FACULTY AND STUDENT EXPERIENCES WITH EMERGENCY REMOTE INSTRUCTION – SPRING 2020

Faculty Survey Report

Introduction

Purpose

The faculty survey was designed by the Data and Technology FIG with support from Dr. Rick Fox and Dr. Chris Calienes from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. The survey was designed to measure the Spring 2020 distance learning faculty experience using qualitative and quantitative questions. The results of the survey can help inform the college of faculty challenges and needs as the college continues with distance learning and expands online learning in Fall 2020. Additionally, the results might provide considerations for future semesters more generally. This survey collected faculty perceptions of and experiences with Emergency Remote Instruction (ERI) during Spring 2020. However, online teaching and learning usually entail advanced knowledge of format, time for preparation, and students who self-select for online courses. Therefore, the lessons learned from this particular survey may need to be adapted if they are to apply to future planned online teaching and learning.

Sample

The survey was forwarded in mid-June through KCC e-mail to all part-time and full-time faculty. A total of 198 faculty members responded, although not all 198 responded to every question. Among respondents, 31% (60 out of 195) identified as non-white; and 57% (112 out of 195) as female, which is fairly representative of KCC's faculty demographics.

Findings

Quantitative Responses

The first notable finding that sets the foundation for the upcoming analyses reveals that about 39% (75) of the respondents for question 4 reported that they had taught an online and/or a hybrid course before Spring 2020 (hereinafter referred to as "online experienced"). While there was no difference among white and non-white faculty, females (45%) reported a relatively higher rate of online experience compared to males (27%).

When asked about their courses during emergency remote instruction (ERI) in Spring 2020 (question 6), 62% of survey participants (122 out of 196) reported to have gradually developed their course(s) throughout the Spring 2020 semester, and 72% of participants (141 out of 196) reported to have redesigned their course(s), regardless of whether they had prior online experience or not. Regarding Fall 2020 (question 15), faculty were asked what changes they

would make to their courses in the future. While a majority of faculty will be making adjustments to their courses for Fall 2020, more of those without online experience prior to Spring 2020 (71%; 84 out of 118) will be making significant changes compared to the faculty who had prior online experience (50%; 37 out of 74).

When asked about what helped them prepare for the conversion to remote instruction (question 7), 83% of faculty (163 out of 195) reported that KCeL trainings and/or related discussions with colleagues were helpful. Departmental supports (48%) and videos/tutorials related to Blackboard (57%) were also considered helpful tools.

Concurrently, faculty reported using the following tools that met their instructional needs: KCC email (157; 84%), Blackboard Collaborate (98; 71%), and Zoom (82; 95%). Conversely, 29% (41 out of 139) of faculty who used Blackboard Collaborate noted that it "did not meet instructional needs" compared to 5% (4 out of 86) who used Zoom and noted that it "did not meet instructional needs."

When asked about the frequency of synchronous sessions (question 9), 34% (67) of faculty reported conducting synchronous sessions at the same time and as frequently as their in-person class schedule. Meanwhile, 44% (88) reported teaching asynchronously; some with an optional synchronous component. The highest rate of synchronous instruction was reported by faculty without prior online experience (39% compared to 21%).

When asked which tools helped to maintain instructor online presence (question 10), email, announcements, discussions, video conferences, and recorded lectures were reported to be effective in maintaining instructor presence, with email being reported by 94% of participants. 69% (52 out of 75) and 75% (56 out of 75) of faculty with prior online experience reported Discussion Forums and Virtual Videos, respectively, helped enhance instructor presence compared to 45% (54 out of 119) and 49% (58 out of 119) of the faculty without prior experience. Faculty without prior experience relied heavily on emails (95%) and announcements (87%).

When asked (question 16) how faculty felt when the college shifted to distance learning, 21% (41) reported to have felt completely unprepared. Most (35) of these respondents did not have any online experience. Out of these 41, only 2 reported to still feel completely unprepared (question 17).

When asked about perceived confidence levels at the end of Spring 2020 (question 17), 78% of faculty (154) indicated that they feel confident or better about [their] ability to adapt to online courses in the future. 20% of faculty indicated that they feel somewhat better. We disaggregated by teaching load (credit hours) as well, to see if teaching load correlated with faculty's perceived confidence level. The data show that more faculty teaching 13+ credits 94% (32 out of 34) feel confident or better about the ability to adapt to online teaching, compared to 75% (121 out of 62) of faculty teaching 0 to 12 credits.

