Hostos Online Learning Assessment (HOLA) Follow-Up:
Student Perceptions in Two Cohorts

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Student perceptions of online learning are integral to building upon current best practices and also gauging the preparedness of the students for the online learning environment, particularly in an urban, Hispanic-serving community college (Wolfe et al., 2016). Hostos Community College (HCC) was founded 50 years ago as part of the City University of New York (CUNY), and is located in the South Bronx, the poorest congressional district in the country. HCC enrolls approximately 7,200 students, and more than half (5,070) are enrolled full time. Sixty-three percent of students reside in the Bronx, and many come from families who reside below the poverty line. Almost 67 percent of students identify as female, and the vast majority of students (81 percent) are 29 years old or younger, with 47 percent 21 years of age or younger. Students at Hostos are ethnically diverse. Nearly 60 percent identify as Hispanic, 21 percent as Black, and 18 percent as Other/Unknown. Three percent identify as Asian and less than two percent as White. The majority of first-year students are enrolled in developmental or remedial courses (Hostos Community College, Office of the President & Office of Institutional Research and Student

Assessment, 2018). Hostos is categorized under the Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI) program authorized by Title V of the Higher Education Act of 1965 and has received grants as a Hispanic-serving institution under the Department's Office of Postsecondary Education (Minority Institutions, n. d.).

Traditional, face-to-face courses still dominate the schedule at this exceptionally diverse campus; however, all academic departments with one exception offer at least one course in an online format. Since 2012, all faculty are encouraged to use Blackboard to makeup class sessions missed due to weather or the instructor's absence. Online offerings exist in two formats on this campus: asynchronous and hybrid. Asynchronous courses require that at least 80 percent of the instruction and classroom interaction occur online. At least 30 percent of the content must be delivered online in a hybrid course, which also meet face-to-face (Hostos Community College, Office of Educational Technology, 2018c). Blackboard 9.1 is currently the Learning Management System (LMS) that CUNY hosts centrally and is used by Hostos faculty members teaching online content.

Asynchronous and/or hybrid sections of existing courses are created by faculty who participate in the college's Online-Teaching Initiative, through which instructors receive guidance on creating the online shell for their course and earn certification to teach online. Once the shell is completed, the EdTech Leadership Council (ETLC) reviews the online component for the course to determine if it meets ETLC's requirements as a hybrid (Hostos Community College, Office of Educational Technology, 2018b) or asynchronous (Hostos Community College, Office of Educational Technology, 2018a) course. Faculty interested in creating a hybrid or asynchronous

section of a course must first have their academic chair's permission and the assurance that, once approved by the EdTech panel, the course will be included on the schedule for the next semester.

Online course enrollment has been steadily increasing since Hostos began offering asynchronous and hybrid courses; over the past five years the number of courses with some online aspect have tripled. In Fall 2015 there were 88 course sections that were taught as either hybrid or asynchronous; similarly, in Fall 2016 there were 72 online course sections. These sections represent about 6 percent of all Hostos courses, with about 2000 students enrolled in these sections. There has been no formal assessment of student perceptions of online learning at Hostos prior to these studies, but all instructors receive the results of the standard course assessment by the Office of Academic Affairs and are able to compare the academic achievement within their online sections with that of their traditional, face-to-face classes.

With online education increasingly becoming readily available in higher education, examining issues like student readiness and online pedagogies has become commonplace in educational institutions. At Hostos, students are strongly urged to complete the "Are You Ready?" e-Learning course to assess if they are ready for this modality of learning directly under the course description. Collins and Halverson (2009) acknowledge that, with educational content steadily transitioning to an online medium, "people will need to develop skills to find the information they are looking for, to evaluate its usefulness and quality, and to synthesize the information they glean from the different sources they locate;" these skills qualify as *critical thinking* skills.

