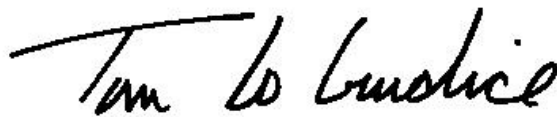


IMPROVING ONLINE COURSE DESIGN THROUGH AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENT  
PERCEPTIONS OF THE COURSE MANAGEMENT, UNIVERSAL COURSE DESIGN,  
COMMUNICATIONS, INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN, AND CONTENT

Approved:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom L. Busch". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the beginning.

Date: November 12, 2015

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A Seminar Paper

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University of Wisconsin-Platteville

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In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirement for the Degree

Masters of Science

in

Education

Adult Education

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by

Mary Jo Black

2015

ii.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Beyond the classroom lies the heart of my support; my family. To my children, Andy and Lindsay, thank you for being there, supporting me, believing in me, and encouraging me to pursue my education and meet my potential; and to my parents who raised me to believe that with hard work and dedication, anything is possible; thank you for always believing in me. I could have never done this without all of you!

## **Abstract**

IMPROVING ONLINE COURSE DESIGN THROUGH AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF THE COURSE MANAGEMENT, UNIVERSAL COURSE DESIGN, COMMUNICATIONS, INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN, AND CONTENT

By: Mary Jo Black

Under the Supervision of Tom LoGuidice, Ph.D.

This research study was conducted to understand how student perceptions of course design, the course management system, universal course design, communications, instructional design, and content can improve future online course design.

A 36 question survey was developed by the researcher and sent to the current students of IT Security Awareness Online at Madison College using Survey Monkey as the Survey Tool. The survey and confirmed consent form was sent to the students as a link in the announcement section of the course by the instructor. The students were asked to submit a confirmed consent form prior to completing the survey. Data was collected and analyzed to determine current perception of online learning and the relationship between perception and online course design.

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## **Chapter I Introduction**

. There has been an increasing demand for Online Learning Solutions since 1902 when the first known Correspondence Course was known to have been created. The changes in course delivery since then have been remarkable.

A leader in innovation research, Innosight Institute, predicts that in less than 10 years, 50 percent of the nation's secondary courses will be taken over the Internet. (Education Daily, 2012) Furthermore, in 2009, nearly 12 million U.S. postsecondary students took some or all of their classes online. This number is expected to jump to more than 22 million in the next five years. (Meyer, 2009)

Online learning has become entrenched in the education scene, although there are significant challenges to teaching online and an instructor needs to be fully aware of these challenges. (Layzell, 2010) In order to be prepared to teach Online, Instructors are learning new technologies, redesigning their courses, and changing their instructional strategies.

Online learning helps provide access to courses that otherwise might not have been available; allows working adults to participate in postsecondary education and lifelong learning opportunities. In addition, online learning can provide academic skills that will promote employability and career readiness (Butcher, 2009).

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to analyze student's perceptions are of the effectiveness of online courses in community college settings. Course flexibility, course management, navigation, universal design, communication, online instructional design, and content are evaluated to make recommendations for online course design best practices

## **Statement of the Problem**

How does an understanding of student perceptions and preferences in an online course environment improve online course design?

## **Definition of Terms**

Online: connected to, served by, or available through a system and especially a computer or telecommunications system (as the Internet) <an *online* database>; also: done while connected to such a system <*online* shopping> (Meriam-Webster).

Correspondence Course: a class in which students receive lessons and assignments in the mail or by e-mail and then return completed assignments in order to receive a grade (Meriam-Webster).

## **Delimitations of Research**

The research was limited to the Information Technology Students at Madison College taking the Security Awareness Online Course for the fall 2015 term. A total of 44 students were asked to participate in a survey and 14 students responded to the Survey.

## **Method of Approach**

The references used for the review of literature were collected over a period of 90 days using the resources of the Karmann Library at the University of Wisconsin – Platteville and Wyllie Library at the University of Wisconsin – Parkside. The several search engines provided by EBSCOHOST were used. The search engines Education Research Complete and Educational Administration Abstracts were especially useful. The key search terms were “Online Learning”, “Online Learning in the Technical College”, “Student Retention in Online Courses”, and “Designing Online Courses that Promote Student Retention”.

The School of Online and Accelerated Learning surveyed the 7504 students who have taken an online class at Madison College since the Summer Term of 2014. A total of 935 students responded. The data from that work is reported in the review of literature.

An additional follow-up survey of a small group of students was planned using an action research approach. The purpose of the survey was to further examine student perceptions of the course management, universal course design, communications, instructional design, and content.

The data collected by the School of Online and additional information collected in the questionnaire presented to 44 students in IT Security Awareness Online, Fall 2015, at Madison Area Technical College was used as an analysis of student perceptions and preferences regarding components and practices used in online course design.

## **Chapter II Review of Literature and College Study Findings**

The growth in distance learning courses has resulted in researchers examining the qualities of effective delivery. The examination includes not only the rate of growth but also qualities of pedagogy including universal design, pedagogical features of major course management systems, and student's attitudes, perceptions and preferences of online assessment. A brief review of the literature follows as well as a summary of an extensive Madison College study that was done to examine student perceptions of College distance learning offerings.

The number of postsecondary institutions offering distance learning courses grew from 34% in 1997 (Wirt et al., 2004) to 66% in 2006-2007 (Parsad & Lewis, 2008). A report by the Sloan Consortium describes the steady growth in online course enrollments in the past seven years. According to the report, between 2008 and 2009, there was a 21% growth for enrollments in online courses, which far exceeds the overall growth of the number of students in higher education at less than 2% (Allen & Seaman, 2010). With more students choosing distance education options, enrollments in online courses will increasingly reflect the diversity of postsecondary populations, including students with disabilities (Rao, 2013).

### **Pedagogical Features of Major Course Management Systems**

The pedagogical features of major course management systems include collaboration and communication, content creation and delivery, administrative tools, learning tools, and assessment tools (Online Learning, 2005). The five categories that address the major components of an educational event as designed and developed for distance education include: learning goals and content presentation, interactions, assessment and measurement, instructional media and

tools, and learner support systems and services (Ragan, 1999).

### **Student's attitudes, perceptions and preferences of online assessment.**

It is important to consider the potential impact of student's attitudes, perceptions and preferences of formative online assessment; although the focus of the present paper is on how factors may impact upon improved course design. Because performance contributes directly in determining the overall course result obtained, Instructors have been generally more reluctant to adopt online methods for administering summative assessments (Boyle & Hutchison, 2009)

In preference studies reported in the JCRL Forum, Sandberg reports that students prefer paper to online text at this point in literacy history. There are a number of problems when reading online, as seen by Le Bigot and Rouet's comprehension study, the usability of hypertext may be related to how well online text is organized. If online text with hypertext is difficult to navigate and understand, students will prefer paper, which they overwhelmingly do now. Some of this may be attributed to writers of college e-textbooks and articles. Students have not reached a point where they understand how to manipulate hypertext so that it is more easily comprehended and studied (Le Bigot, 2007).

A study has been done on the relationship between level of experience with online learning and preference for types of learning activities by researchers at the Community College Research Center (CCRC) housed at Columbia University. The Columbia Community College Researchers interviewed community college students who were just beginning to take online Courses and discovered that they preferred the structure and interaction of on campus courses and found online courses to be very challenging (CCRC, 2013a, 2013b).

### **Social presence in online learning.**

Social presence reported has an effect on computer mediated communication (CMC) in online courses. Researchers specify that cognitive presence can play an important role in online learning, discuss the concept of cognitive presence by breaking it into three categories, each of which is related to the online learning experience: The first category represents inconsistency that is may be experienced, which causes trepidation. The next category encompasses the process of obtaining knowledge to clarify understanding. The final category consists of the manner in which ideas are collected, synthesized, and incorporated into the learning process (Garrison, 2000).

Researchers Garrison and Cleveland-Innes performed a study to assess how the implementation of cognitive presence affects student and instructor interaction in online courses. Results indicated that mere online interaction that excludes guidance is insufficient for productive and positive online instruction and that both instruction and learning should be qualitatively examined. Further, the type of asynchronous communication should be examined so that reflection and collaboration are aspects that are included when considering online learning (Garrison, 2005).

Social presence should include well thought out activities that discuss what is being learned and the topics relevant to a student's learning. In all cases an effort should be made to include student's thoughts and ideas in discussions, blogs, and journals creating a reflective thought process in the student.

### **Impact of online assessment practices on student performance.**

There is an extensive body of literature concerned with the relationship between computer attitudes (i.e., computer anxiety, computer engagement, etc.) and performance. The studies reported focused on student use of laboratory based computerized tasks, rather than online tasks that involve greater flexibility in time and location of completion, which is of primary interest here, their findings are nevertheless some indication of what might be expected in the an environment online course assessments that were not proctored (Brosnan, 1998a), i.e. a test taken without the observation of an instructor or assigned proctor. One suggested explanation for this finding is that motivation and academic ability become more important variables in the online course assessment (Mahar, 1997). There is a need for further evidence relating to the impact of online assessment practices on student performance.

### **Importance of Universal Course Design**

Instructors should consider learning preferences and diverse abilities of students when designing a course. Educational models that stem from universal design provide best practices for Instructors and designers of online courses who seeks to create accessible and learner centered environments. Universal Design or UD is the ides of universal access to pedagogical practices and applying them to the process of teaching and Learning (Rose, Harbour, Johnston, Daley, & Abarbanell, 2006).

Three guiding principles are necessary to comprise a UDL approach (a) providing multiple, flexible methods of presentation that give students various ways to acquire information, (b) providing flexible methods of expression that offer students alternatives for acquiring and

demonstrating their knowledge, and (c) offering options for engagement to help students get and stay interested as they are appropriately challenged (Rose & Gravel, 2010; Rose & Meyer, 2006).

### **Madison College School of Online 2014-2015 Study Findings**

In the literature review, existing learning readiness assessments for online learning are introduced and summarized. Commonalities and differences among various assessment tools are identified, along with the factors that are measured. The differences between factors predicting readiness versus factors predicting retention are then outlined in the discussion. A summary of the literature creates a baseline for the additional research completed in this project.

The School of Online and Accelerated Learning surveyed the 7504 students who took an online class at Madison College between summer 2014 and spring 2015. The goal of the surveys was to better understand online student satisfaction and needs as well as learn more about potential college services and resources that might benefit these students.

