Collin County Community College District
APPLICATION FOR SABBATICAL LEAVE

Instructions
Please complete this application by responding to all items. Attach requested documentation (in the order requested) and secure the appropriate signatures prior to submitting the application to the chair of the Sabbatical Committee. Please submit the original and 10 copies.

Name Ann Cervantez

Title Professor, Information Systems Division Business, Information, & Engineering Technology

Have you ever been granted a sabbatical? No If yes: Date:

Please provide a brief description of your previous sabbatical project:

Sabbatical Leave Period Being Requested

Dates: Beginning Date Aug 2009 Ending Date Dec 2009

Length: [X] One semester [ ] Two semesters [ ] Other

Applicant’s Agreement

ABSTRACT

Please give a summary description of the project and its significance in a language that can be readily understood by persons in areas of expertise other than your own. PLEASE DO NOT EXCEED SPACE PROVIDED BELOW.

The purpose of my sabbatical leave will be to do research on the application of mobile learning (i.e. mobile/cell phones, screen phones, smart phones, Instant Messaging, viewing prerecorded MP3 files, PDA usage, iPOD usage, etc.) in distance learning to improve student retention. I want to identify and measure students’ attitudes and perceptions towards the effectiveness of mobile learning in distance learning. The advances of technology are now challenging the concept of traditional distance learning and it is no longer necessary for learners to learn in isolation. I want to examine specific remedies via mobile technology to improve student retention by providing proactive and more robust student support.

My plan is to 1) Conduct research on students’ attitudes and perceptions towards the effectiveness of mobile learning by distributing a survey/questionnaire to students enrolled in distance learning courses; 2) Analyze responses to each of the indicators on effectiveness of mobile learning as measured on a Likert scale of 1 to 5; 3) Apply a model to the data such as Rogers’ (1995) model of innovation diffusion and/or Keller’s (1987) Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction (ARCS) Model to describe key factors that have been found to influence student retention in distance learning.

I want to determine curriculum changes that could be used to improve student satisfaction and confidence in distance learning and therefore improve retention. This will impact faculty who teach distance learning courses. I plan on providing information on my findings and the probable impact it could have on the curriculum to the faculty in my department. I could also provide this information to colleagues in the district.

This project will tie in directly with my dissertation I am completing for my Ph. D.
Summary Timetable

PREPARATION

Spring Semester 2009

I plan on setting up my plans for administering my survey in the Spring Semester 2009 as I plan on administering it to 3 main community college districts. I have already talked to many contacts at various campuses.

Summer 2009

I plan on developing my instrument in the Summer 2009.

SABBATICAL

Fall Semester 2009 (Sabbatical)

I plan on administering the survey in early September. I will analyze the results in mid to late September. I will spend the rest of the semester writing up the methodology and conclusions to my study.

FOLLOW UP

Spring Semester 2010

I plan on reporting my findings.
Annotated Bibliography

Fozdar, B. I., & Kumar, L. S. (2007). Mobile learning and student retention. *International Review and Research in Open and Distance Learning, 8*(2).

This article is a report on research conducted at the authors' university in India. Since student retention in open and distance learning (ODL) is comparatively low to traditional education the main aim of the research is to better understand students' attitudes and perceptions towards the effectiveness of mobile learning. Mobile learning is implementing the use of mobile devices (i.e. mobile phones, personal digital assistants, and other mobile computer devices) in ODL systems. It is the hope of the authors to determine how this technology can be optimally used to improve student retention in their Bachelor of Science programs and to help inform others who may be seeking to improve communication and enrich students' learning experiences in their ODL programs. While information and communication technology-based ODL instruction is slow due to poor infrastructure in underdeveloped countries such as India there has been explosive growth in mobile phone usage. The research was conducted by administering a survey to gather students' feelings on the subject. Results of the survey clearly indicate that offering mobile learning could be one method of improving retention with the biggest advantage of this technology being that it can be used anytime, anywhere. If this is true in an underdeveloped country it is a solid indicator that mobile communication technologies could enhance learning in ODL systems of developed countries.


