

Introduction to Section II

Online Learning Volume 24, Issue 4

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In addition to our special issue on papers from the American Educational Research Association OTL-SIG, this issue also contains several studies from our regular submission process.

The first paper in this section is, “A Statewide Study of Perceptions of Directors on the Availability of Online Student Support Services at Postsecondary Institutions” by Victoria Brown of Florida Atlantic University, Josh Strigle of the College of Florida, and Mario Toussaint of Taravella High School. As online education has grown, so has the need to support a diverse population of students. Research on student support is lagging though. This paper fills this gap in the research by reporting on the development and implementation of a scorecard to assess online student support services across the State of Florida, one of the largest providers of distance education in the United States. The instrument covers a comprehensive range of support services and compares perceptions of directors at both University and State colleges on the availability of these to provide a benchmark for both institution types. If your institution is concerned with online student-support services, this paper and the scorecard (now available from the Online Learning Consortium) will be of interest.

The next paper is “The Development and Validation of the Distance Doctoral Program Integration Scale” by Joe Holmes and Amanda Rockinson-Szapkiw of the University of Memphis. The issue of doctoral student success is problematic with many program having low completion rates, an issue that is compounded in online programs. Reflecting some of the same foundational literature as the previous study, the authors of this paper argue that academic and social integration is key, yet reflective of differing constructs in online doctoral study. This paper studied the dimensionality, validity, and reliability of a survey developed to measure online doctoral students' program integration. The instrument was developed, revised, and tested with 282 students enrolled in distance doctoral programs. The exploratory factor analysis and internal consistency metrics indicate that the 32-item self-report instrument has good validity and reliability. The final scale was found to have three dimensions rather than the expected two dimensions of academic and social integration. The third dimension identified in this study related to curriculum and the authors offer a definition of program integration for doctoral students in online programs: satisfaction with faculty integration, student integration, and curriculum integration. The instrument will be of interest to the growing number of institutions launching online doctoral level programs.

The third paper in this section is “A Synopsis of Online Testing Integrity in a General Education Math Course: A Correlational Study” by Daris William Howard of Brigham Young University. In this study, the author examines the issue of academic integrity in three different conditions. Students either took exams in place-based proctoring centers, online exams proctored through software, or unproctored online exams. A few previous studies suggest that unproctored students both take longer to complete exams and score higher on them relative to proctored

students. Previous researchers conclude that these results are indicative of cheating by unproctored students. Utilizing data from thousands of test takers the author of the current study finds that, although the unproctored students took longer to complete exams, they did not score significantly differently than students in proctored conditions. While these and previous results suggest that the additional time used by unproctored students may indicate that they were looking up answers (in violation of testing conditions), the fact that the students in the current study did not score better leaves open other questions. Were there systemic differences between students in the different conditions or were the tests easy enough that all scored relatively well? More research seems warranted.

The next paper is “A Multi-Institutional Study of Factors Influencing Faculty Satisfaction with Online Teaching and Learning” by Gregory Blundell and Daniel Castañeda of Kent State University and Junghyae Lee of Case Western Reserve University. The purpose of this study was to identify factors that influence online instructors’ perceived satisfaction with online education. The authors tested the validity and reliability of an instrument and used exploratory factor analysis to identify three broad constructs correlated with faculty satisfaction. These factors included interaction, technology and institutional support. Faculty who are able to establish personal interactions with online students have higher levels of perceived satisfaction than those who are not. Technology issues also impact overall perceived satisfaction in fully online courses. Finally, the study concludes that the least influential factor for fully online faculty’s perceived satisfaction was institutional support. The author interprets this finding to indicate that the instructors at the 10 institutions studied may not be fully satisfied with the resources provided by their colleges, not that institutional support is not important. This study presents a useful tool for benchmarking faculty satisfaction that should be of interest to other investigators as well as program administrators.

The fifth and final paper in this section is “Professional Development for Online Teaching: A Literature Review” by Heather Leary, Cade Dopp, Chad Turley, Matthew Cheney, Zach Simmons, Charles Graham, and Riley Hatch of Brigham Young University. This systematic review of the literature on the issue of online teaching professional development (OTPD), collects and organizes twenty years of research. The review seeks to understand significant patterns and identify questions that remain about future approaches and systems for online faculty development. The paper is guided by the four research questions including the kinds of research questions asked about online faculty development; the range of best practices reflected in the literature; curricula used in online faculty development, and research gaps on this topic. This paper represents the most recent systematic review in this area and should be a useful reference for other researchers as well as practitioners.

We invite you to read and share this issue with colleagues and to consider submitting your original work to *Online Learning*.

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