

Fall 2013 DISTANCE EDUCATION (DE) STUDENT SATISFACTION SURVEY

Summary Findings of Respondents for CRC Respondents

During Fall 2013, the Los Rios Community College District Office of Institutional Research collaborated with the district-wide Educational Technology Committee to develop and administer a student satisfaction survey of those students who enrolled in a Distance Education class in Fall 2013. The results will be used to provide information to assist in Distance Education strategic planning at the district and college level.

The Office of Institutional Research sent emails to over 15,000 students taking a Distance Education course or courses in Fall 2013 inviting the students to take the Distance Education Student Satisfaction Survey; the initial email invitation was followed by a series of email reminders. A total of 1,809 surveys were completed district-wide, for an overall adjusted response rate of approximately 11.0%, which was somewhat disappointing. Currently, students across the Los Rios district are being asked to respond to a multitude of surveys, both internal to Los Rios as well as external surveys; the consequence are lower survey response rates as there is some confusion amongst students as to which survey they are being asked to respond to. Because of duplicate enrollments of students at more than one college it is difficult to calculate exact response rates by individual college and instead the proportion of survey responses by the Los Rios colleges follows: American River College, 48.7%; Cosumnes River College, 17.4%, Folsom Lake College, 11.7%; and Sacramento City College, 23.0%.

Highlights of the initial analysis of the Distance Education Satisfaction survey for the CRC respondents are included in this report. For more detailed information on survey responses, please refer to the comprehensive Frequency Distribution Reports available on the LRCCD Office of institutional Research website by clicking: <http://irweb.losrios.edu>.

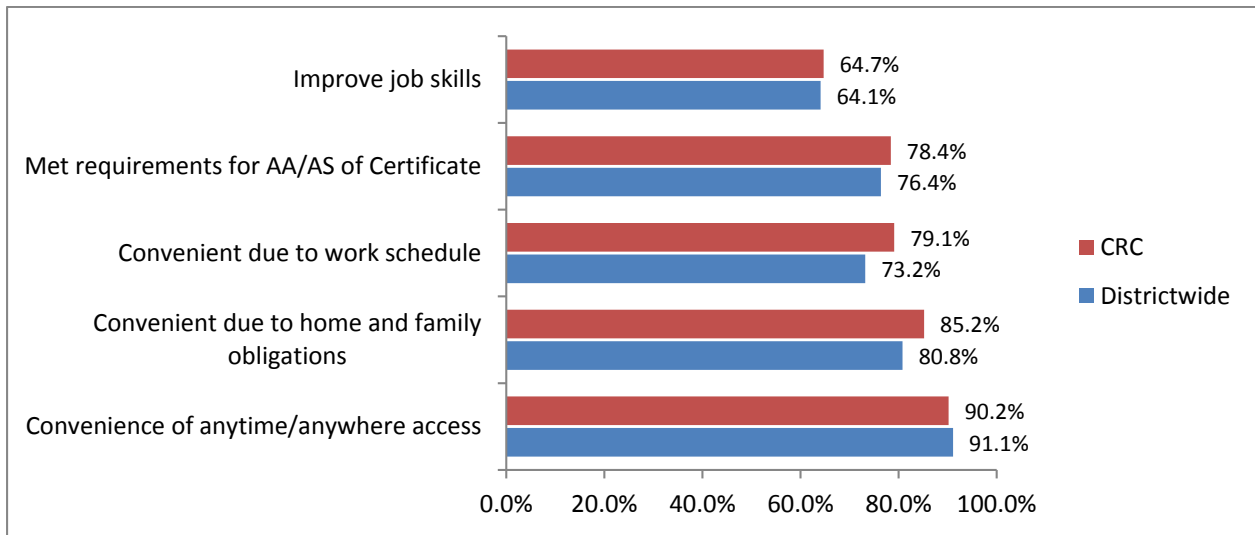
Distance Education Courses Help CRC Students Balance Busy Schedules