In 2016, the U.S. Department of Education's *National Educational Technology Plan* stated that the combination of these skills, along with complex problem-solving, collaboration, and

multimedia communication, in addition to traditional content knowledge, is the key to creating engaging and relevant online courses (Wolfe, et al., 2016).

The 2018 plan reinforces the recommendation that instructors teaching online courses must intentional plan meaningful online activities to engage students as mere access to technology does not ensure a quality learning experience.

According to the Babson Survey Research Group, public institutions experienced a decrease of almost 8 percent between 2012-2016 in the number of students who only took traditional, face-to-face courses (Seaman, Allen, & Seaman, 2018). Simultaneously, across all colleges and universities, the number of learners enrolled in at least one distance-learning course rose to 31.6 percent of all enrolled students. Two of these researchers had previously reported that over 70 percent of academic leaders claimed that online learning was a critical part of the long-term strategic plan for their institutions (Allen & Seaman, 2016).

Hsu, Ching, Mathews, and Carr-Chellman described online education as a "win-win" (2009) for both students and academic programs based on the quickly increasing population of those taking courses in an online environment. They cite the easy access of content resources through the Internet, cost effectiveness based on eliminating the need for transportation to and from class, and on freedom from time constraints as reasons for this growth.

Help-seeking strategies and time management are considered successful learning techniques in online environments (Hu & Gramling, 2009). Saltarelli and Roseth described "meeting belongingness prior to starting an online cooperative learning activity" may lead to

increased academic success and motivation (2014). Establishing a sense of belonging within an online course can also counteract negative effects of the more impersonal means of communication often utilized online.

Online education is entrenched as a critical component of higher education, in part because it can be instrumental in addressing the needs of students who may be inadequately prepared for college (Mitchell, 2017). It is the instructor's responsibility to set the stage for engagement and inclusion in the online setting (2017).

As Hostos Community College works toward academic excellence in conjunction with current higher educational trends, attention to content, delivery, and student perceptions needs to be carefully examined, with comparisons to the standards in online learning (Wolfe, et al., 2016). The responsibility for providing professional development to instructors of online courses falls to the ETLC and the Center for Teaching and Learning.

Online Courses: Advantages and Disadvantages

Advantages to online courses include "lower total cost, more comfortable learning environment, convenience and flexibility, greater interaction and greater ability to concentrate, career advancement, continue in your profession, avoid commuting, improve your technical skills and transfer of credits," according to the Open Education Database (OEDB) (2018). Additional benefits include providing individualized instruction (*Seattle PI*, 2018), reviewing content as often as necessary needed, and supporting advance planning (American Academy, 2018). Jaggers & Bailey (2010) emphasized that supporters of online learning also maintain that technology-

enhanced instruction can lead to superior learning outcomes, in addition to greater access for distance learners (as cited in Wolfe et al., 2016, para. 8).

The report from OEDB (2018) also discussed the possibility of increased comfort and participation in an online environment for shy students who may feel overwhelmed among their peers. Learning alone through distance learning may help focus easily distracted students by allowing them to control their surrounding environment.

While HCC has taken many steps to ensure that the quality of classes is leveraged by the aforementioned advantages, it should be noted that (like face-to-face courses) there are some real-world disadvantages to online education (Wolfe et al., 2018). These disadvantages include "lack of accreditation and low quality, little or no face-to-face interaction, more work, intense requirement for self-discipline and even more intense requirement for self-direction" (Hickey, 2014).

Quality in online learning is key to student and faculty success. The quality of online courses has always been a concern, especially among those who are not in favor of online teaching and learning. A study by Jaggars and Bailey (2010) suggested that some online faculty do not develop curricula specifically for online learning, instead they just load content into their online learning management system. Hostos has been working diligently to reduce these problems and strongly emphasize the benefits of online teaching and learning.

Why Learn Online?

