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REPORT ON ONLINE EDUCATION STUDY

"More than one-third of public university faculty have taught an online course while more than one-half have recommended an online course to students . . . . In addition, nearly 64 percent of faculty said it takes 'somewhat more' or 'a lot more' effort to teach online compared to a face-to-face course. However, a large majority of faculty cited student needs as a primary motivator for teaching online, most commonly citing 'meet student needs for flexible access' or the 'best way to reach particular students' as the reason they choose to teach online courses."

The two-part report, "Online Learning as a Strategic Asset," published by the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) and the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, summarizes the results of the APLU-Sloan National Commission on Online Learning Benchmarking Study conducted in 2008 and 2009 that surveyed 45 public institutions across the U.S. The study was "designed to illuminate how public institutions develop and implement the key organizational strategies, processes, and procedures that contribute to successful and robust online learning initiatives."

Volume I: "A Resource for Campus Leaders" reports the results of 231 interviews conducted with administrators, faculty, and students on online learning programs and initiatives.
http://www.aplu.org/NetCommunity/Document.Doc?id=1877

Volume II: "The Paradox of Faculty Voices: Views and Experiences with Online Learning" reports on the results of a survey of over 10,700 faculty respondents which included a mix of tenure and non-tenure track, full- and part-time, and those who have and those who have not taught online. http://www.aplu.org/NetCommunity/Document.Doc?id=1879

The Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU), formerly the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC), was founded in 1887 and represents 186 public research universities in the United States. For more information, contact: APLU, 1307 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 400, Washington, DC 20005-4722 USA; tel: 202-478-6040; fax: 202-478-6046; Web: http://www.aplu.org/.

Articles providing an overview, summary, and comments on the study:

"Strong Faculty Engagement in Online Learning APLU Reports"
A Public Voice: APLU's Online Newsletter, August 31, 2009
http://www.aplu.org/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?pid=1347

"Going For Distance"
Inside Higher Ed, August 31, 2009
http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2009/08/31/survey

"Professors Embrace Online Courses Despite Qualms About Quality"
The Chronicle of Higher Education, August 31, 2009
http://chronicle.com/article/Professors-Embrace-Online/48235/

TEACHING WITH WEB 2.0 TOOLS MASHUPS

"It would be foolish to ignore the tremendous opportunities the Social Web offers to education. Societal growth is profoundly dependent upon the success of teaching and learning. Societies are founded on the propagation and dissemination of knowledge, and formal learning has become the prime gateway to knowledge. Teachers should therefore continue to explore new and dynamic ways of providing excellent pedagogical opportunities, with emerging social software tools assuming greater importance."

In "Learning Space Mashups: Combining Web 2.0 Tools to Create Collaborative and Reflective Learning Spaces" (*Future Internet*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2009, pp. 3-13), Steve Wheeler reports on two studies "where tools [wikis and blogs] used for different pedagogical purposes were brought together in combinations to create even more dynamic and interactive experiences for learners." Students in the studies viewed the wiki as a community collaboration space and the blog as their personal reflective space. Wheeler argues that, despite the differences in the two tools, such "mashups" of Web 2.0 tools warrant further research. The paper is available at http://www.mdpi.com/1999-5903/1/1/3/pdf.

Future Internet [ISSN 1999-5903], a quarterly Open Access journal on Internet technologies and the information society, is published by Molecular Diversity Preservation International (MDPI). For more information, contact: Future Internet Editorial Office, Molecular Diversity Preservation International, Kandererstrasse 25, CH - 4057, Basel, Switzerland; tel: +41 61 683 77 34; fax: +41 61 302 89 18; email: futureinternet@mdpi.org; Web: http://www.mdpi.com/journal/futureinternet/

STUDY FINDS THAT ONLINE EDUCATION BEATS THE CLASSROOM

"Earlier studies of distance learning concluded that these technologies were not significantly different from regular classroom learning in terms of effectiveness. Policy-makers reasoned that if online instruction is no worse than traditional instruction in terms of student outcomes, then online education initiatives could be justified on the basis of cost efficiency or need to provide access to learners in settings where face-to-face instruction is not feasible. The question of the relative efficacy of online and face-to-face instruction needs to be revisited, however, in light of today's online learning applications, which can take advantage of a wide range of Web resources, including not only multimedia but also Web-based applications and new collaboration technologies."

The U.S. Department of Education's report, "Evaluation of Evidence-Based Practices in Online Learning: A Meta-Analysis and Review of Online Learning Studies" (2009), provides a summary of a literature search of more than a thousand empirical studies of online learning published from 1996 through July 2008. Analysis of these studies found that "on average, students in online learning conditions performed better than those receiving face-to-face instruction."

The report is available at http://www.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/tech/evidence-based-practices/finalreport.pdf. As a publication of the U.S. government, the report is in the public domain; authorization to reproduce this report in whole or in part is granted.

FUTURE OF SCHOLARLY PUBLISHING

In 2006, the National Humanities Alliance (NHA) created a task force to assist in "exploring issues related to scholarly journal publishing in [U.S.] humanities and social science (HSS) associations." Each of the eight collaborating associations selected a representative journal for detailed review. Among the study's findings was that "a shift to an entirely new funding model in the pure form of Open Access (author/producer pays) in which the costs of publishing research articles in journals are paid for by authors or a funding agency, and readers have access free online, is not currently a sustainable option for any of this group of journals based on the costs provided."

The report of the study, "The Future of Scholarly Journals Publishing Among Social Science and Humanities Associations," is available at http://www.nhalliance.org/bm~doc/hssreport.pdf.

Founded in 1981, the National Humanities Alliance is a non-profit organization to "advance national humanities policy in the areas of research, education, preservation and public programs." For more information, contact: National Humanities Alliance, 21 Dupont Circle NW, Suite 800, Washington, DC 20036 USA; tel: 202-296-4994; fax: 202-872-0884; Web: http://www.nhalliance.org/.

See also:

"Reinventing Academic Publishing Online. Part I: Rigor, Relevance and Practice"
by Brian Whitworth and Rob Friedman
First Monday, vol. 14, no. 8, August 3, 2009
http://www.uic.edu/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/viewArticle/2609/2248

"While current computing practice abounds with innovations like online auctions, blogs, wikis, twitter, social networks and online social games, few if any genuinely new theories have taken root in the corresponding 'top' academic journals. Those creating computing progress increasingly see these journals as unreadable, outdated and irrelevant. Yet as technology practice creates, technology theory is if anything becoming even more conforming and less relevant. We attribute this to the erroneous assumption that research rigor is excellence, a myth contradicted by the scientific method itself. Excess rigor supports the demands of appointment, grant and promotion committees, but is drying up the wells of academic inspiration."

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 for possible inclusion in this column.

"Perishing Without Publishing"
By Rob Weir
Inside Higher Ed, August 12, 2009
http://www.insidehighered.com/advice/instant_mentor/weir11

"As one who has served (and is serving) as an associate editor for actual paper journals, let me share some bad practice observations that could sandbag your career -- and this advice almost all applies to any online peer-reviewed journal too." -- Rob Weir

"How to Generate Reader Interest in What You Write"
By Philip Yaffe
UBIQUITY, June 23 - 29, 2009
http://www.acm.org/ubiquity/volume_10/v10i7_yaffe.html

" Unfortunately, most would-be authors cling to the myth that if they just put in enough effort, people will automatically want to read what they write." -- Philip Yaffe