CRC survey respondents have predominantly taken Distance Education courses through one of the Los Rios colleges only (81.1%). Substantial proportions of the respondents have taken one or two web-based (online) courses (47.9%) while many respondents indicated they have taken three or more web-based (online) courses at a Los Rios college (48.8%). Many respondents indicated they have taken DE courses offered as a combination of face-to-face and online instruction at a Los Rios college (37.8%). Nearly half of the respondents, 47.5%, indicate they have not taken nor are they interested in taking other types of DE courses which include telecourse/cable broadcast course offerings and interactive television courses.

With many survey respondents indicating their Distance Education experience is primarily at a Los Rios college, for planning purposes it's important to gauge future interest of students to continue to enroll in DE courses at a Los Rios college. Survey recipients were asked the likelihood that they would take any type of Distance Education courses; substantial proportions of CRC respondents, 60.2%, indicated they are very likely or likely to take a Distance Education course at a Los Rios college in the future.

Information as to why respondents take DE courses may be helpful in the planning process especially related to support services unique to distance education students; the following chart illustrates the top five reasons survey respondents take distance education courses:

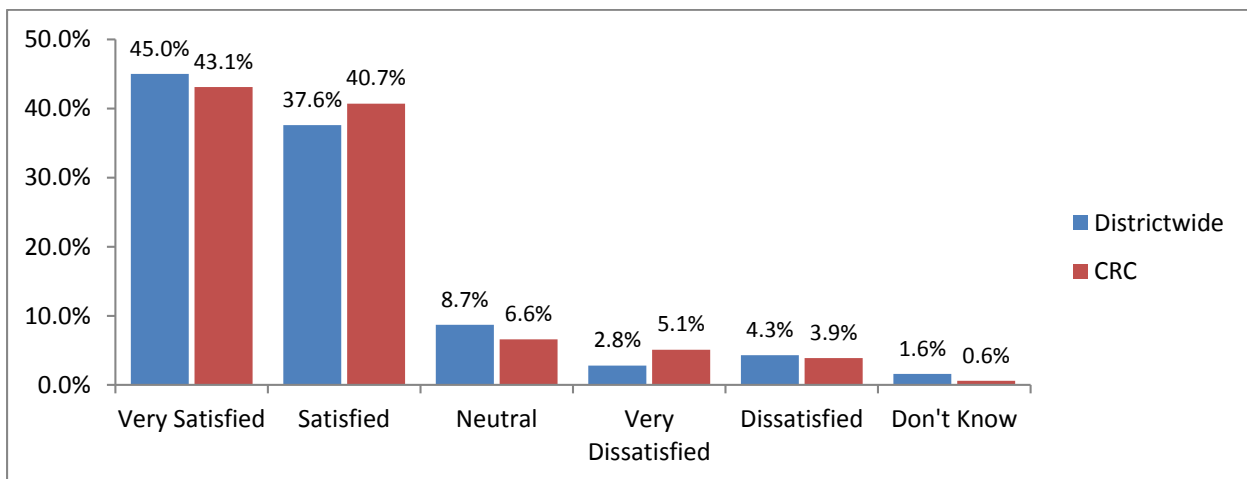
Chart 1: Top Five Reasons CRC Survey Respondents took Distance Education Courses in Fall 2013



Survey Respondents Satisfied with the Distance Education Learning Experience

Chart 2 shows the level of satisfaction of survey respondents with their overall Distance Education experience at CRC and district-wide, ranging from the 43.1% who were very satisfied to the 5.1% who were very dissatisfied.

Chart 2: Overall Satisfaction with Distance Education Experience



Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with a series of statements that focused on the Distance Education learning environment at CRC for the course or courses taken during Fall 2013. Table 1 illustrates the areas where at least thirty percent of respondents strongly agreed with the statements, noting in particular the 44.6% who strongly agree that overall the distance education experience met their learning goals and the 45.2% of respondents who would recommend Los Rios distance education courses to their friends.