Jaggars (2014) found that students favored less interruptions from distracting classmates and non-global, "to-the-point" information (compared with prolonged lecture). She identified reasons students express interest in taking online courses. These included not finding available seats or sections of specific courses, the ability to tailor a personal schedule to make the most of limited time, being able to meld a class schedule with that of employment and travel, setting the pace for instruction and assignments, and believing that they could self-teach certain topics. Jaggars also emphasized that community-college administrators should examine the reasons why students prefer certain online courses and yet seek to take others in the traditional face-to-face setting in order to make appropriate decisions in format and scheduling of courses.

Researchers are encouraged "to isolate the key elements and mechanisms of effective non-instructional supports, and to identify the instructional behaviors and activities that encourage student engagement, motivation, retention, and learning," including the reasons students on a specific campus enroll in and complete online courses (Jaggars, 2011). Determining these motivations would allow administrators "to scale online learning offerings appropriately" (Jaggars, 2014). The Hostos Online Learning Assessment (HOLA) Task Force is committed to advancing the offerings and standards for online courses through continued research into student perceptions so as to best meet the need of the diverse student body at HCC.

Research Design

The current study examined the continuity of student perceptions of online learning at Hostos Community College from the Fall 2015 cohort to the Fall 2016 cohort. This study is not longitudinal; we are assessing aggregate data in both of these semesters. As noted in the earlier

article, this study began in the Office of Education Technology (EdTech), whose members sought faculty who taught online to take part in developing the research hypotheses, designing the survey, getting approval through the CUNY IRB process, recruiting participants, analyzing and disseminating the data. The authors of this specific study included EdTech staff and Professors in the Education Department and the Department of Behavioral and Social Sciences (the entire task force is representative of the offices already mentioned and faculty from the Business Department and the Library).

This study focused on three hypotheses: (1) students would indicate that their experiences in online courses is comparable to their experiences in face-to-face courses (in terms of workload, level of course difficulty, and engagement with both the instructor and other students in the course); (2) students would access the course from multiple devices and multiple locations, and (3) students would indicate ease in navigating their hybrid and asynchronous courses. The HOLA Task Force first received approval from CUNY's Human Research Protection Program (HRPP, formerly known as Internal Review Board [IRB]) in September of 2015.

In order to identify student participants, we worked with the faculty teaching online courses (both asynchronous and hybrid, or blended, courses) through the EdTech office. First, our Blackboard administrator identified all Hostos faculty members teaching online in the semester indicated. This list was then sent to the EdTech Director, who is one of the Principal Investigators (PI) for this study. He then sent a link to all faculty teaching online, this link was the informed consent and 23-question HOLA survey. Faculty who received the link were asked to share this link with their students on Blackboard 9.1. There were no incentives offered or provided for

student participation. Some of the study's PIs were also faculty teaching online, therefore, the survey was anonymous, and these PIs had no way of knowing which students had participated. We did not want student participation to affect any classroom interactions or create an unconscious bias on the part of the professor. Also, all data were collected electronically, which further lessened the likelihood of faculty identify individual students as no handwriting was involved.

Participating students clicked on the survey link, they then read the informed consent and checked a box which indicated their agreement to participate in the study and took them to the actual survey. Students had the option of leaving the survey at any point without any penalty whatsoever. Student data were provided through a web-based form, with only the PIs having access to this raw data. Data were shared through protected email accounts and via Google Drive during the two-week student survey period; however, after that, all research data were moved from online spaces to a secure server stored at Hostos Community College. Hostos already had in place security protocols to store confidential information for the college. The authors protected participants' confidentiality and anonymity by using only aggregate data for the entire cohort, which meant that no individual or course level data were analyzed. Data were coded to remove any revealing factors of participants. With the many protective practices used by the HOLA Task Force, we are confident that we did all we could to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of the participating students and the integrity of the collected data collected.

These data were collected to address the research hypothesis and other purposes. First, the EdTech office thought it was useful to identify areas to explore for future faculty development for online faculty. This could lead to greater effectiveness in providing online courses. Faculty could thus improve their online pedagogy. Secondly, these data are useful in advocating for resources at

the college. Third, these data could offer information that is need for the EdTech office who coordinates the development of online and hybrid courses.

