



Withdrawal Survey Qualitative Results: Improvement Recommendations

Spring 2020

Objective

The Student Withdrawal Survey elicits responses from ECC students who withdraw from a course after the add/drop deadline. The survey provides data to help the college address factors that contribute to course withdrawals. It also provides data that can inform strategies for improving course and institutional retention.

COVID-19 Context

The COVID-19 pandemic required all in-person courses to make an immediate transition to distance learning. The Department of Online and Digital Education started working with faculty to transition course to an online format one week prior to the March 19, 2020 Stay-at-Home Order. Given the abrupt need for transitioning to distance learning, many students struggled with adapting to a new learning modality.

Survey Results: Text Responses

The withdrawal survey recorded 1,524 text responses. **Text analysis revealed three key instructional themes: online instruction, resources for course success, and available learning space.**

Institutional Research and Planning recommends that the campus engage in the actions described below to address the themes discovered after completing text analysis of survey results.

As a general recommendation, **the college should consider developing and disseminating an action plan for maximizing the ability of students to successfully complete online courses.** Action items provided below should be used as a guide for developing this plan for distance learning during Fall 2020 to support improvement in course retention and success in subsequent terms.

Themes and Recommendations

Theme 1: Online Instruction

Text analysis reported that students were dissatisfied with online instruction (the overall experience). They referred to limited opportunities to engage with instructors and other students in learning dialogues, and requested increased/expanded assignment workload.

Recommendation:

- Formalize an expectation of quality and structure for all online courses offered at ECC, including all online instructional tools suggested by the College and/or used by faculty.
 - Inform students about course technology requirements (hardware and software) and provide methods for obtaining required technology (campus supported or privately supported).

- Formalize an expectation that video tools such as YouTube are used to promote *dialogue around content*, in addition to the *presentation of content*.
- Conduct observational assessments on student engagement during online course meetings. These assessments may serve as evidence to document Distance Education quality assurance (ref. ECC's accrediting agency ACCJC, Distance Learning Evaluation Guide).
- Support faculty members with the preparation of additional options for learning course material (visual, audio, tactile learning methods, etc.) to support students with learning disabilities (currently being worked on by the Department of Online and Digital Education).

Theme 2: Resources for Course Success

Text analysis reported that students did not have technology resources (required course software), ability to access different instruction platforms used by instructors, nor institutional support for troubleshooting difficulties of online instruction (class engagement and learning).

Recommendation:

- Provide faculty and students with strategies for successfully engaging in online learning through user-friendly and accessible formats (toolkits, guides, infographics, etc.), and related to these specific topics:
 - **For Supporting Faculty**
 - Faculty-student communication
 - **For Supporting Students**
 - Student to student communication
 - Time management
 - Course engagement strategies
 - Provide students with a preparation course for online instruction.
- Provide technical support to students with limited backgrounds in utilizing e-learning tools: computer, wifi, and software (currently being worked on by the Department of Online and Digital Education).
- Include information in course schedules about existing support for students with learning disabilities.

Theme 3: Available Learning Space

Text analysis reported that students had a difficult time identifying dedicated learning spaces within their home. Students were balancing supporting their children in online learning and sharing workspace with a spouse/partner/or roommate. They reported not having workspace at their homes that is comparable with campus learning spaces.

Recommendation:

- Provide counseling that specifically supports online course completion (engagement strategies).
- Offer guidance to students on how online instruction helps them achieve their goals.

If you would like more specific information on the qualitative section of the withdrawal survey, please contact the Institutional Research & Planning Office.