#### **Questions related to access.**

Of the 934 student responding, 73.3% of students indicate that they decided to take online classes because it fits with their work schedule better than in person options. In contrast, only 23.8% of students indicate that they decided to take online classes because they prefer the online format. This may indicate that students choose online classes because they need flexibility these courses offer, not necessarily because they prefer the instruction mode.

An impressive 78.9% of the respondents indicated that the flexibility of online classes is essential for them to stay in school or complete their program. Also 73.7% of students indicate they have sufficient online course options within their program of study and 95.3% of students indicated that registration for online courses is convenient at Madison College.

### **Questions related to preparedness.**

A larger number, i.e.780 of the 934 respondents indicated they did take the online orientation in Blackboard prior to registering for an online class at Madison College. And 46% felt the orientation made them feel better prepared for online classes, 14% didn't feel more prepared after taking the orientation, and 40% already felt prepared (or had previously taken an online class).

In addition, 628 of the respondents responded to what, if anything could be added to the orientation to better prepare students for the class format. The four most commonly requested additions, in order:

- A tutorial specifically on how to use Blackboard
- A list of resources on strategies for being successful in online courses
- A tutorial on general strategies for being successful in online courses
- Contact from an advisor with additional student support

### **Questions related to college readiness.**

Based on survey responses, the most important college service was a contact person for students if they have questions (56% indicated very important). Note that some students indicated in comments that this contact person could be their instructor.

The second most important college service was the availability of technical assistance (36% indicated very important).

### **Questions related to online instruction.**

Based on survey responses, the most important characteristic of a successful online experience is online instructor responsiveness (77% indicated very important)

The second most important characteristic of a successful online experience is clear structure/organization of the online classroom (74% indicated very important).

Overall, students place much higher value on things happening *inside* their online classroom compared to general services from the college.

### **Top programs and courses students would like to see offered in the online format.**

The courses that students would like to see online included the following:

- Science courses including the non-lab components of lab science courses
- Math courses at every level
- English and Humanities or Social Science courses
- Human Resource Management
- Graphic Design

### **Summary**

In summary, the pedagogical features of online learning include: a tool for learning, interactions (communication and collaboration), enhanced content and its delivery, measurement, and technical and administrative services. The goals of these features are intended to enhance

interactions between learners and peer learners, learners and content, learners and technology, and learners and instructors (Seok, 2007a, 2007b, 2008).

Students are no longer totally dependent on instructors for learning when in an online learning environment when there is easy access to course content and information resources. For online learning to be successful, instructors as well as students must take on new roles in the teaching-learning relationship. Instructors must be willing to motivate and release control of learning to students (Illinois Online Network, 2007) and students must be able to assume more independence.

## **Chapter III Methods Used for Action Research Project**

### **Subject Selection and Description**

Approximately 44 students in IT Security Awareness Online, the Fall 2015 Term at Madison College, were asked to participate in a survey about their perceptions and preferences in the community college setting regarding course flexibility, course management, navigation, universal design, communication, online instructional design, and content.

### **Instrumentation**

A 36 question survey was developed to specifically collect student perceptions and preferences in the community college setting regarding course flexibility, course management, navigation, universal design, communication, online instructional design, and content.

Questions were written to address the demographic data (age, gender, and number of previous online course taken by the student) of the participants and their preferences in regards to online learning.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

An IRB was submitted by the researcher and signed by the Provost at Madison College. The IRB also included a consent form for students to sign and return prior to completing the survey (see appendix).

A course announcement was sent out to 44 students in IT Security Awareness Online at Madison College, in the fall 2015 Term, asking them to participate in a Student Survey. The students were directed to complete a confirmed consent form and they were then directed to Survey Monkey Online Evaluation Tool to take the survey.

The survey was comprised of 36 questions which include demographics as well as preference questions. 15 students of the 44 students (34%) completed the survey.

### **Data Analysis**

The data gathered from the survey was analyzed using the percentage of students strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree and the correlation between course design, the guiding principles of universal course design, online assessment, social presence in the online environment, and pedagogical features in the course management system.

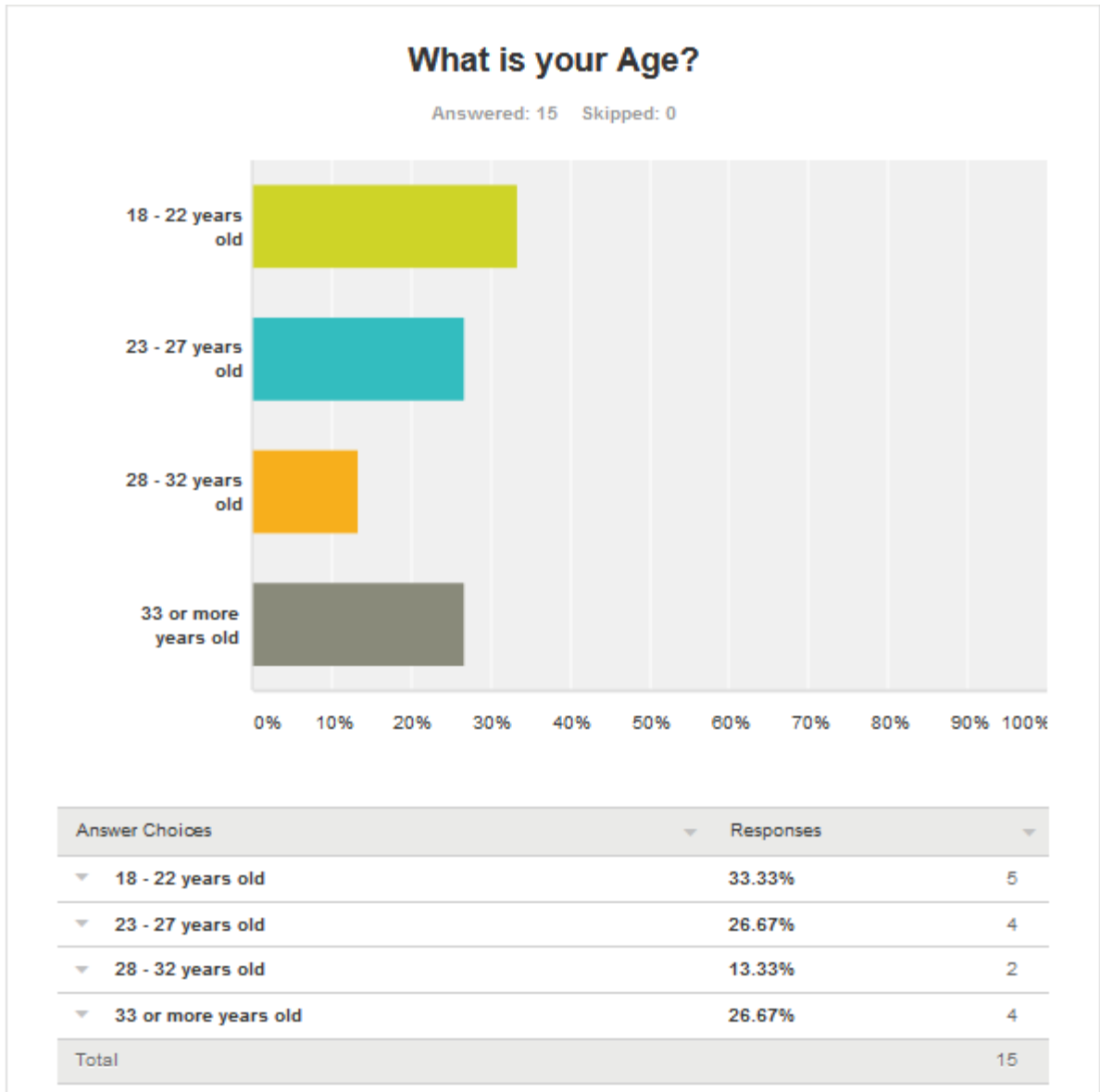
### **Limitations**

Limitations of this study included a limited number of students in the Online Security Awareness Course and that the students were primarily pursuing an information technology degree. Another limitation not originally apparent, was that 13 of the 15 survey participants (87%) were male.