Table 1: Top Distance Education Learning Environment Statements where Respondents Strongly Agree

Rank	Distance Education Learning Environment	% Strongly Agree	
		Districtwide	CRC
1	I would recommend Los Rios Distance Education courses to my friends	42.4%	45.2%
1	Overall, the Distance Education experience met my learning goals	45.8%	44.6%
3	I spend about as much time studying for Distance Education courses as I do face-to-face courses	35.5%	38.4%
4	The Distance Education course or courses prepared me for the next level in the course-progression	35.1%	35.9%
5	I learn as much in Distance Education courses as I do in my face-to-face courses	31.4%	29.6%

It is also important to note that in four of these areas over thirty percent of respondents agreed with statements focused on the Distance Education learning environment; 37.8% agreed that overall the distance education experience met their learning goals, nearly one-third of CRC DE students (32.6%) agreed that they learn as much in their DE courses as they do in their face-to-face courses and that distance education course or courses prepared them for the next level in the course progression (32.3%), and 31.4% of respondents agreed that they would recommend a Los Rios Distance education course to their friends.

There were several areas directly related to student learning in the distance education environment in which over ten percent of respondents indicate a level of disagreement with the statements presented as illustrated in Table 2. In particular, 43.2% of respondents disagree or strongly disagree that distance education courses are academically easier than face-to-face courses which is a positive reflection of the distance education learning environment at Los Rios colleges. Also worth noting are the 19.0% of respondents who disagree or strongly disagree that they spend as much time studying for Distance Education as for face-to-face; a review of open-ended comments finds many respondents who indicate they spend more time on Distance Education coursework than they do for their face-to-face courses. It is interesting to note that 18.6% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that they learned as much in DE courses as they did in their face-to-face courses. Comments related to this item indicate that learning in the online environment necessitates time-management, and self-discipline and self-motivation.

Table 2: Top Distance Education Learning Environment Statements where Respondents Disagree or Strongly Disagree

Rank	Distance Education Learning Environment	% Strongly Disagree	
		Districtwide	CRC
1	Distance Education courses are academically easier than face-to-face courses	41.4%	43.2%
2	I spend about as much time studying for Distance Education courses as I do face-to-face courses	19.2%	19.0%
3	I learn as much in Distance Education courses as I do in my face-to-face courses	17.5%	18.6%

Fall 2013 Courses Receive Favorable Reviews

Survey recipients were asked to respond to a series of statements specifically related to the Distance Education course or courses they took during Fall 2013 and the responses were very favorable. Close to half of the respondents strongly agree that the course syllabus accurately reflected course content (51.2%) and that student learning outcomes are clearly stated for the course (47.3%). Respondents strongly agree with the remainder of the statements, ranging from 41.3% who strongly agree that the external websites used for the DE course were beneficial to the 46.4% who strongly agreed that class assignments were beneficial to their learning. However, some of the open ended comments indicate there are some respondents who perceived some homework for their distance education course was more “busy-work” in nature.

There were no statements about their course experience where more than ten percent of respondents strongly disagreed. However there were 10.2% who somewhat disagreed that they spend as much time on distance education homework assignments as compared to face-to-face; this is an area that may require additional review by program or course area to determine if there are any patterns to help address any possible concerns.

Student, Instructor, Peer Interactions Strong in the Los Rios Distance Education Learning Environment

In the distance education learning environment interacting with both the instructor as well as fellow students is especially important to ensure there is adequate communication across all areas of the distance learning environment. Table 3 illustrates the statements in this area where over thirty percent of survey respondents strongly agree, ranging from the 44.7% of respondents who strongly agree that they were kept informed of their academic progress in the Distance Education courses to the 30.8% who strongly agree that they were satisfied with the level of peer interaction in the Distance Education environment.

