

# TL Infobits - July 2009

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## ARE ONLINE STUDENTS MORE LIKELY TO DROP OUT?

"The accelerated growth of online instruction has been accompanied by questions of quality in terms of outcomes. One measure of program quality and effectiveness is program completion rates. Although studies have shown the effectiveness of instruction in the online environment to be comparable to that of the traditional classroom environment, studies and anecdotal evidence indicate high attrition rates for online courses, often much higher than for campus courses."

In "Attrition in Online and Campus Degree Programs" (*OJDLA*, vol. 12, no. 2, Summer 2009), East Carolina University researchers Belinda Patterson and Cheryl McFadden report on their study comparing online and face-to-face students in two graduate-level programs. The authors concluded that "attrition in online program formats remains an issue and challenge warranting the attention of educational leaders in program planning and development." They also believe that "[d]ropout seems to result from an interaction of many complex variables that are difficult to delineate and determine, particularly in online environments, hence making it difficult for one comprehensive theory of dropout to fully explain the phenomenon in all situations or settings."

The paper is available at <http://www.westga.edu/~distance/ojdlasummer122/patterson112.html>.

The *ONLINE JOURNAL OF DISTANCE LEARNING ADMINISTRATION (OJDLA)* is a free, peer-reviewed quarterly electronic journal published by the Distance and Distributed Education Center, The State University of West Georgia, 1603 Maple Street, Carrollton, GA 30118 USA; email: [distance@westga.edu](mailto:distance@westga.edu); Web: <http://www.westga.edu/~distance/>.

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## COLLEGE STUDENTS IN 2020

"The College of 2020: Students" is the first of the Chronicle Research Services' three-part series of reports on what higher education will look like in 2020. The report addresses such questions as

What will change in how students view higher education and how to get it?

How will colleges have to change to address students' expectations?

What will be the make-up of the student body?

The complete report is available for purchase; a three-page Executive Summary is available at no cost online at [http://research.chronicle.com/asset/TheCollegeof2020ExecutiveSummary.pdf?utm\\_source=at&utm\\_medium=en](http://research.chronicle.com/asset/TheCollegeof2020ExecutiveSummary.pdf?utm_source=at&utm_medium=en).

Chronicle Research Services is part of the company that publishes *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. For more information go to <http://research.chronicle.com/>.

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## CELLPHONES AS INSTRUCTIONAL TOOLS

"Cellphones have been called 'the new paper and pencil' or 'the new laptop,' and they could be in the hands of as many as 10 million to 15 million schoolchildren in the next few years."

*Education Week's* webinar "Cellphones as Instructional Tools" makes a case for using cellphones as "mobile computers" that can be used for students' learning activities both in and outside the classroom. Although the presenters use examples from the K-12 educational environment, instructors in higher education may find the presentation of interest. A link to the archive of the webinar is available at <http://www.edweek.org/ew/marketplace/webinars/webinars.html>. (Registration is required to access the broadcast; registration is free.)

*Education Week's* webinars are sponsored by Editorial Projects in Education, the non-profit organization that founded The Chronicle of Higher Education. For more information, contact: Editorial Projects in Education Inc., Suite 100, 6935 Arlington Road, Bethesda, MD 20814-5233 USA; tel: 800-346-1834; Web: <http://www.edweek.org/>.

See also:

"50 Ways to Use Twitter in the College Classroom"

*Online Colleges*, June 6, 2009

<http://www.onlinecolleges.net/2009/06/08/50-ways-to-use-twitter-in-the-college-classroom/>

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## TEN HIGHER EDUCATION IT ISSUES FOR 2009

In December 2008, the tenth annual EDUCAUSE Current Survey asked participants to select the "five most-important IT issues out of a selection of thirty-one in each of four areas: (1) issues that are critical for strategic success; (2) issues that are expected to increase in significance; (3) issues that demand the greatest amount of the campus IT leader's time; and (4) issues that require the largest expenditures of human and fiscal resources."