Furthermore, faculty with prior online experience seem to have more preference for asynchronous instruction. When asked about their frequency of synchronous sessions during Spring 2020 (question 9), 45% of faculty (34 out of 75) with prior online experience reported to have conducted synchronous sessions compared to 61% (72 out of 119) of faculty without prior online experience.

When asked (question 14) what type of online course would best promote [their] course outcomes, 36% (27 out of 75) of faculty with prior online experience chose asynchronous compared to 21% (25 out of 119) of faculty without prior online experience. Overall, all respondents seem to value some blend of synchronous and asynchronous learning, whereby 59% (115) chose a blend of both synchronous and asynchronous.

Qualitative Responses

Question 18 asked faculty "What activities, resources, and/or supports do you think would help you prepare to teach in future online courses?" After categorizing faculty responses, the following are most frequently reported as helpful in their future online courses:

- o 41% (55 out of 133) cited support and training provided by KCeL and/or some type of certification.
- o 14% (19 out of 133) cited the use of zoom.
- o 14% (19 out of 133) cited Blackboard support.

Question 19 asked "What were three challenges you experienced this semester?" After categorizing faculty responses, the following are most frequently reported challenges:

- o 33% (55 out of 167) cited contacting students.
- o 32% (53 out of 167) cited maintaining student engagement.
- o 31% (52 out of 167) cited faculty time spent on: a) adapting course material to online format; b) managing the online course; and/or c) professional development.

Q20 asked "If we remain online for the Fall 2020 semester, how might you modify your course?" After categorizing faculty responses, the following are the most frequently reported comments:

- o 51% (74 out of 144) would adjust course design.
- o 29% (42 out of 144) would teach with more tech.
- o 22% (32 out of 144) would increase student engagement.
- o 21% (30 out of 144) would use more Blackboard tools.

Discussion

The quantitative and qualitative survey responses show that, although less than 40% of faculty previously taught an online or hybrid course and had felt that they were unprepared when the college shifted to ERI in Spring 2020, by the end of that same semester 98% of the faculty felt better prepared or confident that they can adapt to future online teaching. A significant majority of faculty reported that KCeL trainings or related discussions with colleagues were helpful during the shift to ERI. In the qualitative analysis, the main change that faculty reported for the future is adjustments to their course design and the most frequently cited support to help them prepare for the future online courses was training and support from KCeL and other professional development.

While most faculty relied on emails to communicate with students, those who had taught an online or hybrid course relied more heavily on Discussion Forums and Virtual Videos to create an instructor presence and reported a greater preference to teach asynchronously compared to faculty without prior experience. Overall, the majority of respondents seem to value some blend of synchronous and asynchronous learning. While there were differences in confidence, preference in teaching mode, and Blackboard tools used based on prior online experience, it would be interesting to observe faculty's experience and decisions in Fall 2020 when the online experience gap has decreased significantly.

Student Survey Report

Introduction

Purpose

During the summer of 2020, the Data Faculty Interest Group (FIG) with support from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, and therefore with institutional commitment, designed, implemented, and analyzed the results of a student survey. Singular in purpose, this survey measured the Spring 2020 Emergency Remote Instruction (ERI) student experiences. ERI is differentiated from the traditional and optional online model practiced before Spring 2020 as it was an unexpected situation leaving neither students nor faculty with preparatory pedagogical time or choice. This section of the FIG report reflects the analysis of the student survey. The FIG also designed and implemented a complementary survey for faculty.

Applicability

The results of the student survey may provide useful information on the extent to which students were prepared and satisfied with ERI, pedagogical challenges in multiple areas, and technology preferences, among other variables. Additionally, the results can help provide insights and considerations for online learning in the future. Even when students self-select and enroll in online courses, there are inherent challenges we could extract from the survey results to understand how best to help students succeed.

As we approach the Fall 2020 semester, which will be administered largely online, the analysis that follows is an effort to understand the experiences of students and faculty in Spring 2020 so that all members of the college community can more reasonably and expeditiously meet student needs moving forward.

The Student Survey

Sample

The survey was sent in mid-June by e-mail and text message to all students who enrolled in at least one Spring 2020 course. A total of 867 students responded, although not all responded to every question. This high level of participation is indicative of the clear interest students had in communicating their experiences with ERI. Among respondents, 70% identified as non-white; and over 54% were under 26 which is fairly representative of KCC's student body. Liberal Arts and STEM were equally represented. However, over 75% identified as female, which is an over-representation, since the general student body is about 55% female.