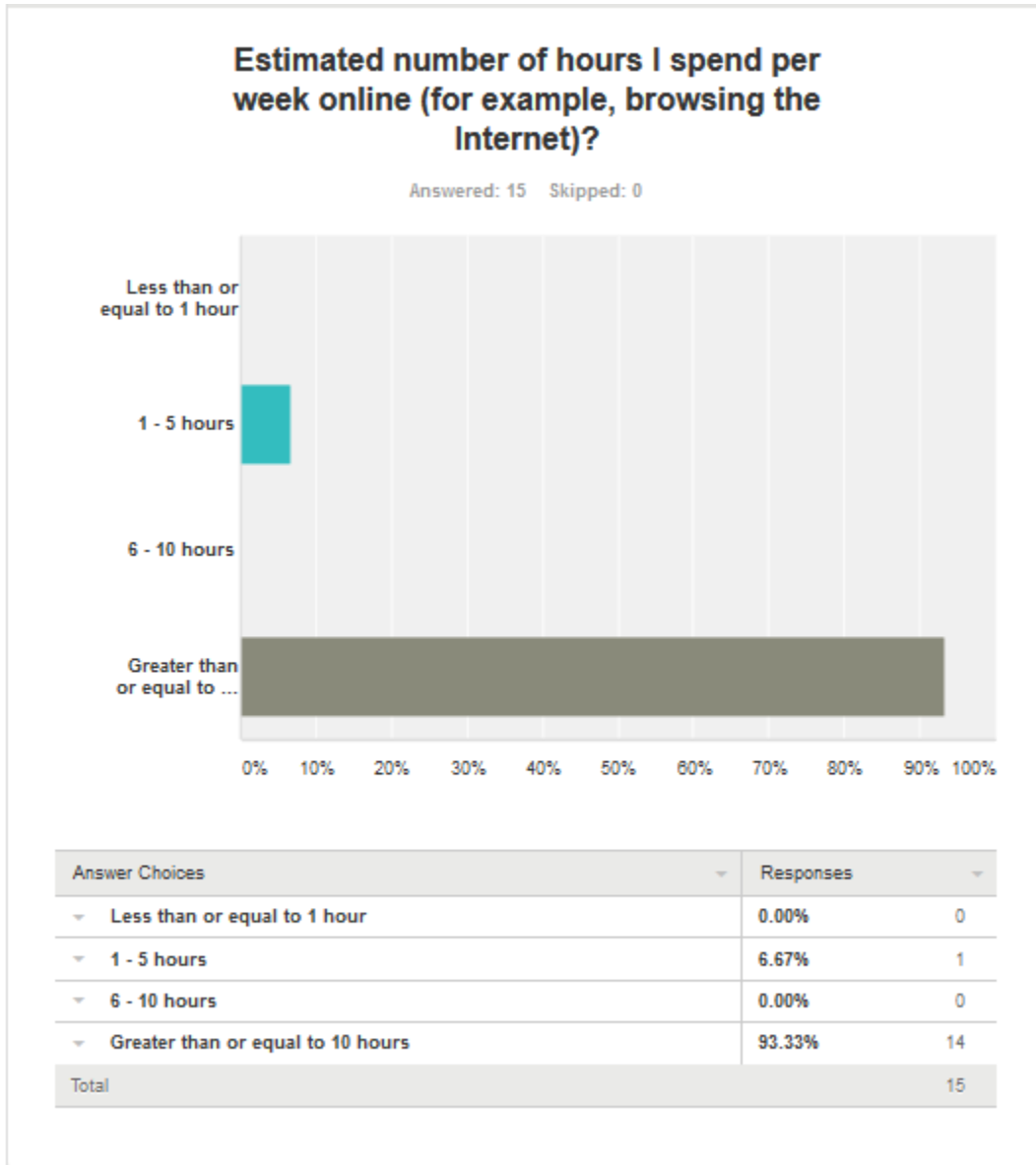
## Chapter IV Results

The purpose of studying a group of students who have taken an online course was to determine preferences in the community college setting regarding course flexibility, course management, navigation, universal design, communication, online instructional design, and content. Cautions are necessary in terms of generalizing to the population of all on-line students. Action research is a useful tool for gaining insight into a particular setting and is informative for teaching. However, the data only applies to the specific situation. Each generalization made here suggests further research exploration in a controlled design investigation. (**Note.** A decision was made to leave the results in the Survey Monkey style and to not adjust the tables to APA format).

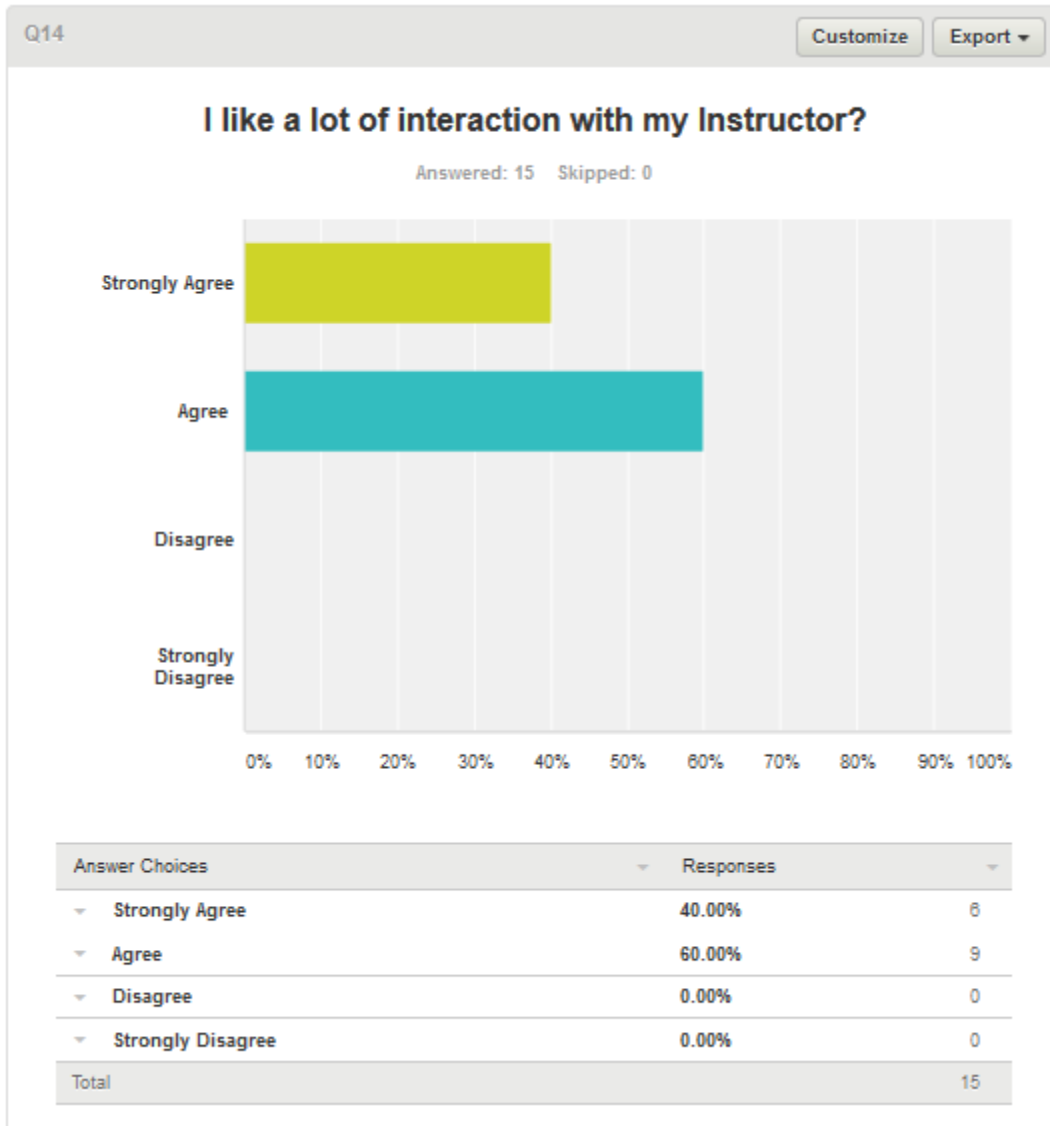
Of the 15 students that took the survey, 87% are male, 100% speak English as a first language, and 60% have had 2 or more years of post-secondary education. Interestingly, there is a fairly even distribution of ages between 18 years of age and 33 years or more years old. This demonstrates the wide-range of students that attend classes at Madison College. The two largest groups participating in this survey are 18-22 years of age, and are in most cases just getting out of High School. The second largest group are the students are 33 or more years of age, and these students usually come to Madison College for additional certifications or education in their field of employment. Madison College also attracts student 33 or more years of age that attend to acquire skills in a different area of the workforce.



A large number of the participants in the survey, 43%, have taken three or more online classes. 47% of the participants indicated that they spent 10 or more hours a week using the computer for education purposes. Additionally, 93% of survey participants spend more than 10 hours a week online doing other things (i.e., browsing the internet). These statistics indicate to me that the students that have taken this survey have a great deal of technological understanding.

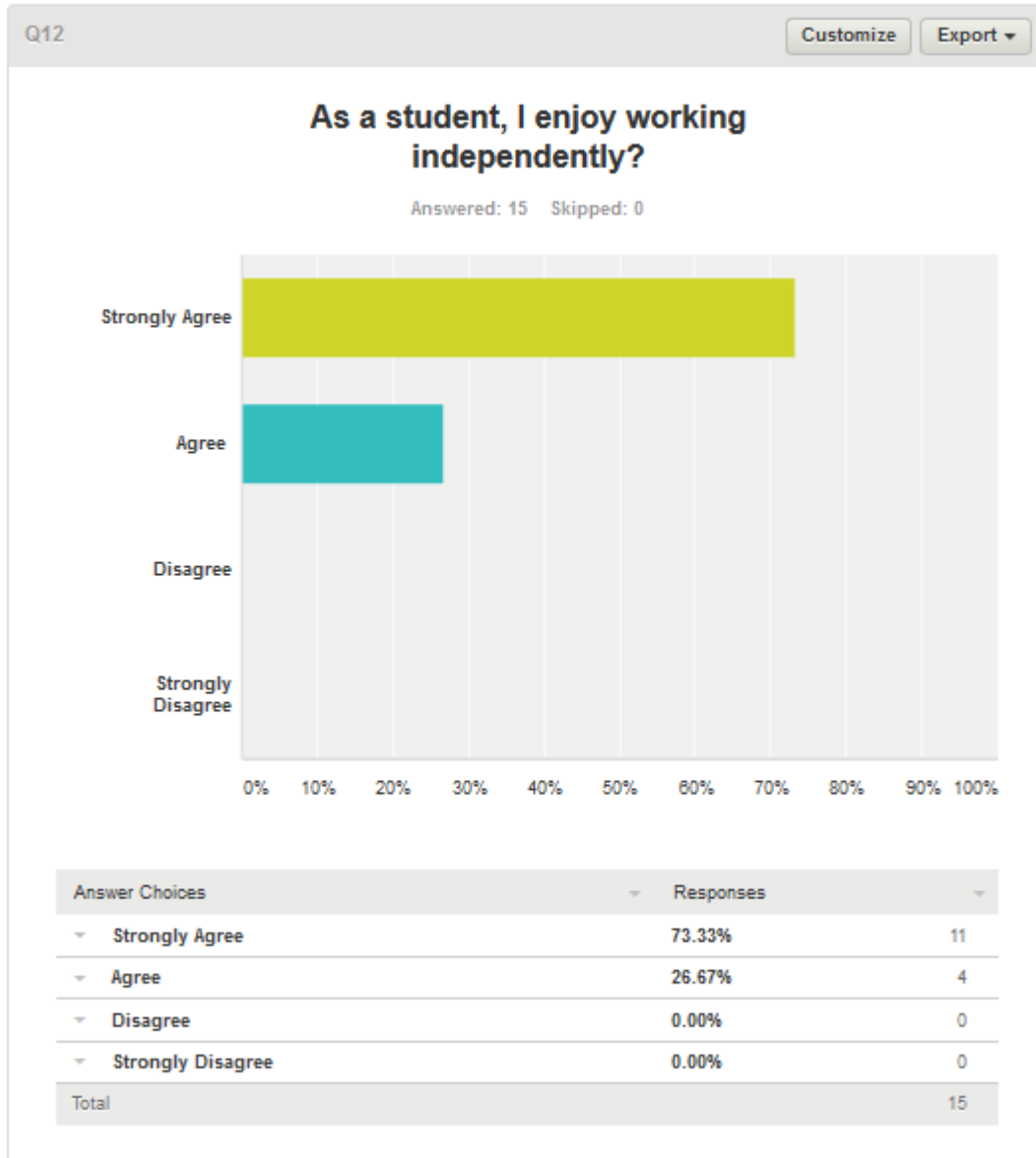


In addition to being comfortable with technology, the students surveyed indicated that they are willing to actively communicate with their classmates electronically (60% strongly agree). 66% of the students survey also agree that they would enjoy working with other students in groups. The survey participants (100%), either strongly agree or agree that they like a lot of interaction with their Instructor.