As for the previous six years, funding IT, administrative/ERP information systems, and security rank at the top of the list of college and university CIOs' concerns. This year, funding IT is the number one concern, reflecting the economic downturn that most institutions are experiencing.

The survey results and other materials, including readings related to each of the ten issues, are available at <http://www.educause.edu/2009IssuesResources>.

EDUCAUSE is a nonprofit association whose mission is to advance higher education by promoting the intelligent use of information technology. The current membership comprises more than 1,900 colleges, universities, and educational organizations, including 200 corporations, with 15,000 active members. EDUCAUSE has offices in Boulder, CO, and Washington, DC. Learn more about EDUCAUSE at <http://www.educause.edu/>.

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## BEING THERE FOR ONLINE STUDENTS

"Instructors who are new to online teaching often fear that their courses will be impersonal and that connecting with their students will not be possible in an online environment. Online students also fear this 'missing instructor,' and feel isolated if they don't sense that others are out there sharing their learning journey."

In "Increasing Instructor Presence in an Online Course" (*Educator's Voice*, vol. 10, no. 4, July 8, 2009), Gail E. Krovitz provides tips to help online instructors connect and stay connected with their students. Her suggestions include "paying attention to the frequency and tone of communication, having a strong presence in threaded discussions,

providing feedback and expectations. . . ." Krovitz also recommends "increased instructor personalization" by posting instructor bios, pictures, voice recordings, and the use of first person in communications. The article is available at [http://www.ecollege.com/Educators\\_Voice.learn](http://www.ecollege.com/Educators_Voice.learn).

*Educator's Voice* is published monthly by the eCollege Instructional Design Team. For more information contact eCollege, eCollege Building, 4900 S. Monaco Street, Denver, CO 80237 USA; tel: 888-884-7325; fax: 303-873-7449; Web: <http://www.ecollege.com/>.

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## INSIGHTS FROM LEARNING LEADERS

"Today's learning leaders face more challenges than ever before. How do they deal with the economic and business climate we are all facing? How should they make decisions? How should they effectively interface with business leaders? How can they build (or re-build) a team for success? All of these questions have become even more critical and challenging."

The *Learning Leader Fieldbook* (The MASIE Center, 2009), edited by Bill Byron Concevitch, is "designed to bring you insight into the worlds and daily realities of a prestigious group of learning leaders. We've captured their thoughts and some guiding principles and actions that they believe have aided their success." The book includes texts and podcasts from nine learning officers in corporate and government organizations.

The book is available for free downloading at <http://www.masie.com/fieldbook> and, under a Creative Commons License, can be distributed and duplicated.

The MASIE Center is an international e-lab and think tank located in Saratoga Springs, NY. The Center is dedicated to exploring the intersection of learning and technology. For more information, go to <http://www.masie.com/>.

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## Recommended Reading

"Recommended Reading" lists items that have been recommended to me or that *Infobits* readers have found particularly interesting and/or useful, including books, articles, and websites published by *Infobits* subscribers. Send your recommendations to [kotlas@email.unc.edu](mailto:kotlas@email.unc.edu) for possible inclusion in this column.

"The Impending Demise of the University"

By Don Tapscott

*Edge*, June 4, 2009

[http://www.edge.org/3rd\\_culture/tapscott09/tapscott09\\_index.html](http://www.edge.org/3rd_culture/tapscott09/tapscott09_index.html)

"Universities are finally losing their monopoly on higher learning, as the web inexorably becomes the dominant infrastructure for knowledge serving both as a container and as a global platform for knowledge exchange between people.

"Meanwhile on campus, there is fundamental challenge to the foundational modus operandi of the University -- the model of pedagogy. Specifically, there is a widening gap between the model of learning offered by many big universities and the natural way that young people who have grown up digital best learn."

Responses/rebuttals to Tapscott's essay by Marc D. Hauser, Harvard University and James O'Donnell, Georgetown University

<http://www.edge.org/discourse/demise.html>