Results

In Fall 2015, there were 198 students who participated in this survey (which comprised slightly less than 10 percent of individuals registered in online courses). In Fall 2016, 222 students responded to the 18-question survey (see Appendix A), which also represents about 10 percent of all online students. The survey participation rate was low, so we initiated new measures in future semesters to increase it. Participants were enrolled in ten different courses across the content areas: Computer Literacy (MAT 130), Field Experience in Early-Childhood Education (EDU 113), Office Systems and Procedures (OT 104), United States History through the Civil War (HIS 210), Anthropology (ANT 101), Business (BUS 100), Business Communications (BUS 203), Psychology (PSY 101), and Sociology (SOC 101). Nearly 23 percent had no idea they had enrolled in an online course in Fall 2015 and this increased slightly to twenty-five percent in Fall 2016. In both semesters about 5 percent enrolled for the online course as an added section so as to be considered full-time students. Very few students had a mental or physical disability that would prevent them from being on campus for class (three respondents in Fall 2015 and only one respondent in Fall 2016). In terms of previous experience with online learning, in Fall 2015, 42 percent reported that they had taken a hybrid course at Hostos prior to the current semester, this decreased to 32 percent in Fall 2016. About 3.5 percent completed one at another college in Fall 2015, and this increased to 5 percent in Fall 2016. Eighteen percent of participants responded that they had taken an asynchronous course at Hostos in Fall 2015, and this remained

fairly stable with 17 percent reporting they had taken an asynchronous course in Fall 2016. Four percent of respondents in Fall 2015 had completed one at another college and 6 percent reporting this in Fall 2016. The number of student participants acknowledged that this was their first online class rose from 47 percent in Fall 2015 to 51 percent in Fall 2016. These totals may exceed 100 percent because students were allowed to check all responses that applied and may have taken a combination of online courses at Hostos and/or at Hostos and another college.

Hypothesis 1: The online learning experience is comparable to the face-to-face learning experience. Students in both semesters (Fall 2015 and Fall 2016) agreed that online courses were equally difficult as face-to-face courses with over half of both cohorts stating this, 56 percent in the Fall 2015 and 55 percent in the Fall 2016. There was an increase, from 20 percent to t25 percent, in the number of students who found online courses less difficult than face-to-face courses, from the 2015 to the 2016 cohort. There were less students who found the course more difficult in 2015, from 24 percent in 2015 to 21 percent in 2016.

Additionally, we asked how much time students spent working on an online course compared to a face-to-face course. The number of respondents who stated that they spent the same amount of time in an online course as in a face-to-face course decreased from 60 to 55 percent, from Fall 2015 to Fall 2016. There was an increase in the number who reported spending more time working in an online course, from 32 percent in Fall 2015 to 38 percent in Fall 2016. About 8 percent of student respondents in both semesters reported spending less time on their online course.

Hypothesis 2: Students will access online courses from multiple devices and multiple locations. Participants in both cohorts overwhelmingly (ranging from 88 to 90 percent) believe

they have adequate access to technology to meet the needs of the course. The same pattern emerged in both cohorts: A personal laptop was the most frequently selected choice, followed by cell phones, devices at Hostos, a personal desktop, and tablets. Students accessed their courses from home, work, the Hostos library, the Hostos computer lab, another site at school, or alternate site off campus (see Table 1).

Hypothesis 2 states that students participating in online courses at Hostos will access the content using different devices and from different locations. Online learning offers convenience and versatility that face-to face courses cannot by eliminating the need to physically go to a classroom. Results from both cohorts are very similar and they support the hypothesis by showing a wide range of devices used by students and the different places from where students accessed the courses they participated in.