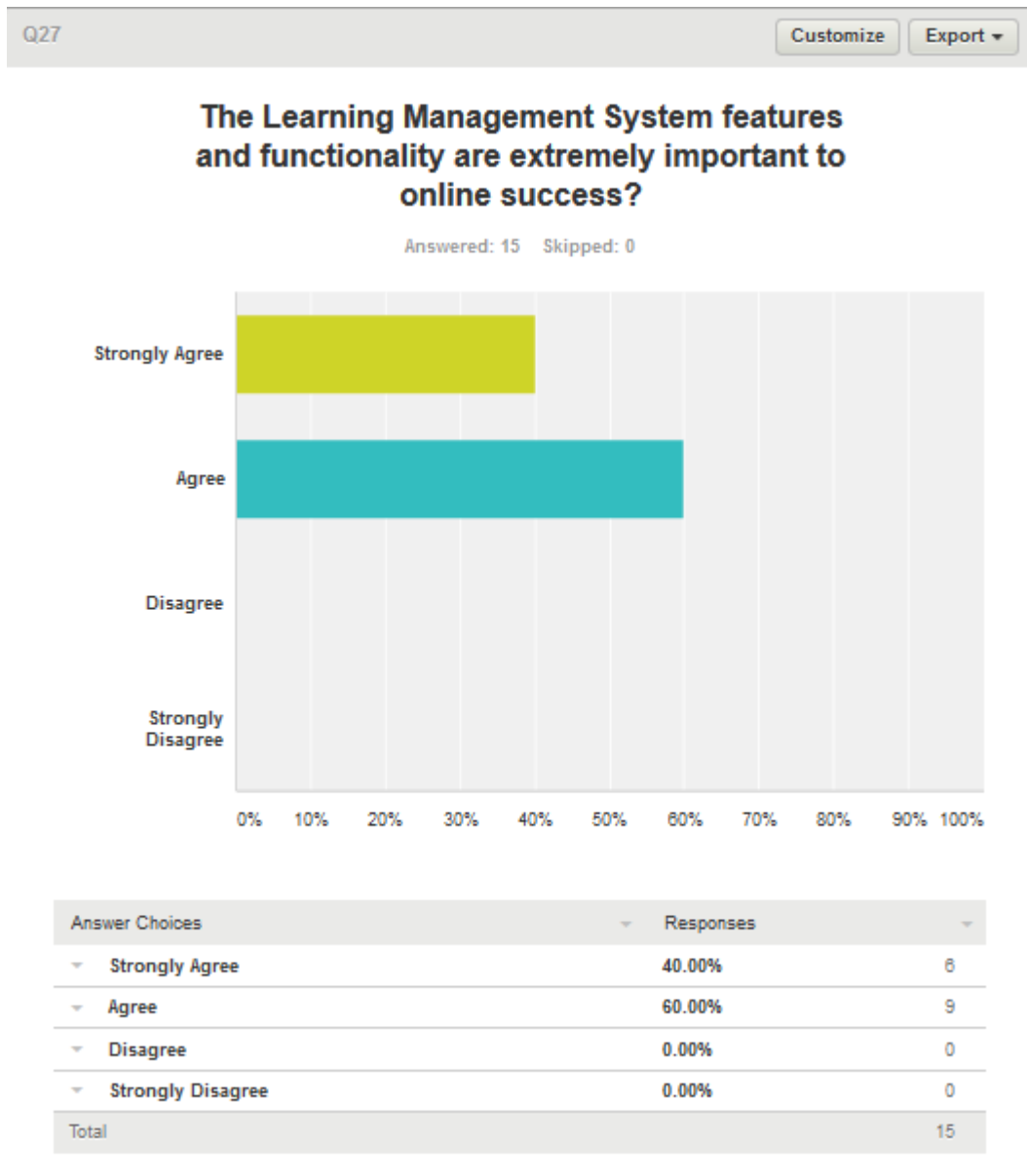
The survey indicated that a large number of the students, 67%, agreed that they were self-deciplined and found it easy to set aside reading and homework time. 67% also agreed that they wer able to manage their study time effectively and complete assignments on time. Overall, 73% of the surveyed students strongly agreed that they enjoy working independently. Of the surveyed population, 100% of the students either stronly agreed or agreed that the online course contained oppotunities for interactive learning (discussions, jounals, blogs, groups, etc.) This

indicated this student population is extremely independent and motivated, but also enjoy meaningful participation in activities with their Instructor and Classmates.

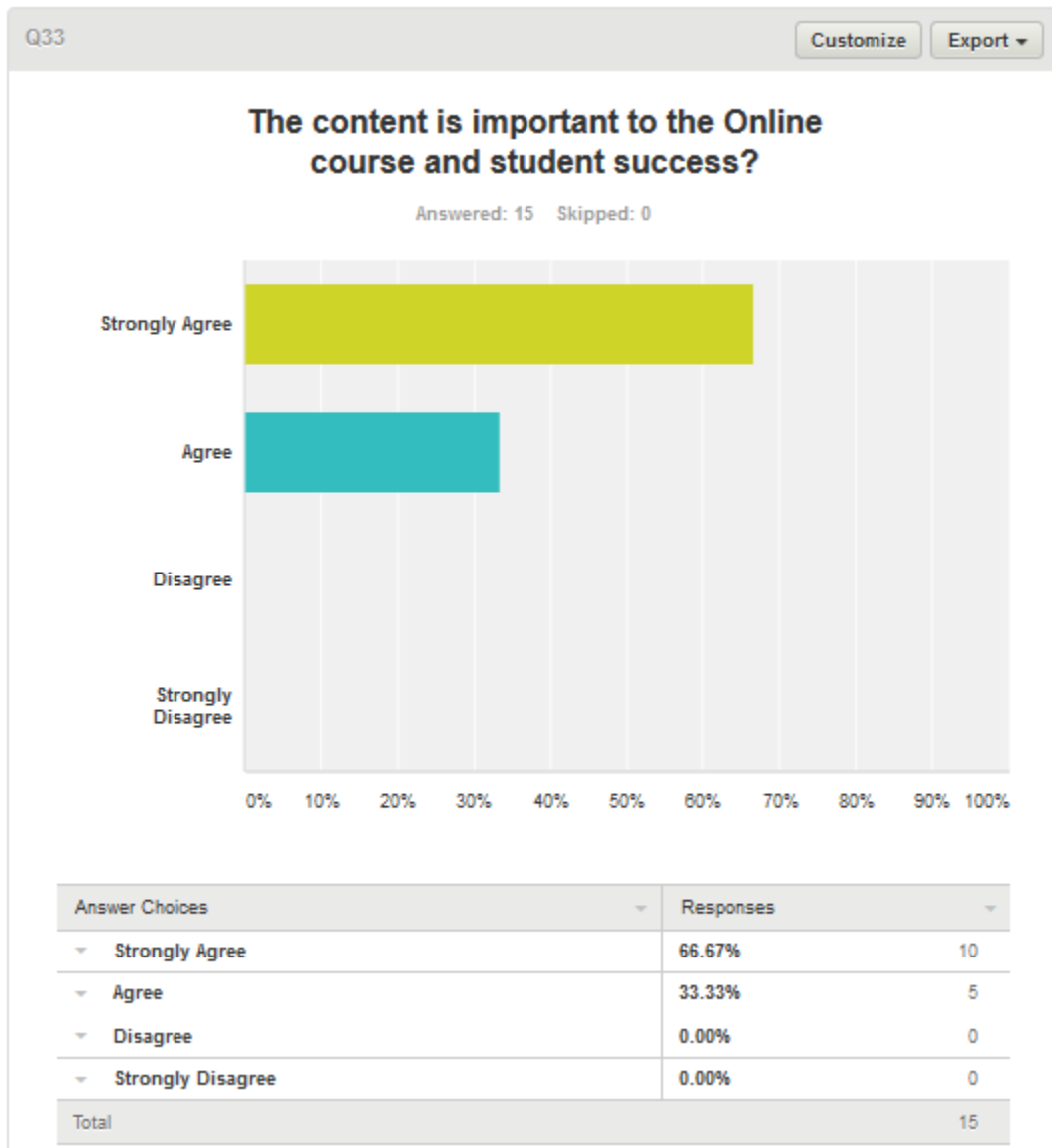


The surveyed students, 80% strongly agreed or agreed, that how the Instructor set up the navigation in the course is very important. 93% of the survey participants also strongly agreed or agreed that the flow of the online course was extremely important and 93% of students also found the Learning Management System easy to use and had a positive experience. Additionally

100% of the survey participant either strongly agreed or agreed that the features and functionality of the Course Management System were extremely important to online success. I believe that the student experience has a high degree of correlation based on course design, course content flow, and functionality and features of the course management system.

