

Developing Effective Online Systems: National University

Sidney R. Castle, Ph.D.
Professor, School of Education
National University

Dina Pacis, Ed.D.
Associate Professor, School of Education
National University

Kevin Jerred
Institutional Research Office
National University

Abstract

National University (NU) is the second largest private university in California and considered a leader in online education with an academic program based on a course per month format. A 2010 study of 14,175 NU classes from academic years (AY) 2008, 2009, and 2010 examined the impact of a shift from onsite to online program/course enrollments and student self-assessment of learning in onsite, hybrid, and online courses. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to determine if statistically significant differences were found in student self-assessment of learning and found that learning was highest in onsite, followed by hybrid and then online ($P < .001$).

A study conducted in early 2014 in the School of Education (SOE) with AY 2013 data from 1,742 graduate and 194 undergraduate courses examined the impact of synchronous communication (online CLP courses), Audio/Visual/Kinetic (AVK) items, and unit summary PowerPoints with voice-over narratives in the online course offerings. A second focus was the new Teacher Education undergraduate program.

The early 2014 SOE study findings included: (a) Graduate students reported learning highest in onsite, but online was second followed by hybrid ($P < .001$); (b) Graduate online learning scores in 2014 were higher than noted in 2010 ($P < .001$); and, (c) No statistically significant differences were found in learning scores in undergraduate courses with online CLP rated highest of all instructional modalities. This was a major finding and appears to be the first of its kind.

The research was being expanded to all NU schools/programs to determine the extent to which the 2014 SOE findings were reflective of NU as a whole. The expanded study examined a total of 8,100 NU classes from AY 2014, 4,593 of which were classes from relatively new undergraduate programs. The finding of no statistically significant differences in learning scores

in online, onsite, and hybrid SOE undergraduate courses was confirmed for a second year with online CLP again rated highest of all instructional modalities.

Our paper will include the findings of the early 2014 SOE study and the subsequent expanded NU study with a description of how different assessment measures, emerging technology, student tutorials for participating in online instruction, and mentoring of instructor best practices combined to achieve the high quality of NU's academic programs.