Table 3: Top Level of Interaction Statements where Respondents Strongly Agree

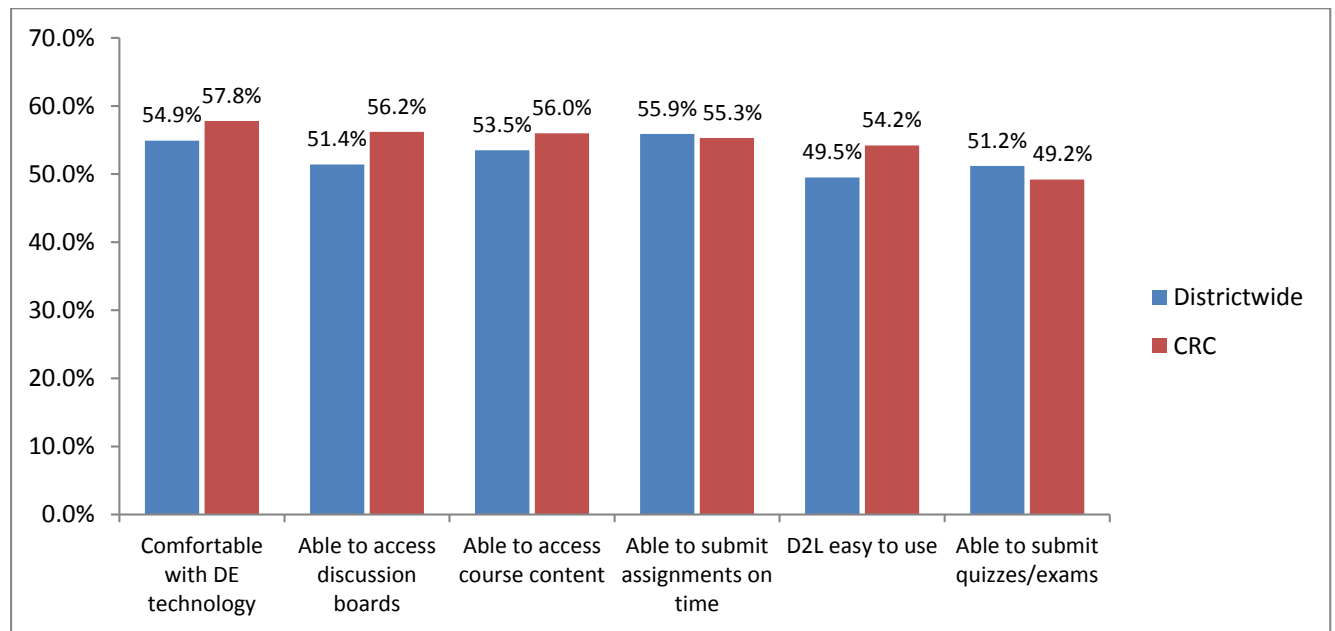
Rank	Distance Education Learning Environment	% Strongly Agree	
		Districtwide	CRC
1	I was kept informed of my academic progress in the Distance Education course	45.6%	44.7%
2	The instructor answered my questions in a timely fashion	42.2%	41.1%
3	The answers I received from my instructor were helpful	42.3%	40.2%
4	I am satisfied with the amount of interaction I had with my Distance Education instructor	39.8%	39.5%
5	I am satisfied with the peer interaction in the Distance Education environment	32.6%	30.8%

There were no statements relating to interaction within the Distance Education learning environment where over ten percent of respondents strongly disagreed but 15.0% of survey respondents who somewhat disagree that they are more comfortable participating in the Distance Education learning environment than face-to-face courses. This may partially relate to the respondents’ comfort level with using the technology as a tool to interact in the distance education learning environment.