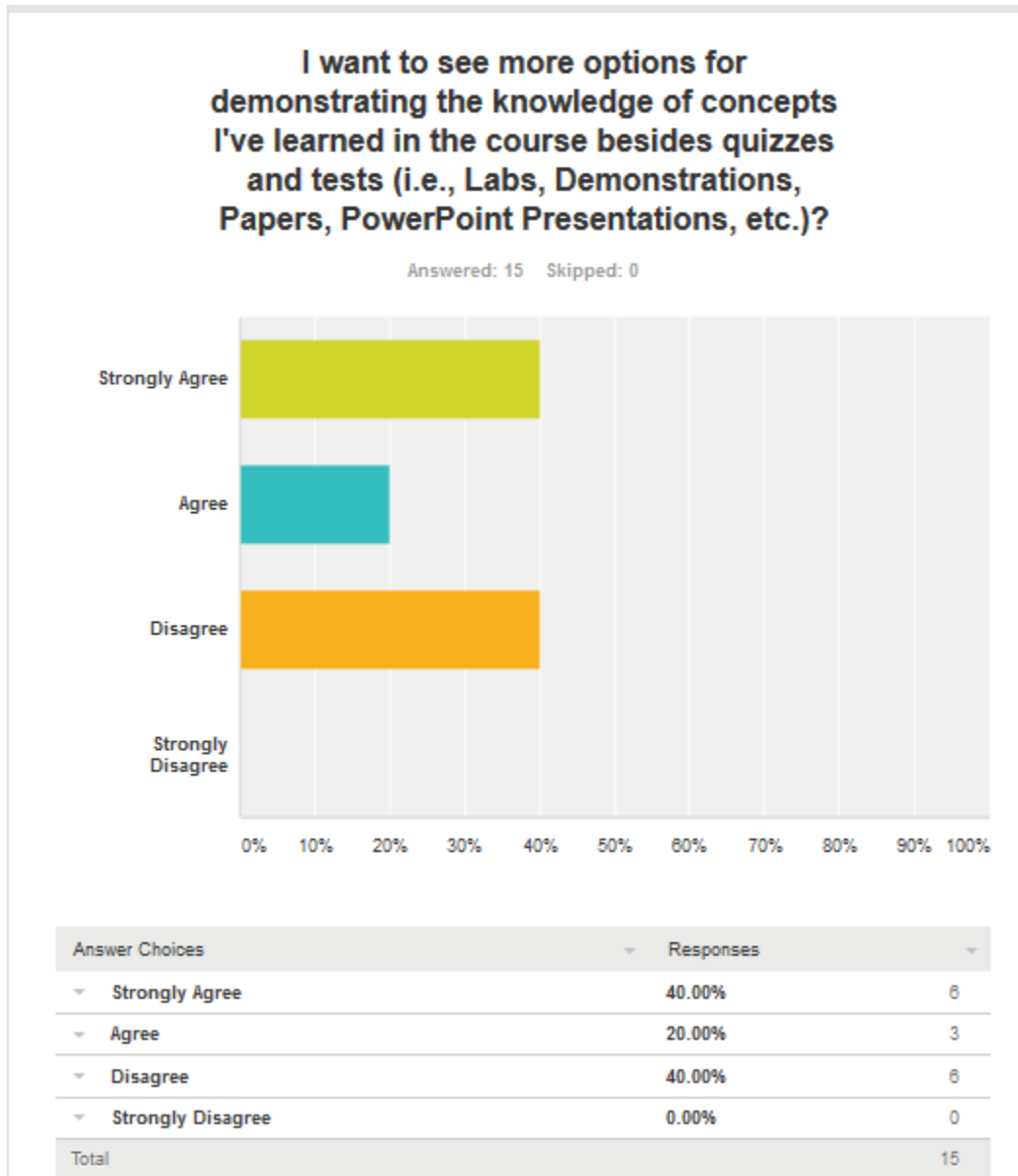


Most of the surveyed students, 55%, agreed that the content of the online course was diverse and interesting. Additionally, 67% of these students also indicated that the content in the online course was important to student success. This illustrates the importance of well thought out and diverse content in an online course.



Assessment is an important component of any course, face-to-face, hybrid or online. In the survey, 100% of the students strongly agreed or agreed that the quizzes and tests were a good representation of the material covered. The students surveyed also indicated, 60% strongly

agreed, that they would like to see more options in demonstrating the knowledge of concepts learned through the use of labs, demonstrations, papers, PowerPoint presentations and other alternative forms of demonstrating understanding of course content.



## **Chapter V Conclusions and Recommendations**

Based on the review of existing literature related to student's perceptions of the effectiveness of online courses in community college settings and the School of Online Survey 2014-2015. The course flexibility, course management, navigation, universal design, communication, online instructional design, and content are evaluated to make recommendations for online course design best practices, the following conclusions can be drawn.

In both the School of Online Survey 2014- 2015 (77% indicated very important) and the Follow-Up Online Student Survey (93% strongly agree or agree), students consider instructor interaction extremely important to the student success in an online course. Additionally there is a strong correlation between successful online experience and clear structure/organization of the online classroom, with the School of Online Survey 2014-2015 (74% indicated very important) and the Follow-Up Online Student Survey (93% strongly agreed or agreed).

The additional research using the Follow-Up Online Student Survey indicated that how the instructor set up the navigation of the course was very important, that the learning management system features and functionality are extremely important to online success.

Social presence in the course also proved to be important. The interactivity using discussions, journals, blogs, and groups are essential to online success. Students also want a strong instructor led social presence.

The impact of online assessment practices on student performance is very important to student success in and online course. Students were generally in agreement that the assessment was a clear reflection of the content being taught in the online course. Of the students taking the Follow-Up Online Student Survey (60% either strongly agree or agree), would like to see more

option for demonstrating the knowledge of concepts they've learned in the courses besides the use of quizzes and tests (i.e., labs, demonstrations, papers, PowerPoint demonstrations, and similar tools).

Course designers and instructors should take these findings into consideration when creating new online courses. Findings indicate that the demand for online courses will continue to grow and we as college administrators, researchers, course designers, and instructors need to grow as well.

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- Lewis, B. P. (2008). B. ParDistance education at degree-granting postsecondary institutions: 2006-2007. *National Center for Educa-*.
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## Appendix

### Table A:

#### SCHOOL OF ONLINE SURVEY 2014-2015 ACADEMIC YEAR

The School of Online and Accelerated Learning surveyed the 7504 students who took an online class at Madison College between Summer 2014 and Spring 2015. The goal of the surveys was to better understand online student satisfaction and needs as well as learn more about potential college services and resources that might benefit these students

The survey had 14 total questions in three categories. A total of 934 students responded. Below are highlights and trends from the survey replies, the full survey file is also available to anyone interested.

#### QUESTIONS RELATED TO ACCESS

- 73.3% of students indicate that they decided to take online classes because it fits with their work schedule better than in person options.
- In contrast, only 23.8% of students indicate that they decided to take online classes because they prefer the online format. This may indicate that students choose online classes because they need flexibility these courses offer, not necessarily because they prefer the instruction mode.
- 78.9% indicate that the flexibility of online classes is essential for them to stay in school or complete their program.
- 73.7% of students indicate they have sufficient online course options within their program of study.
- 95.3% of students indicated that registration for online courses is convenient at Madison College.

#### Student quotes regarding access:

*“I am disappointed that some classes that are online during the fall/spring are not online during the summer. It’s easier to get a job in the summer, but this makes it harder to have that job and still take those classes.”*

*“I’d like to see more classes offered online. It seems to be getting better – but we need more options. The classes fill up quickly – so the demand must be there – please answer that call.”*

*“I love the convenience of online classes. I would not be in school now if it wasn’t for these classes.”*

#### QUESTIONS RELATED TO PREPAREDNESS:

- 780 of the respondents indicated they did take the online orientation in Blackboard prior to registering for an online class at Madison College.
- 46% felt the orientation made them feel better prepared for online classes.
- 14% didn't feel more prepared after taking the orientation.
- 40% already felt prepared (or had previously taken an online class).
- 628 of the respondents responded to what, if anything could be added to the orientation to better prepare students for the class format. The four most commonly requested additions, in order:
  - A tutorial specifically on how to use Blackboard
  - A list of resources on strategies for being successful in online courses
  - A tutorial on general strategies for being successful in online courses
  - Contact from an advisor with additional student support

**Student quotes regarding preparedness:**

*“I thought the information about getting hardware and software ready before the class was really important. I think it might be a good idea to include a blackboard sample setup for people to explore and get used to.”*

*“Have the online class available a week prior to the start of classes to get a feel of the layout of the class and how that specific teacher operates the online class.”*

*“I don't remember It (the online orientation), but it was an inconvenience at the time.”*

**QUESTIONS RELATED TO COLLEGE SERVICES:**

- Based on survey responses, the most important college service was a contact person for students if they have questions (56% indicated very important). Note that some students indicated in comments that this contact person could be their instructor.
- The second most important college service was the availability of technical assistance (36% indicated very important).

**Student quote related to college services:**

*“Online classes are great, it only becomes difficult when there are issues with the technology and the professor doesn't help with it.”*

**QUESTIONS RELATED TO ONLINE INSTRUCTION:**

- Based on survey responses, the most important characteristic of a successful online experience is online instructor responsiveness (77% indicated very important)
- The second most important characteristic of a successful online experience is clear structure/organization of the online classroom (74% indicated very important).

**Student quotes related to online instruction:**

*“The lack of any coherent structure from one class to the next is an issue. Teachers have too much leeway in the way they structure Blackboard for their class.”*

*“Prompt grading of online assignments by the instructor is critical for success in an online class.”*

*“Responsiveness and interaction of the instructor is extremely important, as is the instructor’s organization.”*

**Note:** Overall, students place much higher value on things happening *inside* their online classroom compared to general services from the college.

**TOP PROGRAMS AND COURSES STUDENTS WOULD LIKE TO SEE OFFERED IN THE ONLINE FORMAT:**

(A more detailed breakdown is available by academic school for individuals who are interested)

- Science courses including the non-lab components of lab science courses
- Math courses at every level
- English and Humanities or Social Science courses
- Human Resource Management
- Graphic Design

**Table B:**

**Signed IRB**

Library at the University of Wisconsin – Parkside. The several search engines provided by EBSCOHOST were used. The search engines Education Research Complete and Educational Administration Abstracts were especially useful. The key search terms were “Online Learning”, “Online Learning in the Technical College”, “Student Retention in Online Courses”, and “Designing Online Courses that Promote Student Retention”. An additional follow-up survey of a small group of students is planned using an action research approach.

The School of Online and Accelerated Learning surveyed the 7504 students who have taken an online class at Madison College since the Summer Term of 2014. A total of 935 students responded. The data collected by the School of Online will be used as additional research information. I will be conducting a separate follow-up survey of a small group of 15 students in the IT Security Awareness Course offered online in the Fall Term of 2015 term using an action research approach. This research will be done over a 5 month period from August 2015 – December, 2015.