Critics of distance education (DE) are quick to assert that completion rates are lower in DE than in traditional courses despite sparse and inconclusive research. This article reviews some of the existing research and then describes some of the caveats and complexities in comparing DE and traditional education completion rates. Analysis reveals many problems in comparing the two formats stemming from limitations in the research design itself, differences in student demographics, and inconsistent methods of calculating and reporting completion. Additionally, the author states that if completion rates are used as a criterion for evaluating the effectiveness of courses, they are best done by comparing 'apples to apples' and 'oranges to oranges' instead of 'apples to oranges', especially in the absence of any generally accepted algorithm for comparisons. Finally the author presents best practices for improving completion rates while emphasizing the impact of distant learner characteristics. Some of these are the integration of standardized methods for calculating completion rates, orientation programs, insuring enough faculty and staff are available to provide high levels of interaction with students, and building a sense of community in classes. The author concludes with the thought that the more
important effort may be in shifting the interest in comparisons to the emphasis on identifying and promoting best practices for improving completion rates.


This study compares student learning outcomes and student perceptions of and satisfaction with the learning process between two sections of the same class—a web-based section and a traditional face-to-face (f2f) section. Traditional students who had volunteered for the study were randomly assigned to the two course sections. Both versions of the course were delivered by the same instructor using duplicate syllabi and duplicate assignment requirements in each. Attendance was equated by requiring the web-based section to attend at least two "Live Chat" sessions per week. Group equivalency was established by students completing the Visual, Aural, Read/write Kinesthetic (VARK) a diagnostic instrument designed to determine learning preferences (Fleming & Bonwell, 2002). The frequencies of VARK learning style preferences in each group were compared (using control group frequencies as the expected distribution) to determine whether group differences were statistically significant. Student perceptions of student-teacher interactions as well as course satisfaction were measured by an identical end-of-semester evaluation in each section and a comparison of mean evaluation scores was calculated. This study reveals that the two equivalent groups did not have equal experiences in the area of student perceptions. Because the instructor was the same for both courses, it can be concluded the course delivery may have some effect on the variables examined. Findings indicate student performance on tests was equivalent; however, student final grades were lower in the web-based course due to incomplete assignments. Findings of this study further indicate that because of the random assignment of students to groups students' perceptions and experiences were more indicative of the "average" student as opposed to those students who generally enroll in web-based courses.


This article discusses the nature of open distance education in the age of globalization. It addresses the questions of whether or not to have blended learning (BL) in open and distance learning (ODL) and how it is one among other learning strategies that can maximize learners' learning. It also identifies some pros and cons of BL and how it can
be successfully implemented into ODL. The author sees globalization as a progressive transformation of social structures where open and distance education (ODE) is the type of flexible learning needed. He also describes many different learning strategies from correspondence courses to information and communication technologies (ICT). He then goes on to define BL as a learning strategy that integrates seemingly opposite approaches (i.e. formal and informal learning, face-to-face and online, digital references and group connections, etc.). The author further elaborates on varying categories and degrees of BL and how learners must be able to take advantage of both ends of the spectrum. Some issues and challenges he sees in BL are that educators must know when online learning is appropriate and when it is not, recognize the difference and resulting tension between innovation and production, and that BL is highly context dependent with an infinite number of solutions.


Evidence suggests that the demographics of distance learners are changing. This article describes a study conducted to investigate the nature and magnitude of such changes at a Western Canadian university using enrollment data for a decade. Results indicate that the distance learning population has shifted toward younger students, local residence, and full time course loads that combine distance learning with on-campus courses. Results also suggest the most important factor pushing students towards distance learning is work commitments and the most important attractions relate to control of the time and place of learning. The study does not answer the question as to what has changed to make distance learning more salient today than ten years ago but it does state that economic changes seem likely to be part of the explanation. The findings of this study have obvious and immediate implications for the way distance learning is discharged, particularly with policies and practices related to instructional design, student support services, and the convergence of distance learning and on-campus programs. The assumptions that distant learners are largely part-time adult learners and employment is a barrier to only adult students must be challenged.

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**SUMMARY OF JOURNAL ARTICLES ON DISTANCE LEARNING**

In doing research on distance learning I have found there is a large plethora of studies ranging from comparing it to traditional learning in face-to-face classes, analyzing its different formats of delivery (i.e. blended learning, teleconferencing, telecourses, web-based. etc.), looking at student demographics and motivation, to determining persistence and course completion statistics. When conducting research on this topic it will be necessary to narrow the focus down to a more specific topic. The articles presented in this annotated bibliography give a broad, quick overview of the differences in the two formats of delivery and how they must adapt to societal and resulting student population changes.