Distance Education Technical Support Receives High Grades

Survey recipients were asked to respond to a series of statements related to technology and technical support that are crucial to ensure students succeed in the distance learning environment. Chart 3 demonstrates technical support areas where fifty percent or more of survey respondents strongly agreed that technology support met their needs; ranging from the 55.3% who strongly agree that they were able to submit assignments on time to the 54.2% who strongly agreed the Learning Management System (D2L) Los Rios colleges use to deliver Distance Education was easy to use. There were no statements where over ten percent of respondents somewhat or strongly disagreed. There were however two statements where many respondents indicate the “don’t know/not applicable”; specifically the statements the Los Rios help desk was available when I had questions (50.9%) and I was able to get technical help when I needed it (45.3%) which may reflect many distance education students are familiar with distance education technology and did not access the particular technical service areas.

Chart 3: Top Technical Support Areas where Survey Respondents Strongly Agree



On-Campus Requirements

Survey respondents were asked to evaluate various on-campus requirements as they related to Distance Education students. Charts 4 and 5 illustrate areas where there is general agreement as well as general disagreement about which areas respondents believe should be on campus requirements for distance education students. Higher proportions of students who responded to the survey believe that students should be required to attend student support related services on campus while there is general disagreement that those areas related to the actual distance education learning environment course should be on campus requirements.

For example, survey respondents agree or strongly agree distance education students should be required to come to a Los Rios college campus to receive academic counseling, Assessment Testing, Financial Aid services, Student Education Plan (iSEP) development and for their initial college orientation. In contrast, survey respondents somewhat or strongly disagree that distance education students should be required to come to a Los Rios college to take quizzes, tests and exams, for final exams, for distance education orientation, for in-class presentations and for initial college orientation.

Chart 4: CRC Student Support On-campus Requirements for DE

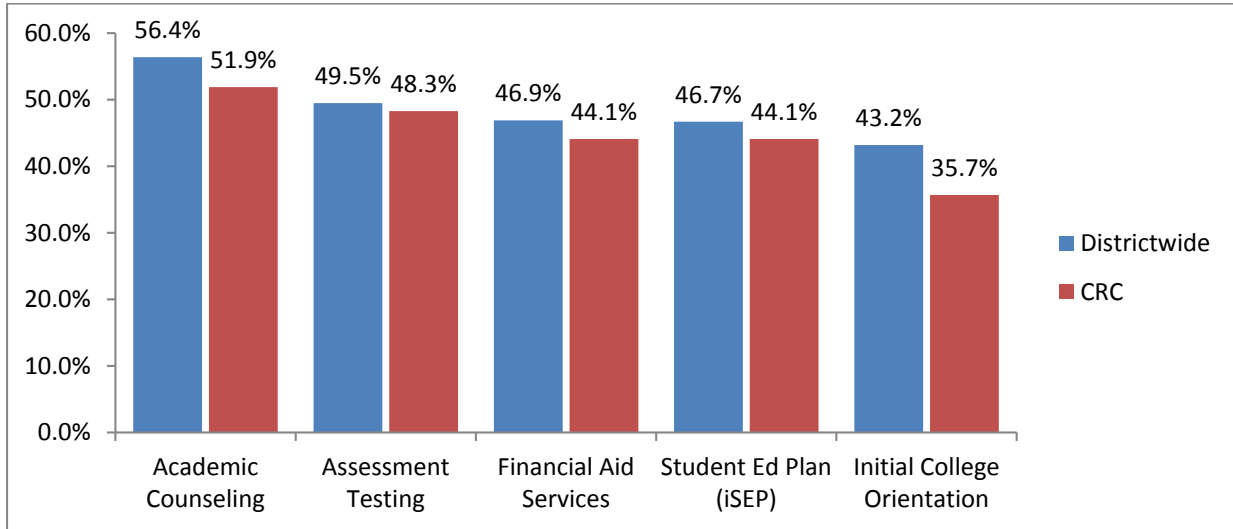
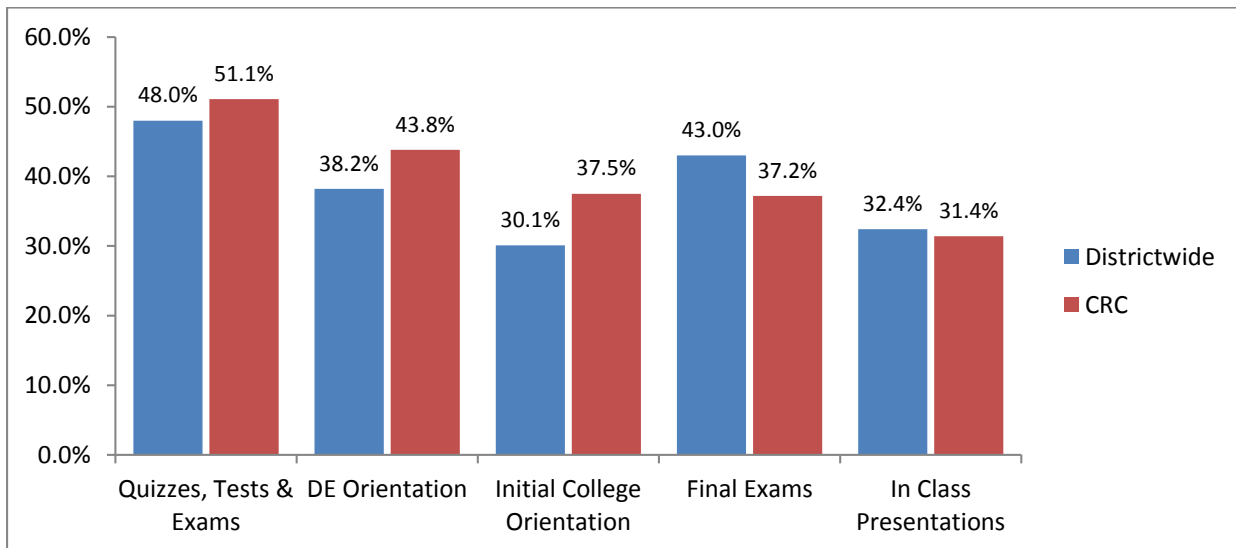


