schedule work this semester. This professor made it easy to participate and is an excellent teacher.
- Pardon my language, but [Instructor] kicks ass. He is usually called a "hard ass" because of his honesty within his critiques, because of the due dates, etc. But he does all of this for us to learn from. To better improve our [course topic] skills. I have learned so much from [Instructor], he does not sugar coat anything, which we learn from tremendously.
- Although this instructor was tough I am very glad I experienced this course online. It has been by far the best [course topic] class ever that I have taken online. I would have to say the challenge was wonderful and if students asked I would tell them to enroll in this course!



- This course is very handy to me. I can easily balance my time between my family, my kids, my relatives, my work and my hobbies without worrying about time schedules for this class. I can make my own schedule in terms of studying, taking tests, making posts and reading the materials. This class also offers the students everything they need in order to succeed. Two thumbs up for this class! Two thumbs up for [Instructor's Name]!
- I have enjoyed the class and I'm looking forward to take the other classes provided by this instructor.

#### **Communication (N = 4 )**

- In class instruction is great and fairly understandable, just wish [instructor] had some office time for students open to meet one-on-one, just to clear understanding of the material in some troubled spots I'm having. It would also build my confidence.
- The instructor was not present in the class at all. Weekly assignments were never responded to, questions were not answered. There was no feedback. Tests did not represent material covered at that point, and did not accurately reflect the textbook. Emails were not answered within a week's time, ever.
- [Instructor's Name] was very helpful and timely when answering any questions I had regarding this course.
- I emailed the instructor a couple times and he only responded once roughly about 2-3 weeks later. I called a couple times and left messages and never got a call back. I'm sure he has plenty of students he has to respond to, but a timely response would be very helpful when work is due and can't find help anywhere else. I don't blame the instructor because I don't know what is happening on his end, but if we can establish a more effective means of communication, that would be great, such as a teacher aide for student feedback.

#### **BlackBoard and other technology (N = 6)**

- Using BlackBoard was very frustrating. Links would come up with errors, so I would have to figure out another way to get to what I needed. For the most part I did not get auto emails notifying me that the instructor had posted something, and when I did it was always a day or so after the instructor had posted.
- Had some Blackboard problems but it was not the instructor's fault other than that it was a great class
- The instructor and course were outstanding. However the performance of BlackBoard and the new email system made this course harder that it had to be.
- 95% of the time, BlackBoard wouldn't even work. This made it difficult to do assignments, projects, and finals.
- After figuring out the quirks of the SAM program I had a lot of fun in the course.
- I would recommend this course to someone who has some knowledge of computers and would like to enhance their skills. For someone that has hardly used computers at all, I think that class instruction would work better for them. I have worked with computers and have taken a number of courses over the years so I am familiar with the functions/uses of the programs. For a limited user, an overview from an instructor of what the programs do best (i.e., when you would use a database instead of a spreadsheet) I think would be more helpful in addition to actual instruction. Online is good if you can stand to read the very dry text of the books. To me, classroom instruction is the best. Yes, this was my first on-line class. I did learn some new functions that I had not explored (as we all get in a rut with how we accomplish things). So, overall I did learn new things from this course.

**Other (N = 4)**

- Although [Instructor] claims he grades fairly, I went and talked with him about my grade. He then showed me how he graded other student's posts which were completely subjective. In addition, he doesn't comment on why your post did not get the points. His whole focus on this course was his ego, research for publications, and his outside participation in [name of subject] conventions which has nothing to do with course content that should have been presented. He did not encourage me to do well in his class. If students were doing well on posts, which by the way had nothing to do with the course, he changed his grading system so that the student's scores went down. I really think he did not want people to pass the class. I CAN HONESTLY SAY I LEARNED NOTHING IN THIS CLASS. I have a master's degree from USC and been a graduate student for 10 years studying in a doctoral program and [Instructor] is by far the worst instructor I have ever encountered after 15 years of the college experience.
- I did not care for the book itself, as the readings were so so so tedious and long. I feel the book should be a little less "wordy" and give us more of general outline of the important facts as I feel strongly that I would have been able to retain more information. The length, and way the book drags on.....makes it hard to keep interest.
- All that stuff you've heard about [Instructor's name] being a hard ass? Forget it. He's just got a good, old-fashioned work ethic, which means precisely this: if you show up on time, stay for the class, PAY ATTENTION to instruction, and do the work, you'll be fine. It's not an easy class, but it's not super-hard, either. I wouldn't take the class again, though. Only getting together five times per semester for a [name of subject] class doesn't make sense to me, especially now that I've done it. Besides that, I do much better with weekly, face-to-face instruction than reading and doing it online.
- I only took [name of course] because it was a requirement and that is why I would not recommend this course to another student. I wish the instructor would have stuck closer to the syllabus and the due dates for assignments. I also wish there was more time to complete the online discussion board assignments.