Analysis of Quantitative Data

The most general takeaway from the survey is that those students who had experience with online classes and technology, and had access to technology were also the ones who reported

having had a more positive experience in Spring 2020. However, overall, students reported that Spring 2020 was a challenge. More than half (57%) of respondents found the shift to ERI "hard" or "very hard" while 43% found it "easy" or "very easy." The qualitative responses show a more complex experience during the transition as shown in this example: "*switching to online this semester wasn't easy but also not hard, I actually enjoyed it. Professors made sure to reach out at all times, doing work on your own time ensures you take the time to grasp material, etc.*" While most students felt comfortable with the technologies implemented to address the lockdown, a large majority (70%) also reported that they missed the social communication with their classmates and professors. The qualitative responses show that many students wished that professors used Zoom and similar synchronous video tools more frequently for all-round communication and contact. This concern might be ameliorated since CUNY has purchased a university-wide Enterprise Zoom license.

A disaggregation of the survey results by race/ethnicity, gender, and age, reveals several inequities in the general findings. Specifically, traditional college-age students and Hispanic women reported having had a particularly difficult time adapting to the online environment. The survey results show that experience with fully online courses had a positive impact on students' Spring 2020 experiences. Those groups who had taken online courses prior to Spring 2020, were also those groups who reported having had an easier time adapting to the shift to online delivery of instruction. Only 31% of students 20 years and younger reported to have taken a fully online course before Spring 2020, compared to 37% of students 45 years and older. Younger students (below 20) were also much less likely (36.4%) to find the shift "easy" or "very easy" than students aged 45 or older (49.1%). *Exposure* to the online environment as measured by experience with hybrid (not fully online) courses seems to not have had a significant effect: While 46% of students 20 years and younger reported to have taken an online or hybrid course before Spring 2020, 47% of students 45 years and older took an online or hybrid course. This suggests that interaction with fellow classmates and instructors may be an important factor influencing students' experiences in Spring 2020.

A sentiment analysis was applied using Python's Textblob library to the narrative comments offered by respondents. Sentiment analysis formulates an algorithm that assigns "positive" and "negative" scores to words and phrases used in narrative comments. A perfect score of 1 designates perfect positivity, 0 designates neutrality, and a perfect score of -1 designates perfect negativity in the narrative comments. Overall, the sentiment analysis showed that students were generally positive about their experiences in Spring 2020 independent of other variables. However, a sentiment analysis of the answers given by students between 18 and 20 years old showed that they were not as positive about their experiences (0.1563 on a scale of -1 to 1) as compared to the entire group (0.1602, on the same scale).

Only 22% of Hispanic women reported having taken an online course prior to Spring 2020, compared to 34% of all respondents. Similarly, only 31% of Hispanic women found the shift to remote delivery "easy" or "very easy," compared to 43% of all respondents. Conversely, 51% of respondents (45 or older) found the shift "easy" or "very easy" while 52% of white women and 54% of Asian women found the transition easy. Both Hispanic women and men reported

having a more difficult time with technology such as Blackboard Collaborate and Webex than other students. Interestingly, younger students and Hispanic males -- two of the groups who struggled the most with the transition -- were also the most likely to report not using KCC email. 61% of Hispanic women found Zoom to be easy to use, while older students did not.

White and Asian women reported having had the easiest time transitioning to remote delivery of instruction and services. These are also the groups that were most likely to have taken an online class. Older students and black male students preferred the more traditional synchronous model of remote instruction. These students were also the most likely to report missing the social interaction with their fellow students and professors ("*I miss [my] classmates*"). More specifically, 80% of Black male students reported missing social interaction compared to overall 75%. Older students, Hispanic women, and Asian men and women preferred the more flexible asynchronous model ("*doing work on your own time ensures you take the time to grasp [the] material.*").

Analysis of Qualitative Data

The responses to open-ended questions reflected that students understood the situation and expressed frustration rather than anger, as evidenced by frequent usage of expressions such as "professors *could have*" or "*should have*" (italics added by author) taught differently. No student used curse words, threats, or aggressive language. One student explicitly expressed that "*the situation was beyond the control of professors,*" a sentiment repeated or in some way implied in the responses of many others. Students understood that persistence depended on a rapid adjustment to distance learning and that any previous online experience was an advantage.