Online learning allows students to use a wide range of devices to interact with class content, their faculty members and other students. At Hostos Community College, in Fall 2015, 36 percent responded they used their desktop computers and in Fall 2016 37 percent used them. Sixty-eight percent said they used their personal laptop in both cohorts. Forty-one percent used Hostos devices in Fall 2015, and this dropped to 38 percent in Fall 2016. Only 12 percent responded that they used someone else's devices and four percent in both cohorts respectively. Cell phones are a very popular device, and they are gaining more support in the online arena. Both cohorts show that 41 percent of respondents are using them. Tablets became really popular and they have a great potential for higher education. Thus, in both cohorts about one-fourth of respondents reported using them. As shown above, the results in both cohorts demonstrate that students used different

devices to access course content such as desktop, laptop computers, tablets, cell phones, and Hostos devices. This confirms the first part of Hypothesis 2 that posits that students will use a wide range of different devices to access content in online classes.

The second component of Hypothesis 2 is that students will access their courses from multiple locations (see Table 2). Online learning allows students to study and interact with course materials from wherever they are as long as they have Internet connection. Access from home continues to be the favorite place for students. A large majority of respondents across both cohorts indicated that they were at home while working on the course while there was a decrease in the number of respondents reported they were at work when they accessed the course (from 32 percent in Fall 2015 to 27 percent in Fall 2016). There was also a decrease in the number of students who said that they used the Hostos Library to interact with the content from 32 percent in Fall 2015 to 27 percent in Fall 2016). Furthermore, about 30 percent of student respondents in both semesters stated they used the Hostos Open Lab. The percentage of survey participants who expressed that they used other Hostos locations to interact with the online course increased from 13 percent in in Fall 2015 to 18 percent in Fall 2016. The number of respondents that accessed the course from other locations than Hostos, home, or work remained stable across both semesters. In sum, these results demonstrate that online students at Hostos used multiple locations to access their courses.

Table 1. Comparison of Devices Used to Access Online Course

I typically access this course on:	Fall 2015	Fall 2016
My personal desktop computer	35.9%	36.9%

My personal laptop	67.7%	67.6%
Someone else's device	11.8%	3.6%
Cell phones	41%	41.4%
Tablets	24.1%	25.7%
Other	3.6%	2.7%

Table 2. Comparison of Where Students Accessed Online Course From

I typically access this course from:	Fall 2015	Fall 2016
Home	92.9%	94.1%
Work	32.3%	26.6%
Hostos Library	31.8%	26.6%
Hostos Open Lab	30.3%	29.3%
Other locations at Hostos	12.6%	17.6%
Other locations off-campus	12.1%	11.3%

Hypothesis 3: **Students will indicate ease in navigating online courses.** In both semesters a majority of students indicated they could easily find specific course tools. For most tools listed we saw an increase from Fall 2015 to Fall 2016 in the percentage of students who could easily access these course materials (see Table 3). Students indicated they were able to locate what they need for class. such as assignments (92 percent of students in Fall 2015, 94 percent in Fall 2016), the syllabus (86 percent of students in Fall 2015, 83 percent in Fall 2016), their grades (85 percent of students in Fall 2015, 88 percent in Fall 2016), the exams (80 percent of students in Fall 2015, 85 percent in Fall 2016), online discussions (73 percent of students in Fall 2015, 80 percent in Fall 2016), and contact information for the instructor (66 percent of students in Fall 2015, 71 percent in Fall 2016). In Fall 2015, 55 percent of participants responded that it was easy to find policies, and this increased to 66 percent in Fall 2016. Forty-five percent of respondents in Fall 2015 indicated that it was easy to locate additional tools for the course; this percentage increased to 49 percent in Fall 2016. When asked whether they were able to find feedback about their progress in the course, 88 percent either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement in Fall 2015, and 86 percent either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement in Fall 2016 showing great consistency in the ability of our students to find their course feedback.