**Subjects:**

Approximately 44 students will be asked if they would like to participate in a survey about their perceptions and preferences in the community college setting regarding course flexibility, course management, navigation, universal design, communication, online instructional design, and content. Students who wish to participate will be asked to return a confirmed consent form. 15 students will be randomly chosen to participate in the survey by shuffling the signed consent forms and pulling 15 forms. These students will be emailed by me to set-up a phone survey. The phone survey will be anonymous as the signed consent form will only be used to contact the student and the student will be assigned an anonymous number for the survey.

**Materials and Devices:**

The survey consists of basic demographic questions, perceptions and preferences regarding course flexibility, course management, navigation, universal design, communication, online instructional design, and content. The responses will analyzed using the measure of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree.

**Risk:** There are no risks to the student as their identity will remain anonymous. The benefit of this action research is that Instructors, Higher-Education Institutions, and myself can use this information to improve online course design and student course satisfaction.

**Confidentiality** No personally identifiable information (like the name of the respondent, address of the house) will be collected through the use of survey or field observation. Any surveys that might have inadvertently included names or other identifying information will be immediately destroyed. Once the survey data has been input into an electronic database, the original survey forms will be destroyed along

7 / 17 / 2015  
Date Submitted

Madison Area Technical College  
Institutional Review Board

\_\_\_\_\_  
File Number

**Expedited Review of Research Form**

Improving Online Course Design through an analysis of Student Perception of the Course Management, Universal Course Design, Communications, Instructional Design, and Content  
Title of Research Project

Mary Jo Black  
Principal Investigator/Project Director      Department      920-988-4512      mjblack7075@gmail.com  
Phone Extension      Email address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Co-investigator/Student Investigator      Department      Phone Extension      Email address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Co-investigator/Student Investigator      Department      Phone Extension      Email address

Anticipated Funding Source: None (Graduate Seminar Paper)

Projected Duration of Research: 5 months      Projected Starting Date: August 2015

Other organizations and/or agencies, if any, involved in the study: University of Wisconsin - Platteville

Expedited Review Category (see categories on page 1—check one) 1  2  3  4  5  6  7

**SUMMARY ABSTRACT:** Please supply the following information below: BRIEF description of the participants, the location(s) of the project, the procedures to be used for data collection, whether data will be confidential or anonymous, disposition of the data, who will have access to the data. Attach copy of the Informed Consent Form and/or the measures (questionnaires) to be used in the project.

**Significance and Purpose of Study:** It is important to understand what student's perceptions are of the effectiveness of online courses in community college settings. How do we use student perceptions and preferences to create an accessible, learner centered course in the online environment?

The purpose of this study is to analyze student perceptions and preferences in the community college setting. Course flexibility, course management, navigation, universal design, communication, online instructional design, and content are evaluated to make recommendations for online course design best practices.

**Methodology:** The references used for the review of literature were collected over a period of 5 month period using the resources of the Karmann Library at the University of Wisconsin – Platteville and Wyllie

with any information linking the electronic data with the original survey.

**Voluntary Participation:** Student participation in this study is totally voluntary and they may withdraw at any time without negative consequences.

**Questions:** Please feel free to contact Mary Jo Black, Master of Education Student at UW-Platteville at 920-988-4512 if you have any questions about the study.

**RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:**

- Any additions or changes in procedures in the protocol will be submitted to the IRB for written approval prior to these changes being implemented
- Any problems connected with the use of human subjects once the project has begun must be communicated to the IRB Chair
- The principal investigator is responsible for retaining informed consent documents for a period of three years after the project.

<i>Mary Jo Black</i> Investigator/Project Director Signature		<i>8/21/15</i> Co-Investigator/Student Signature (if appropriate)
Signature of IRB Committee Chair: <i>[Signature]</i>		Date: <i>8/21/15</i>
IRB Chair: Check 1 box: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Approved   <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Approved with Conditions   <input type="checkbox"/> Refer to Full Committee Review		

*See change to consent form*

*Consent form updated with Teresa Werhane as IRB contact. 8-21-15*

**Table C:**

**Student Questionnaire**

Anonymous Student # \_\_\_\_\_

Section 1:

Information about student

1. Gender	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	
2. First Language	<u>English</u>	<u>Spanish</u>	<u>Other</u>

3. Age	<u>18-22</u>	<u>23-27</u>	<u>28-32</u>	<u>33 or more</u>
4. Years of Post-Secondary Schooling	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4 or more</u>
5. Number of Online Courses I have taken for College Credit	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3 or more</u>
6. Estimated number of hours I spend per week using a computer for educational purposes	<u>&lt;1</u>	<u>1-5</u>	<u>6-10</u>	<u>&gt;10</u>
7. Estimated number of hours I spend per week online (for example, browsing the Internet)	<u>&lt;1</u>	<u>1-5</u>	<u>6-10</u>	<u>&gt;10</u>

Section 2:

Statements about Online Learning

	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>
1. I am comfortable communicating electronically.				
2. I am willing to actively communicate with my classmates and instructors electronically.				
3. In my studies, I am self-disciplined and find it easy to set aside reading and homework time.				
4. I am able to manage my study time effectively and easily complete assignments on time.				
5. As a student, I enjoy working independently				
6. As a student, I enjoy working with other students in groups.				
7. I like a lot of interaction with my instructors.				
8. I possess sufficient computer keyboarding skills for doing online work.				
9. I feel comfortable composing text on a computer in an online learning environment.				
10. I am motivated by the material in an Internet activity outside the class				

11. Learning is the same in a face-to-face class as it is Online.				
12. I believe that learning Online is more motivating than learning in a face-to-face class				
13. I could pass a course Online without any teacher assistance				

Section 3:

Statements about Course Components	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>
1. The pace of the Online course was just right?				
2. The Online Course was easy to navigate?				
3. How the Instructor sets up the navigation of the course is very important?				
4. Did the e-learning unfold in a clear direction?				
5. The flow of the Online course is extremely important?				
6. I found the Learning Management System easy to use and had a positive experience?				
7. The Learning Management System features and functionality are extremely important to online success?				
8. The Online course contained opportunities for interactive learning (discussion, journals, blogs, groups, etc.)?				
9. Interactivity using discussion, journals, blogs, and groups is extremely important in an Online course?				
10. My Instructor communicated with me regularly in the Online course?				

11. Regular communication from the Instructor is important in an Online Course?				
12. The content in the Online course was diverse and interesting?				
13. The content is important to the Online course and student success?				
14. I'd like to see more YouTube videos, samples, journals, and other components as part of my Online content in a course?				
15. The quizzes and tests were a good representation of the material covered in the Online course?				
16. I want to see more options for demonstrating the knowledge of concepts in the course besides quizzes and tests (i.e. Labs, Demonstrations, Papers, PowerPoint Presentations, etc.)?				

**Table D:**

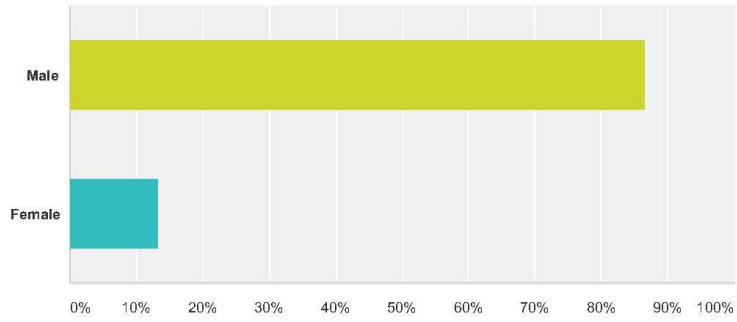
**Online Student Survey Results**

Online Student Survey

SurveyMonkey

**Q1 Gender?**

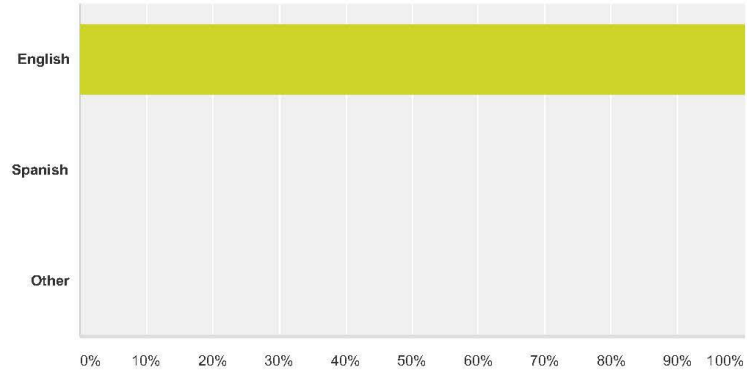
Answered: 15 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Male	86.67% 13
Female	13.33% 2
Total	15

**Q2 What is your First Language?**

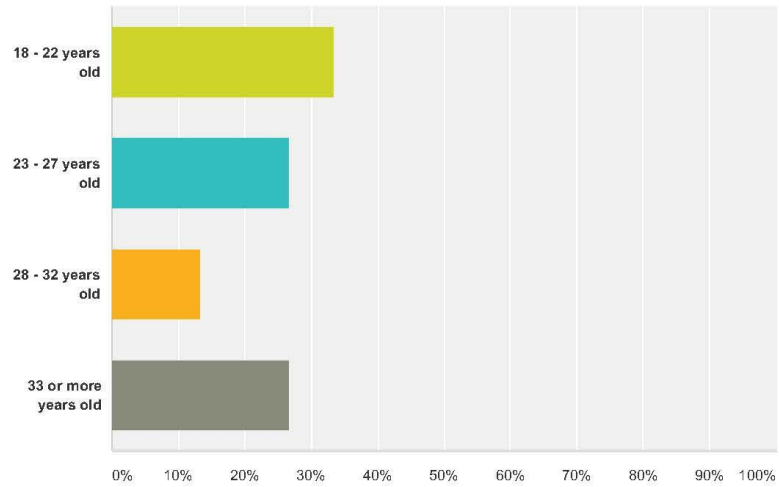
Answered: 15 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
English	100.00% 15
Spanish	0.00% 0
Other	0.00% 0
Total	15

