

This report provides information about the CRC students who enrolled in DE courses during the 2012-13 year. The report analyzes the demographics, course success and satisfaction levels of these students.

Distance Education Students at Cosumnes River College

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CRC Distance Education (DE) Students

In spring 2014 the CRC Research Office, in response to dialog at the College, investigated the following three questions:

1. How does the DE student population compare to the overall CRC student population?
2. How do the success rates of our DE student population compare to the overall CRC success rates?
3. How do the satisfaction levels of our DE student population compare to the satisfaction levels of DE students from across the state.

Methodology

To answer the first two questions, the Research Office analyzed 2012-13 CRC student enrollment and success data in DE courses, focusing on students who enrolled in ITFS (TV) or Online Courses. This data was disaggregated by various factors (such as age, ethnicity, educational background, course level, etc.) and compared with the 2012-13 college-wide data. The Research Office analyzed data from the State Chancellor's Office Fall 2012 Distance Education Student Satisfaction Survey to answer the third question.

Overview of Results

Demographics

Almost 25% of our students in 2012-13 enrolled in one or more DE courses. Almost 90% of these enrollments were in exclusively online courses. In general the population of students enrolled in DE was older and more educated compared to the CRC student population. In addition, a greater percentage of the DE students were female or white compared to the CRC student population.

Success

The 2012-13 course success rates in DE courses were lower than the College's overall course success rates. Students 25 years of age or older were more successful in their DE courses compared to their younger counterparts. Although this reflects a general college-wide trend, the disparity in success between the two groups was more extreme for DE courses. The data also suggests that the DE modality may similarly disadvantage women, African Americans and first-time freshmen.

Student Satisfaction

DE student satisfaction at the college was fairly positive and was similar to the statewide data in many areas. CRC students were particularly impressed with the degree to which their DE course required problem solving skills and provided the opportunity for them to ask for clarification from their fellow students. However, it appears that our students were not as satisfied with their interactions with the instructor compared to the students across the state who participated in the study.

Highlights and more details about these conclusions follow on the next several pages. The data for this study is available at http://www.crc.losrios.edu/Faculty_and_Staff/Research_Office/Cohort_Studies.htm

Highlights of our 2012-13 DE Students

Demographics

- A smaller percentage of DE students were under the age of 25 compared to the overall college student population (46% compared to 60%).
- A greater percentage of DE students were female compared to the overall college student population (62% compared to 56%).
- The ethnic distribution of DE students was similar to the general college population. However, a smaller percentage of DE students were Hispanic (20% compared to 23%) and a greater percentage of DE students were White (32% compared to 27%).
- The percentage of DE students with a first language other than English was slightly lower than the overall college student population (16% compared to 19%).
- Only 9% of the DE students were first time freshmen, compared to 15% in the overall college student population.
- A greater percentage of DE students had previously earned an AA Degree or higher (15%) compared to the overall college student population (9%).

Enrollment

- In fall 2012, 24.3% of our student population (3518) enrolled in one or more DE course.
- Almost 90% of our DE students in 2012-13 enrolled in one or more exclusively online course.
- In 2012-13 a greater percentage of DE students enrolled in college-level courses compared to the overall college student population (22% compared to 14%). Enrollment in Basic Skills DE courses was negligible (1%).

Success

- The course success rate in DE courses was lower than the overall course success rates (60% compared to 66%).
- The course success rate in online courses was greater than the course success rate in ITFS courses (60% compared to 55%).
- DE students who were 25 years of age or older were more successful than students under the age of 25 (63% compared to 55%).
- DE students who were female had lower course success rates compared to males (59% compared to 60%). Course success rates by gender in the overall student population usually have the opposite relationship.
- The distribution of course success rates by ethnicity for DE was similar to the distribution of course success rates by ethnicity in the CRC student population, although the DE mode seems to disadvantage African American students.
- The distribution of course success rates by first-time freshmen status for DE was very different than the distribution of course success by first-time freshmen status for the CRC student population. The DE mode seems to disadvantage first-time freshmen.