Table 3. Comparison of Ease of Finding Online Course Materials

	Fall 2015		Fall 2016	
The syllabus	169	86.2%	184	82.9%
Assignments	181	92.3%	209	94.1%

Exams	156	79.6%	188	84.7%
Policies	108	55.1%	147	66.2%
Discussion Boards	144	73.5%	178	80.2%
My grades	167	85.2%	196	88.3%
Contact info for the professor	130	66.3%	157	70.7%
Additional tools required for the course	89	45.4%	109	49.1%
Other	7	3.6%	10	4.5%

Discussion

The primary objective of the study was to ascertain if student perceptions of their online learning experiences at Hostos Community College were stable across two cohorts. The HOLA Task Force designed a survey aimed at measuring students' perceptions of their online learning experience. The data collected in this study was also used to identify areas to provide professional development for faculty developing hybrid and asynchronous courses and to make recommendations to college administrators about needed resources. The data collected across both semesters does show great consistency of student perceptions.

H1: The majority of students across both cohorts continue to perceive online courses to be equally difficult as face-to-face courses contradicting other literature that demonstrates that students perceive online courses to be easier (Jaggars, 2014). This may be explained by our student population, which is disproportionately remedial in comparison to other community colleges and comprised of many English Language Learners. The high number of English Language Learners and students who speak a language other than English at home may result in fewer students perceiving any course as "less difficult" than others.

H2: Data from both cohorts shows that students access their online course from multiple devices and in multiple locations in the same pattern. Given the tremendous capabilities of Smartphones and laptops, it makes sense that the vast majority of respondents believed they had adequate access to technology; however, our survey did not specifically address issues of Internet connectivity nor did it address which devices students have access to during quizzes and exams. More specific questions such as "Did you ever lose your Internet connection during a quiz or exam?" would be helpful. Members of the HOLA Task Force have indicated based on their experience teaching online that students report losing their Internet signal during a quiz or exam and many others use their cell phone for lengthy written responses on Journals, Blogs, Wikis, and Discussion Forums and also on quizzes and exams. Although students may have access to many devices they may lack the appropriate device and/or stable Internet connection to succeed on a particular task.

With respect to students accessing the course from multiple devices and multiple locations, the majority of students in both semesters accessed their online classes via their personal laptop from home. The HOLA Task Force will seek more specific data in the future about which devices are being used for what tasks and in which places are they most likely to complete coursework.

This will illuminate some additional questions regarding Internet access and the limitations of cellular devices with specific Blackboard features such as quizzes and exams.

H3: These data across both semesters suggest that students continue to perceive that they generally navigate the Blackboard course site fairly well. Students across both cohorts indicated they were able to locate their online course assignments, syllabus, grades, exams, online discussions, and contact information for the instructor. Both cohorts also indicated ease in finding course policies, additional tools for the course, and feedback about their progress in the course.

The issue of students not realizing that they had enrolled in online (asynchronous or hybrid) course is still a problem in spite of the efforts of the Office of Educational Technology to increase student awareness during advisement and registration. There needs to be greater communication with the Registrar's Office in order to develop more effective methods to clearly label courses as online so that students clearly recognize that they are registering for an online course.

Our findings agree with Jaggars' (2014) findings in terms of similar reasons why students choose to take an online course such as flexibility, convenience, and efficiency. Forty-five percent of Hostos students across both semesters' students cited distance, flexibility, or time as a reason for taking an online course. Jaggars' qualitative analysis suggests that students choose online courses based on the following three factors: "(1) whether the subject area was well suited to the online context, (2) whether the course was easy or difficult, and (3) whether the course was 'interesting' and/or 'important'" (p. 13). Regarding course difficulty, Jaggars identifies that "easy" seemed to symbolize humanities-type courses as opposed to math and lab courses. The majority of survey respondents across both cohorts were enrolled in "humanities-type courses," which

might be indicative of Hostos' unique student demographics, their orientation to higher education, linguistic difficulties, and/or college readiness, but few students registered for the course because they thought it would be easy (this number dropped from 8 percent in Fall 2015 to 5 percent in Fall 2016). However, in contrast to our survey results, Jaggars found that most students preferred to take online courses because they thought the course would be easy for them.