### Q3 What is your Age?

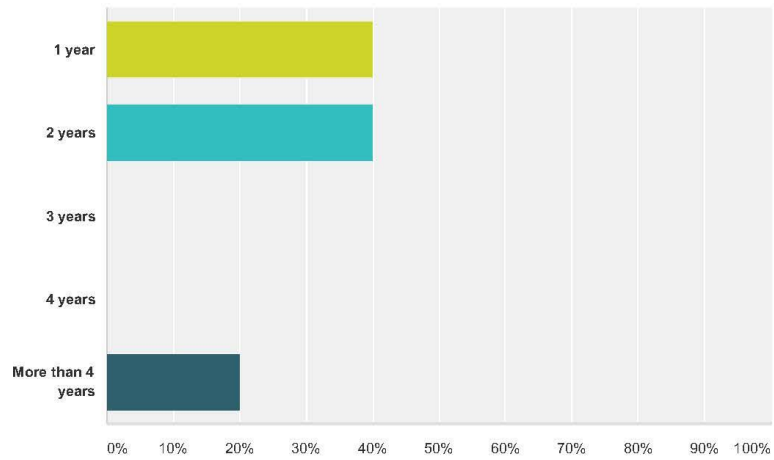
Answered: 15 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
18 - 22 years old	33.33% 5
23 - 27 years old	26.67% 4
28 - 32 years old	13.33% 2
33 or more years old	26.67% 4
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>

### Q4 Years of Post-Secondary (after High School) Schooling including this year?

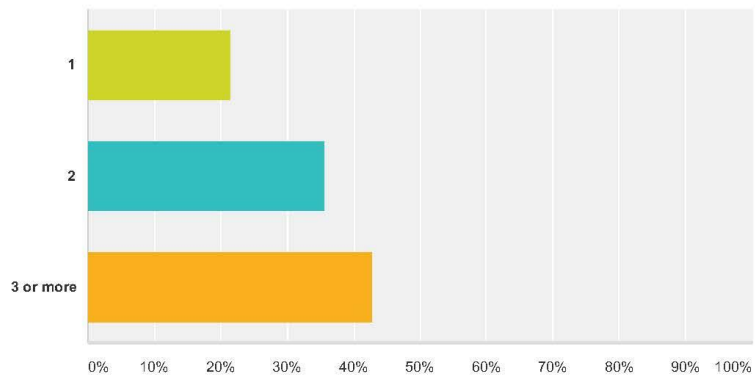
Answered: 15 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
1 year	40.00% 6
2 years	40.00% 6
3 years	0.00% 0
4 years	0.00% 0
More than 4 years	20.00% 3
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>

**Q5 Number of Online Courses taken for College Credit (Including this course)?**

Answered: 14 Skipped: 1

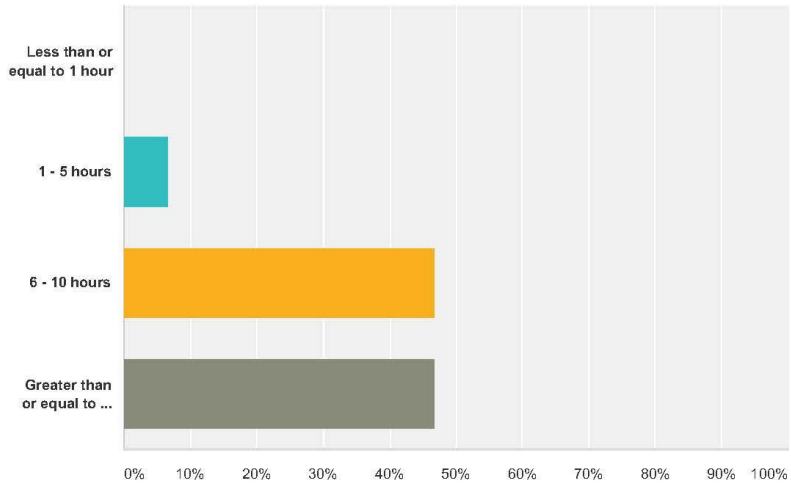


Answer Choices	Responses
----------------	-----------

1	21.43%	3
2	35.71%	5
3 or more	42.86%	6
<b>Total</b>		<b>14</b>

**Q6 Estimated number of hours I spend per week using a computer for educational purposes?**

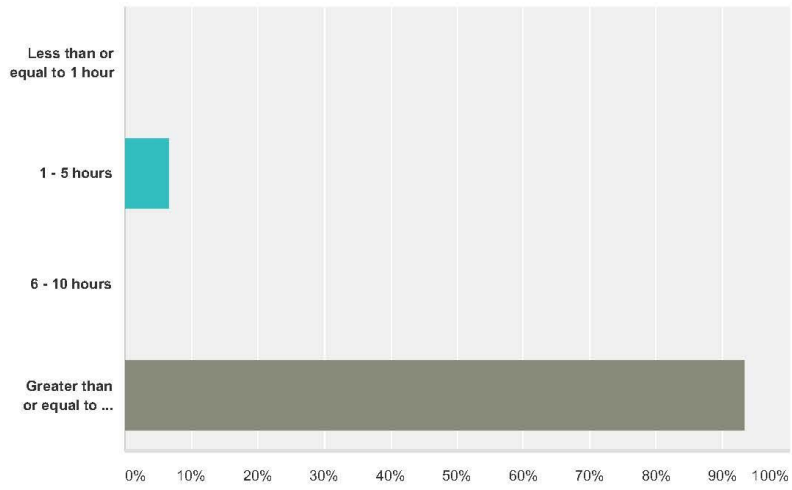
Answered: 15 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Less than or equal to 1 hour	0.00% 0
1 - 5 hours	6.67% 1
6 - 10 hours	46.67% 7
Greater than or equal to 10 hours	46.67% 7
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>

**Q7 Estimated number of hours I spend per week online (for example, browsing the Internet)?**

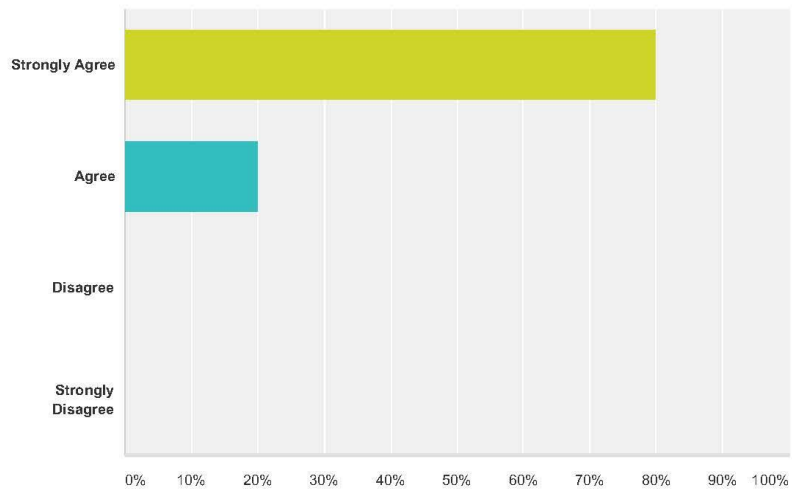
Answered: 15 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Less than or equal to 1 hour	0.00% 0
1 - 5 hours	6.67% 1
6 - 10 hours	0.00% 0
Greater than or equal to 10 hours	93.33% 14
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>

**Q8 I am comfortable communicating electronically?**

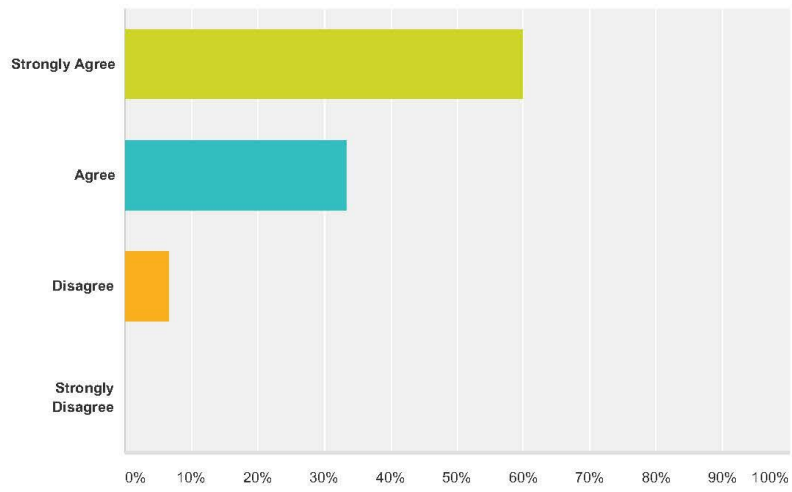
Answered: 15 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	Count
Strongly Agree	80.00%	12
Agree	20.00%	3
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>15</b>

**Q9 I am willing to actively communicate with my classmates and instructors electronically?**

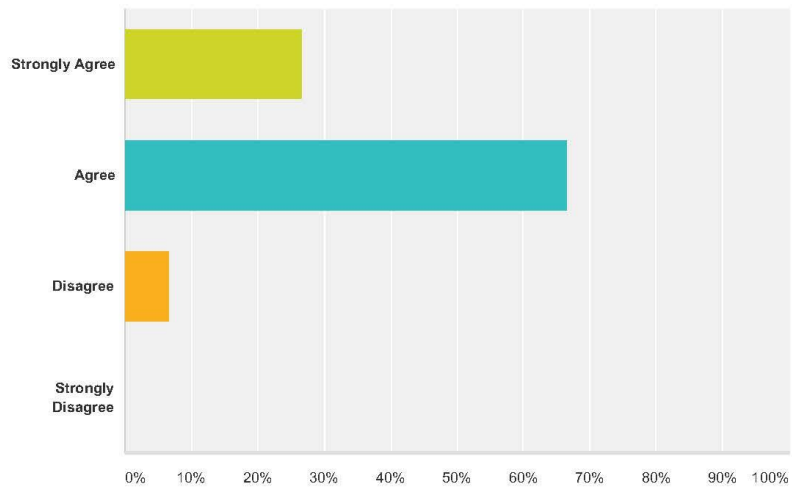
Answered: 15 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Strongly Agree	60.00% 9
Agree	33.33% 5
Disagree	6.67% 1
Strongly Disagree	0.00% 0
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>