Chart 5: CRC Student Oppose On-campus Requirements for DE



Planning for the future...

Survey respondents were asked to consider their interest in taking Distance Education courses at a Los Rios college in the future and what areas are the most important influences in making the decision. Table

4 illustrates each of the statements students were asked to consider sorted by level of importance ranging from the 47.7% who indicate the ability to complete all General Education requirements through Distance Education as very important to the 33.7% who indicate the ability to access course content via a smartphone or tablet as very important in making the decision to enroll in Distance Education courses in the future.

Table 4: Top Level of Statements that are Very Important to Enrollment in Future DE Courses

Rank	Planning for the future	% Strongly Agree	
		Districtwide	CRC
1	The ability to complete all coursework requires for my program major through Distance Education	45.4%	49.1%
2	The ability to complete all General Education requirements through Distance Education	46.8%	47.7%
3	The ability to access Eservices via a smartphone or tablet	40.3%	37.0%
4	The ability to access course content via a tablet	35.6%	33.7%
5	The ability to access course content via a smartphone	34.0%	33.7%

There were no statements where ten percent or more of survey respondents indicated items as not being very important; however there were 8.7% who indicated that the ability to access course content via a smartphone and 7.2% who indicated that the ability to access course content through a tables are unimportant relative to making the decision to enroll in future Distance Education courses at a Los Rios college.

Survey Respondents Provide Additional Feedback via Open-ended Comments

Survey respondents were able to provide additional open-ended comments about Distance Education programs and courses at Los Rios colleges. Comments are wide ranging and speak to the benefits of Distance Education as well as areas of concern to Distance Education students. The following comments highlight the open-ended feedback provided by Fall 2013 CRC Distance Education students who responded to the survey.