Three major pedagogical themes emerged from the qualitative responses, although the themes were not universal and did not negate disparate sentiments. The majority of comments fell into three dominant themes. One was the wish that professors could have and should have shown more <u>leniency</u>, including late assignment submissions without penalty. Students felt that this unique semester warranted more latitude as stated by the following quotes: "*Professors could have been more flexible with deadlines so that assignments could still be accessible to students even if the deadline passed,*" "*my professor could have been more lenient with the amount of work he gave us to do online,*" "*professors should have given more time to complete assignments since we had other classes.*"

A second theme reflected <u>minimal personal contact</u>. Some students were disappointed that professors did not apply the personal touch and would have appreciated a show of investment in their learning and academic progress as expressed in the following quotes: "*professors could have stayed more in touch with us and sent us more emails,*" "*she should have been more interactive and engaging to help make the understanding easier,*" "*he should have been more available, and actually responded to communication attempts.*"

Though students reported that their professors responded well to the shifts presented to them in Spring 2020, a third theme focused on the need for <u>higher technological proficiency</u> for some faculty members. Some students felt more technologically savvy than their professors as manifested by: *"every professor should use the live collaborate in blackboard, but not every professor knows how to use it," "he should have used Zoom right away instead of Blackboard," "professors did not fully utilize features of blackboard (homework, course content submissions, etc.) and should have utilized those resources."* Despite this, a significant fourth theme was sympathy for faculty in light of the extra work needed to sustain an ERI class: *"All of my professors did their best and improved along the way. I think my professor did an amazing job with having to switch over so suddenly."*

The first two themes were critical. Although students had pedagogical and technological challenges, a concomitant or perhaps an even greater need was for academic allowances and emotional support. This affective dimension seemed to reflect an over-arching need to recapture, as much as possible, a personal connection with professors for validation. Students would have appreciated more reassurance, even from a distance, that professors were interested in them and their success.

Discussion

The quantitative and qualitative survey responses reflect that many students had difficulty adjusting to the unexpected Spring 2020 situation, but most developed technology competencies to persist. This is a positive finding, but disaggregation was concomitant with emerging data supporting inherent inequity. Younger, traditional college-aged students, and students of color, particularly Hispanic students, had more difficulty adjusting to ERI than other students. Students who had less experience with online classes before Spring 2020 also had a more difficult time. Those who preferred the online model, older students and women, adapted to the change more effectively. They seemed to prefer flexible options over the traditional face-to-face models.

As previously referenced, most Fall 2020 classes will be online. ERI was an unexpected mandate, but the flexibility it offers was attractive to many students, thereby rendering a serendipitous outcome. However, others struggled throughout the semester and inequity was evident by survey responses. As we move towards Fall 2020 and subsequent semesters, KCC will be more aware of inequities and appropriately offer flexibility and support to validate the needs of each individual student.

Conclusions

Both the faculty and student surveys show that experience with online learning prior to Spring 2020 largely shaped how well the Kingsborough community adapted to ERI. Faculty members who had taught online and/or hybrid classes prior to Spring 2020 had an easier time accessing resources and adapting to the more flexible components of ERI such as asynchronous delivery of instruction. Students with prior experience with online classes also reported a higher level of comfort with ERI in Spring 2020. Exposure only to hybrid courses did not seem to have the strong effect of prior exposure to online courses. Despite these differences based on prior exposure to online learning, students and faculty reported an overall positive experience this past semester. Even those who had a difficult time adjusting reported that their computer skills improved or that they felt much more comfortable with the idea of staying largely online in future semesters. This is truly indicative of the level of commitment and hard work faculty embarked on to ensure that the student experience was as positive as possible given the circumstances. Both faculty and students also reported that further support to facilitate professional development as well as opportunities to improve communication would be instrumental in making the Fall 2020 online experience even more positive.

As we approach a Fall 2020 semester that will most likely be online, it will be interesting to re-administer a similar survey to gauge increasing levels of comfort with online learning. A key component to focus on as data are collected in Fall 2020 is the inequities that emerged from the Spring 2020 survey: Hispanic women and traditional-age students had a more difficult time adapting to ERI than other demographic groups. The overall demographic profile of respondents also highlighted some of these inequities. While the profile of faculty respondents largely reflected the demographic patterns of Kingsborough's body of faculty, male students were heavily under-represented among student respondents. This may reflect an overall lower level of interest in survey-taking by male students, as participation levels by male students in other surveys has been similarly low. It may also be indicative of possible inequities in access to technology or connectivity.