Online Learning and Student Outcomes in California Community Colleges

Hans Johnson

Supported with funding from Donald Bren Foundation
Potential for online learning is high

- Improved access
- Improved student success
- Improved efficiency
Online enrollment at California’s community colleges is enormous ...

![Graph showing the total enrollment in online credit courses from 2002-03 to 2011-12. The enrollment has increased significantly over the years, with a peak in 2009-10 and a slight decrease in 2011-12.]
... and growing rapidly
Access has increased for all groups, but gaps exist.
Course success rates are lower in online courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Online sections</th>
<th>Traditional sections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002-03</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-04</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-05</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>69</td>
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<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>69</td>
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<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
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<td>69</td>
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<td>2007-08</td>
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<td>2008-09</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
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<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Online sections have a success rate of 60.4% compared to 70.6% for traditional sections.
Performance gap is real

Difference in success rates between online and traditional courses

- No controls: -7.4%
- Controlling for differences in students, colleges, courses: -11.4%
- All controls: -14.0%
Achievement gaps are exacerbated in the online setting

- White-Asian achievement gap
- White-African American achievement gap
- White-Latino achievement gap
- Older-younger achievement gap
- Female-male achievement gap
But long-term outcomes are better for online students

- Online courses can help attain long-term objectives
- Students who take at least one course online are more likely to
  - Transfer to a four-year college
  - Earn an associate’s degree
Policy recommendations

- Improve strategic planning and coordination
- Review the quality of current online courses
- Target resources that improve student outcomes
- Systematically gather cost information
Key issues ahead for online learning

- Serving underrepresented students
- Boosting success rates
- Pursuing cost effectiveness
- Defining the roles of faculty and administration
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Notes on the use of these slides

These slides were created to accompany a presentation. They do not include full documentation of sources, data samples, methods, and interpretations. To avoid misinterpretations, please contact:

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Thank you for your interest in this work.