Any advice for students thinking about taking a Distance Education course?

Survey recipients were asked if they had any advice they would give to students who are considering enrolling in a Distance Education course at a Los Rios college and the overwhelming messages are pretty straightforward:

- DON'T PROCRASTINATE!
- STUDY!
- Do your homework assignments.
- Create a schedule for yourself so you don't get behind.
- Check D2L and/or emails frequently.

Survey Respondents voiced the positive...

The following comments generally reflect the positive feedback voiced by students about their Distance Education learning experience at their Los Rios College in Fall 2013 and the feedback reflects the common interest amongst Los Rios students for increasing Distance Education course offerings at Los Rios colleges:

- Please provide MORE online class options. Online classes make education more accessible for those of us with full-time jobs and full-time families! Thank you so much for providing the opportunities to better myself without putting the rest of my life on hold.
- Provide more online courses! A lot of students like myself have vigorous work schedules that are difficult to work around.
- We want to be able to complete our degree in a timely manner but often find it difficult to find courses that can fit into our schedule correctly. With more courses offered online, we can be successful both at work and in school.

...and the not so positive

Much of the frustration, whether real or perceived, seems to focus around the Learning Management System Los Rios uses to deliver Distance Education as illustrated by the following comments. This may be indicative of a need for further training tools or increased communication to students and faculty clarifying any recent and/or forthcoming changes in the system.

- Although I am tech savvy, I had a hard time with the new version of D2L. Not from a technical stand point but a layout stand point. It was difficult to find dates and content there are too many places to have to look and each instructor doing things a little different. I can't really put my finger on what was wrong, I just know in past semesters I never had an issue and with this new version I constantly had to click all over to get all the information.
- All instructors should be trained in how to properly operate the new D2L site.
- Instead of using D2L and Moodle both, instructors should all use the same format. It does get hard when you have 3 professors who all use different formats and you need to sign into all every week.
- There were a lot of changes made to the D2L website for Fall 2013. Many of the changes were not as user-friendly as the previous versions. It seemed even the instructors were having a hard time navigating the changes at the beginning of the semester.
- It would be extremely helpful for all of the Los Rios Colleges to use D2L in the same way. The interface is set up slightly differently for all of the colleges, which can make using the system confusing. Some classes make the class list accessible, some don't. Some use a calendar, some don't. I think instructors should receive more training in how to use D2L effectively. Opening a general discussion board for asking questions of fellow students and sharing ideas should be standard for all classes. Content for classes should be available to refer to after the week it is due (a couple of classes locked me out of the content, so I couldn't refer to it later unless I'd downloaded it to my computer). A smart phone app would be immensely useful for most college

students. D2L could be a fabulous tool for all classes, if instructors knew how to use it. It could be really useful for group projects and sharing ideas and resources with fellow students

It takes the faculty AND the student to achieve success...

Survey respondents voiced agreement that a good instructor can make all the difference in the learning experience and that students must also take responsibility in meeting their educational goals:

- Great, but it all depends on how the teacher uses this to interact with students. Some classes were great because the teacher kept up with the students where others classes didn't.
- Distant education can be a good and bad system all depending on the student taking the course. If you are dedicated in achieving your educational goal then in-class or distance education should not stand in your way.

This report serves as an initial framework to guide the internal discussion related to the survey results as well as to determine next steps in the analysis of the results of the Distance Education Survey; further research will focus on the courses survey respondents took during the Fall 2013 term at the individual college level to see if there are any patterns that might affect student outcomes.

The executive summary for DE Education satisfaction for CRC students report was adapted from the LRCCD Executive Summary developed by Betty Glycer-Culver, Research Analyst, LRCCD Office of Institutional Research (IR) using data provided by the IR office. Copies of the District Executive Summary, as well as the college-level Frequency Distribution Reports, can be downloaded from the IR Web Site at: <http://irweb.losrios.edu>

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