The majority of the students who responded to the survey in both semesters either agreed or strongly agreed that they felt actively and enthusiastically engaged with the course and the professor. This suggests that there was equal or even greater interaction between students and faculty in the online learning environment than in the face-to-face classroom. The survey did not distinguish one-way communication (such as Blackboard Announcements, which are sent to students' linked email accounts, written feedback on assignments, discussions, quizzes, etc.) from two-way communication (such as emails between instructors and students, office hours, online chats, Skype, Blackboard Collaborate, text messages, and/or phone calls).

Limitations

Based on our participants' responses we have determined that we need to ask more specific questions to help us better understand student perceptions of online learning. Additional areas to explore include the professors' experience and whether they had any orientation, whether students had prior experience with their online faculty, and were the students in our sample high achievers which would skew the results. In order to understand the specific findings such as those related to course difficulty, Internet access and ease of use, reasons for enrolling in an online course, and engagement, additional questions were added to the subsequent surveys. Demographic information that does not necessarily compromise anonymity will be gathered (specifically, age,

employment status, and college major); some responses may show that the respondent has had more exposure to technology in general. We did not attempt to ascertain the learning styles of the respondents. A determinant of a student's attitudes may be whether the online-learning environment supports their learning style. We can expect that negative attitudes may be a function of an online learning environment that does not support their learning styles. Cognitive issues such as motivation and task persistence can affect students' engagement and comfort with online learning. It is important for the online learner to have their needs met in the online learning environment, even locating online tools is easier when they are presented in a perceptual modality that corresponds to the learner's preference (Dunn, 2003).

The participant response rate of 10 percent across both cohorts is still a limitation and our sample includes students from the classes being taught by HOLA Task Force members, because all of the PIs teaching online courses in both semesters made the link available to their students. This in turn may skew the results since faculty on the HOLA Task Force are some of the more experienced faculty teaching online and also serve as mentors in the Asynchronous and Hybrid Initiative. Although a link to the survey was sent to all faculty teaching online courses, the number of courses represented in the survey mirrors the courses taught by HOLA Task Force faculty. The HOLA Task Force is now taking a more personal approach to encourage other faculty to make the link available to students in their online classes.

Conclusion

Research conducted in and about Hispanic-serving institutions, and specifically community colleges, is lacking. More general studies of online learning are about a decade old,

so this type of research is just beginning. The descriptive studies described here showcase the attitudes of students in a Hispanic-serving institution; our results show that our respondents' perceptions of online learning are not like those of students taking online courses nationwide and provides important information regarding student perceptions of online learning in a Hispanic-serving institution.

A very important finding across both cohorts is that student respondents at Hostos register for online courses for different reasons than participants in national surveys. Few register for an online course because they think it will be easier than a face-to-face course. Community-college students face challenges that students in other colleges and universities may not face. These challenges also form a rationale for taking an online course. About one-fourth of our student respondents registered for the online course because of work or family commitments. Our HOLA Task Force recognizes the need to make students more aware that they are registering for an online course. Data from these surveys may be used to support changes in online registration and student advisement practices. The Educational Technology Department has developed an online readiness course and has made this available in every course shell. This should be very helpful for students with no prior online learning experience and those who were unaware they were registering for an online course.

We are continuing our efforts to gauge student perceptions of online learning with an improved survey instrument and better outreach efforts to faculty who are not part of the HOLA task force. Our research across these cohorts shows incredible consistency in student perceptions about their online courses. We are considering whether it would be useful to expand or studies to include focus groups to gather qualitative data about student motivations for registering for an

online course, online course design and communication. Our survey results are also being used to
reshape professional development activities for current online faculty. Additional these results can
help revise our current training model for new online faculty. The HOLA Task Force will continue
reaching out to the registration department in order to help make registering for an online course
apparent. Dissemination of our survey results is important as it expands our knowledge about
online teaching and learning at Hispanic-serving institutions.

