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7. Title: *“Assessing student academic indicators between traditional and distance education course offerings”.*
8. Project Dates: May 2005 – February 2006
9. Project Checklist:
 - a. xxx Statement of support. This will be e-mailed by our Chair, Dr. Jeff Vessely.
 - b. xxx Budget. See Page 5.
 - c. xxx IRB consulted. The PI consulted with a team leader at IRB and was informed this project would qualify as exempt; reason #7. IRB approval form will be submitted.

“Assessing student academic indicators between traditional and distance education course offerings”

Abstract

Academic units are offering more courses as distance education courses. This shift has obvious economic (no facility needed and increase in enrollment maximums) and pragmatic benefits (convenience and flexible schedule) for the academic unit and the student. However, in light of the benefits of taking courses via distance education, little research has been completed regarding the impact of distance education on student academic indicators as compared to the traditional classroom education.

The results from this assessment will be used to better understand the effect of taking courses via distance education versus taking courses traditionally on various student academic indicators. Moreover, the findings from this assessment will be used to inform future consideration of converting traditional courses to distance courses.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of the project is to explore whether differences in student academic indicators exist between taking a course traditionally and taking a course via distance education. The academic indicators used for this project will be academic performance, student engagement, and withdrawal rates. Academic performance will be measured by final grade distributions and scores on course assignments. Student engagement will be assessed by rates of course evaluations turned in and assignment completion rates.

Withdrawal rates will be assessed from the final grade rosters.

Project Perspective

The course to be assessed is offered through the Department of Physical Education. The course is titled “H363 – Personal Health” and is dually offered (as a traditional and as a distance education course). The initial response to creating a distance education section in H363 has been favorable for the department. For instance, the department not only increased the number of sections offered per semester, but the maximum enrollments for each section also increased. However, any changes in student academic performance from the course transformation have not been formally studied.

During the initial offering phase (the first four semesters) the same instructor either taught both offerings or, at the least, managed the distance education section while also teaching the traditional offering. As a result, data analyzed for this study will come from the initial four semesters. We will not introduce subsequent semesters when the instructors changed as this inconsistency may impact either directly or indirectly the student academic indicators assessed.

Intended Outcomes

Using the aggregate data from the initial four semesters, we intend to determine whether differences in the following academic indicators exist between the H363 traditional and distance education course:

1. Final grades.
2. Number of Assignments completed.
3. Number of Assignments not submitted.

4. Average grades on assignments.
5. Rates of Withdrawal.
6. Percentage of end of course student evaluations turned in.

Assessment Methods

The basic assessment method will be the compilation of aggregate data found on final grade reports, electronic or hard-copy grade books, and absolute reporting rates of semester-end course evaluations. Collection methods will be identical for both the traditional course offering and the distance course offering. Data will be kept within the department and will be reported as grouped data, with no possibility of traceability to a particular student.

Data Analysis

Difference between groups (traditional and distance learning) and between student academic standing (freshman, sophomores, juniors, seniors) will be determined using a 2 x 4 ANOVA. Dichotomous data (rates of Withdrawals and percentage of student evaluations turned in) will be analyzed using Chi-Square techniques. Statistical analyses will be performed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) with an alpha level of $p = .05$ for all the tests.

Methods of evaluation and dissemination of results

Project results will be submitted to the department Chair and school Dean via a written report. Further, a verbal report will be presented to the academic unit during one of their monthly faculty organization meetings. In addition, findings will be submitted to the IUPUI Distance Education Committee via a written report or as an agenda item. We will also submit an abstract for presentation at the Moore Symposium and submit an article to the Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning .

Intended use of findings for program improvement

Primarily, the findings from this project will provide a first look into what happens, if anything, to student academic indicators by converting traditional courses into distance education courses. Results will be submitted to the School Dean and Department Chair for their perusal and use when determining what courses should be transformed. If the results warrant, the department may initiate further investigation to determine if there are specific retention and/or graduation rate effects that result from offering courses via distance education versus traditionally.

Budget

Graduate student support will be needed for this project. This assistance will be in the form of compilation, organization, coding, and entry of data. Proposed expense of this work is **\$2300**. In addition, statistical consultation is expensed at **\$200**. As a result, the total proposed cost is **\$2500**.