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245 1 0 Does course design impact student engagement and/or student outcomes at community colleges? an empirical test of a web-based, student-centered learning design strategy / ǂc Lawrence Angel.
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504 Includes bibliographical references (pages 119-126).
520 3 Community college enrollments have been on the rise since the 1960s. Because of these ever increasing enrollments, community colleges have come to play an important role in students' pursuing post-secondary education. Some individuals question this expansion of community colleges because these institutions typically have lower retention rates than 4-year universities. Others argue that the demographics of community colleges and the diverse needs of their students are behind these the lower retention rates. While it is important to discuss the low success rates at community colleges, it is more important to move forward to discuss how community college instructors address the lower success rates. Some suggest that instruction needs to be changed in order to tackle the specific needs of its diverse population. This mixed method study explores the impacts of a specific course design, referred to here as the Web-SCL (Student Centered Learning) model, on diverse learners at a community college in the Pacific Northwest. This specific course design couples web-based support tools with other student activities to create the Web-SCL model. It is the author's belief that this approach to course design has the potential to address the unique needs of the community college student. This study used two methodologies, quantitative and qualitative, in multiple phases to explore the Web-SCL model and to test whether this specific course design had an impact on student engagement and/or student outcomes. The first quantitative data phase compared GPAs from students in classes using the Web-SCL model to students who took classes from instructors using a traditional approach of lecturing. The second quantitative phase came from a student survey administered to the treatment group and to the control group. For this study, the unit of analysis was the student. However, instructors' perspectives play a crucial role in the delivery of course material and in the creation of the course design. As a result, the qualitative section focused on the instructors' perspective. The first qualitative phase came from instructors observing the Web-SCL model during a class observation. Following the class observation, each instructor was interviewed using a series of questions designed to bring forth their views on class design. This quantitative data allowed us to see if the model addressed the needs of our student population while the qualitative data gave us the instructors' perspective on whether this was a viable course design. Merging all data sources was crucial in attempting to get a better understanding of the Web-SCL model and the extent to which course design may have had an impact on student engagement and/or student outcomes. Merging the data revealed three general themes: Class structure, Technology, and Learning. Students were able to distinguish the different characteristics in the two types of classes (Web-SCL and traditional) and instructors viewed the Web-SCL model as a positive impact on student outcomes. Students also believed that technology could help their learning and that instructors would advise future instructors to incorporate technology into their class. And finally, instructors used group activities to gauge learning, yet there was no quantifiable evidence to prove that the Web-SCL model had an immediate impact on grades received in a course.
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