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Appendix A

Hostos Online Learning Assessment Survey

To help plan future online courses and make improvements in this one, we would appreciate your feedback and suggestions. We want to learn from your experiences in and thoughts about this online course. Please take a few minutes and tell us what you think. Your responses will be kept anonymous. Thanks in advance for completing this survey.

1. **Did you realize you were signing up for a partially or fully online course when you registered? ***

   o   Yes

   o   No

2. **Which course are you in? ***

   o   PSY 101

   o   EDU 113

   o   MAT 130

   o   BUS 203

   o   OT 104

   o   BUS 100

   o   HIS 210

   o   SOC 101

   o   ANT 101

   o   Other:

3. **Tell us about your previous experience with online learning: ***

   Please check all that apply.

- o I've taken no other online courses.

- o I've taken hybrid courses at Hostos.

- o I've taken hybrid courses at another institution.

- o I've taken fully online courses at Hostos.

- o I've taken fully online courses at another institution.

4. **I registered for this course because: ***

- o Not Applicable- I didn't realize I was signing up for a partially or fully online course.

- o I live too far to attend an on-campus course.

- o I have a mental or physical disability that limits my ability to attend an on-campus course.

- o I was unable to find an on-campus section that would fit my class schedule.

- o All of the on-campus sections were full.

- o I needed extra units to be a full-time student.

- o I thought it would be easier than a face to face course.

- o I have work or family commitments that would not allow me to attend an on-campus course.

- o There were no completely on-campus sections of this course.

- o Other:

5. **How would you compare this online course to an on-campus course in the level of coursework difficulty? ***

- o This online course is more difficult.

- o This online course is the same level of difficulty.

o This online course is less difficult.

6. **How would you compare this online to an on-campus course in terms of the time you spent working on the course? ***

   o This online course is more work.

   o This online course is the same amount of work.

   o This online course is less work.

7. **Do you feel like you have adequate access to technology in order to fully participate in this online course? ***

   o Yes

   o No

8. **I typically access this course on: ***

   Please check all that apply.

   o My personal desktop computer

   o My personal laptop

   o Hostos devices

   o Someone else's device

   o Cell phones

   o Tablets

   o Other:

9. **I typically access this course from: ***

   Please check all that apply.

   o Home

   o Work

- o Hostos Library

- o Hostos Open Lab

- o Other locations at Hostos

- o Other locations off-campus

10. On the Blackboard site, it is easy for me to find: *

Please check all that apply.

- o The syllabus

- o Assignments

- o Exams

- o Policies

- o Discussion Boards

- o My grades

- o Contact info for the professor

- o Additional tools required for the course

- o Other:

11. Compared to an in-person class, I feel as actively and enthusiastically engaged with the course and with the professor. *

- o Strongly Agree

- o Agree

- o Disagree

- o Strongly Disagree

- o Not Applicable

12. I communicate with the instructor using the following methods: *

Please check all that apply.

o   Email

o   In-person office hours

o   Skype or other online video chat software

o   Text messages

o   Phone

o   Other:

13. I know how to find feedback about my progress in the course. *

o   Strongly Agree

o   Agree

o   Disagree

o   Strongly Disagree

o   Not Applicable

14. I interact with my peers in Blackboard in a timely manner (Discussions, Chat, Email, Comments). *

o   Excellent

o   Above Average

o   Average

o   Below Average

o   Not Applicable

15. I interact with my Instructor in Blackboard in a timely manner (Discussions, Chat, Email, Comments). *

- o Excellent

- o Above Average

- o Average

- o Below Average

- o Not Applicable

16. What are the most useful features of the online component of this course? *

17. Do you have any suggestions for improving the online component of this course? *

18. What other questions should we have included to get a better idea of the learning experience of this course? *