Highlights of the Distance Education Student Satisfaction Survey¹

Demographics of Respondents

There were 181 CRC students who responded to the State Chancellor's survey about their experiences in their fall 2012 distance education (DE) course(s). This represents 1.7% of the total number of respondents to the survey and almost 5% of our fall 2012 DE student population. It is interesting to note that:

- Almost all of these respondents (97%) took their fall 2012 DE course(s) at CRC.
- Slightly more than 95% of the respondents indicated that they had taken an online course in the fall.
- Almost 60% of the respondents had previously completed a DE course at CRC, which was greater than the statewide data (approximately 50%).
- More than 85% of respondents indicated they would take another DE course.

The DE sample disaggregated enrollment by four characteristics (unit load, gender, age, and ethnicity). Although the sample mirrored the CRC fall 2012 student population with respect to unit load, there were differences in the other variables. In particular:

- Females were overrepresented in the sample (72.4% respondents compared to 55.3%). This trend was also reflected in the statewide data. This compares to approximately 56% in CRC's overall 2012-13 student population, and 62% in the CRC DE 2012-13 student population.
- Only 27.1% of the survey respondents were under the age of 25, compared to approximately 60% in the CRC 2012-13 student population, and 46% in the CRC DE 2012-13 student population.
- Students who identified themselves as Caucasian were overrepresented in the sample (32% compared to 22%).

The top five factors that motivated CRC students to enroll in a DE course included:

1. Convenience with work schedule (82%) (#1 in the state).
2. Personal interest in the subject (74.5%) (#4 in the state).
3. Class would improve job skills/opportunities (72.3%) (#6 in the state).
4. Course met AA/AS degree requirements (66%) (#2 in the state).
5. Enjoyed learning on a computer (66%) (#5 in the state).

Meeting transfer requirements was ranked third in the state but was ranked 7th at CRC.

Satisfaction of the Respondents

In general student satisfaction in most areas was fairly positive (more than 70% agreeing or strongly agreeing with positive statements about the class). In many areas student satisfaction at CRC **was similar** (within 2%) to the statewide data. This applied to the following areas:

- The importance of a discussion board.

¹ Caution should be used when using this information to draw conclusions about all DE students at the college. The sample size for this survey (181) means that we can only estimate (with 95% certainty) that the ratings of the DE students at the college for each item fall within 7% of the survey response for that item.

- The value of the class documents.
- The value of the websites linked to their DE course.
- The impact of the course syllabus on their learning.
- The impact of the reading material to their learning.
- The breadth and depth of coverage.
- The degree to which the course encouraged students to discuss ideas with other students.

In some areas CRC students were **more satisfied** with some aspects of their DE experience compared to the statewide data. Of particular note was their satisfaction with the degree to which the:

- Class provided the opportunity to ask for clarification from fellow students (77.9% compared to 64.6%).
- Learning activities in the course required problem solving which facilitated their learning (84.3% compared to 78.3%).

In some areas CRC students were **less satisfied** with some aspects of their DE experience compared to the statewide average. Of particular note was their satisfaction level regarding the following items:

- Class activities facilitated their learning (68.1% compared to 73%).
- Teacher was an active member of the discussion group (73.8% compared to 78.5%).
- Online discussion board provided the opportunity for critical thinking with other students (75.3% compared to 78.2%).
- Ability to get individualized attention from the teacher (63.2% compared to 68.4%).
- Being aware of the teacher's presence in the classroom (62.2% compared to 67%).
- Having a clear human presence of the instruction in the course (68.3% compared to 71.5%).
- Feeling frustrated by the lack of feedback from the teacher (16.3% compared to 13.3%).
- Having a sense of community among fellow students (52.5% compared to 55.7%).

It is interesting to note that fewer than 70% of CRC and statewide **respondents agreed or strongly agreed** that:

- They had learned as much in the DE course as compared to a face-to-face course.
- DE courses were as effective as face to face courses.
- The online class experience helped improve their written communication skills.

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