

EVALUATING DISTANCE EDUCATION: THE STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Distance education can now be considered a viable means of providing higher education for many universities. In the study of *Evaluating Distance Education: The Student Perspective*, student opinions were sought to assist in providing information that will help institutions develop a distance education evaluation system by creating or choosing a proper student evaluation instrument and procedures that will provide valid and reliable answers in order to make applicable decisions. A survey was developed that covered topics that could assist in identifying the framework needed for the web-based evaluation system. The framework under study included: (a) evaluation design and format, (b) evaluation questions used and the manner in which they are constructed, (c) areas that should be emphasized, (d) frequencies of feedback and evaluation needed, and (e) the motivation required for valid and reliable responses. Items of importance to the student perspective were determined by calculating percentages of the student responses.

Discoveries of student perspectives were made on the realization of course differences for traditional and web-based courses, the frequency of evaluations experienced during the length of courses, the amount of emphasis placed on questions in traditional and web-based courses, whether or not traditional evaluation instruments were appropriate for evaluating web-based courses, what students ranked highest as to the use of evaluation data, what motivates or de-motivates students to provided valid and reliable evaluation responses, what questions should be added to web-based course evaluations,

whether or not additional feedback was requested during the course, whether students consider themselves as customers of the university, and whether or not students feel competent in the role as evaluator. In order for distance education evaluations to provide the necessary information that will assist distance education programs in meeting student needs and continue to be a viable delivery means of education for universities, this study advocates entire distance education evaluation system and instrument modifications. It further recommends the revision of evaluations used for blended courses to prevent the loss of valuable information.