**Q10 In my studies, I am self-disciplined and find it easy to set aside reading and homework time?**

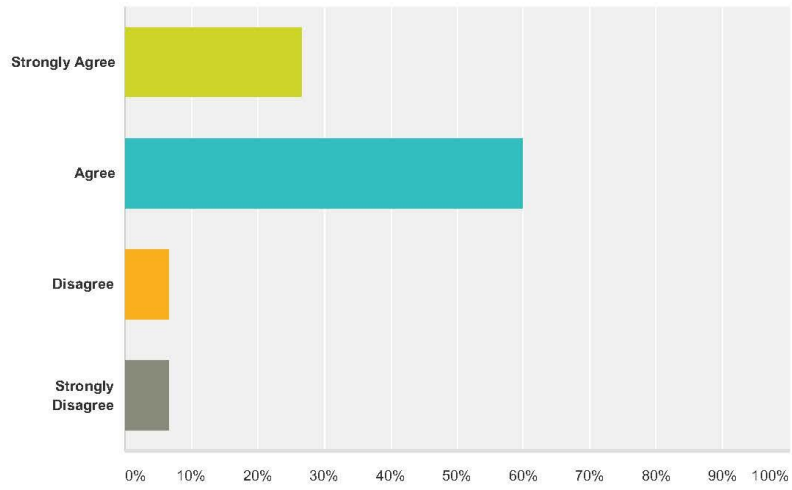
Answered: 15 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Strongly Agree	26.67% 4
Agree	66.67% 10
Disagree	6.67% 1
Strongly Disagree	0.00% 0
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>

**Q11 I am able to manage my study time effectively and easily complete assignments on time?**

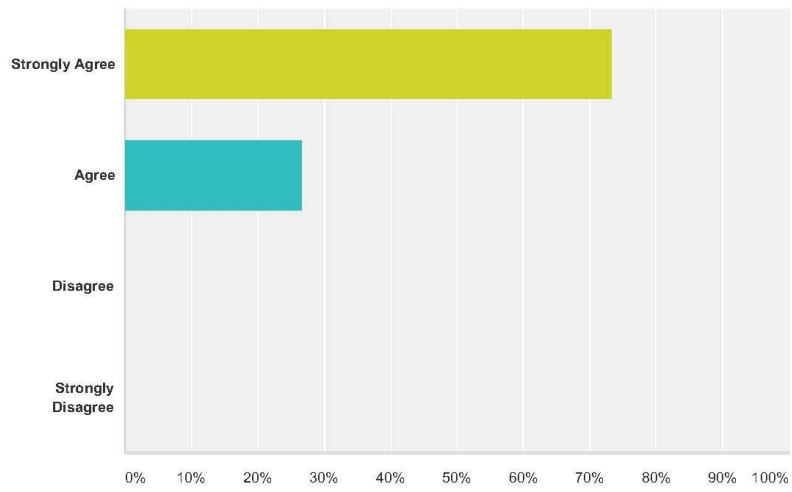
Answered: 15 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Strongly Agree	26.67% 4
Agree	60.00% 9
Disagree	6.67% 1
Strongly Disagree	6.67% 1
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>

**Q12 As a student, I enjoy working independently?**

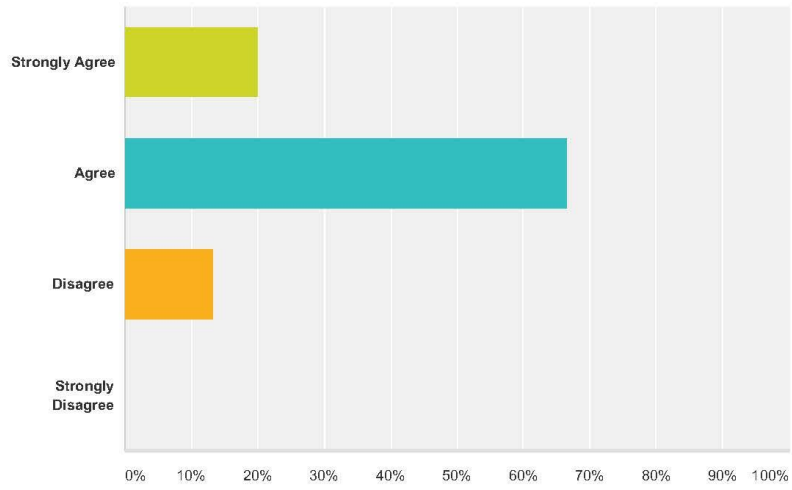
Answered: 15 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly Agree	73.33%	11
Agree	26.67%	4
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>15</b>

**Q13 As a student, I enjoy working with other students in groups?**

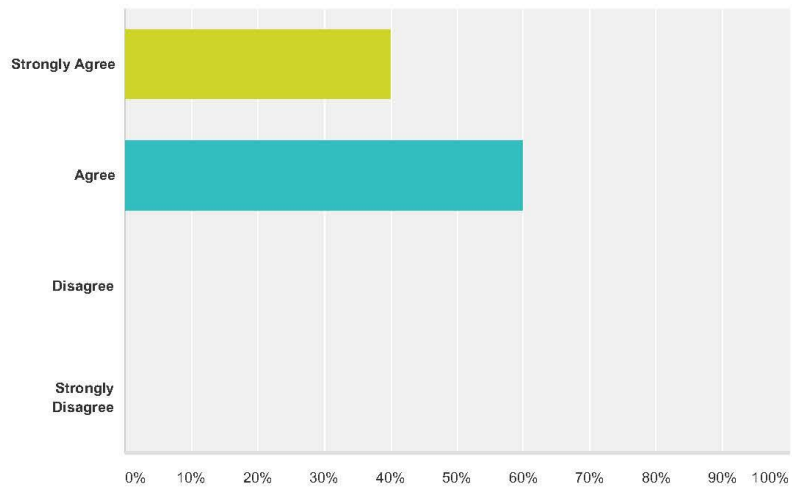
Answered: 15 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Strongly Agree	20.00% 3
Agree	66.67% 10
Disagree	13.33% 2
Strongly Disagree	0.00% 0
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>

**Q14 I like a lot of interaction with my Instructor?**

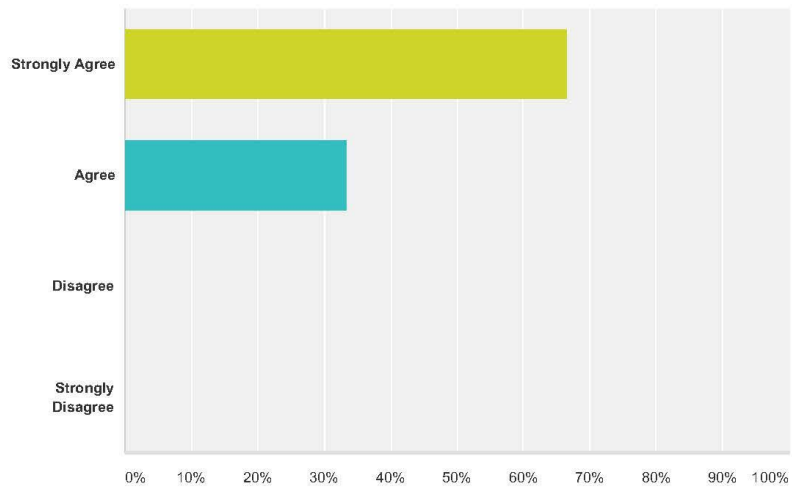
Answered: 15 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Strongly Agree	40.00% 6
Agree	60.00% 9
Disagree	0.00% 0
Strongly Disagree	0.00% 0
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>

**Q15 I possess sufficient computer keyboarding skills for doing online homework?**

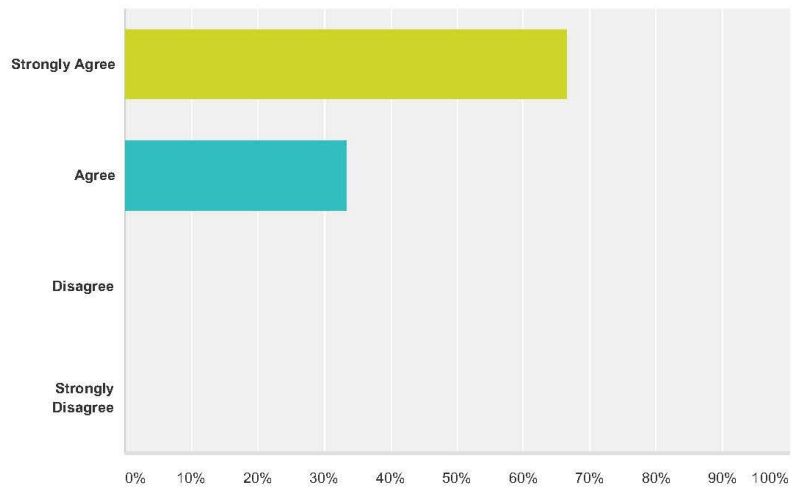
Answered: 15 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Strongly Agree	66.67% 10
Agree	33.33% 5
Disagree	0.00% 0
Strongly Disagree	0.00% 0
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>

**Q16 I feel comfortable composing text on a computer in an online learning environment?**

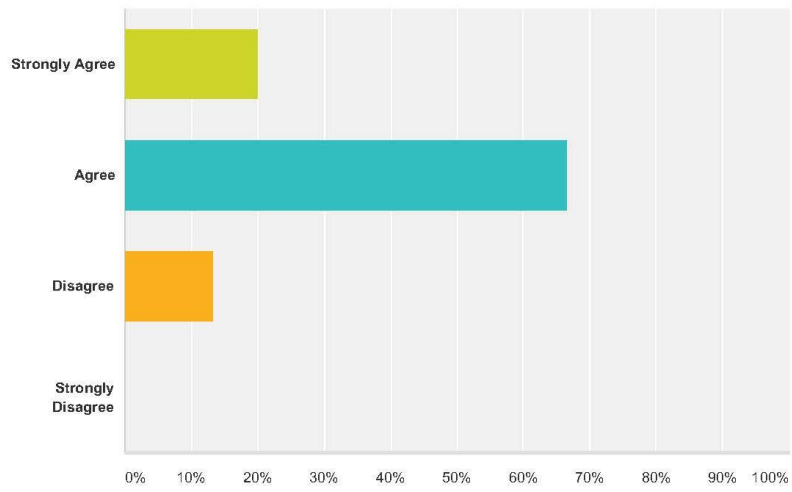
Answered: 15 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly Agree	66.67%	10
Agree	33.33%	5
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>15</b>

**Q17 I a motivated by the material in an Internet activity outside the class?**

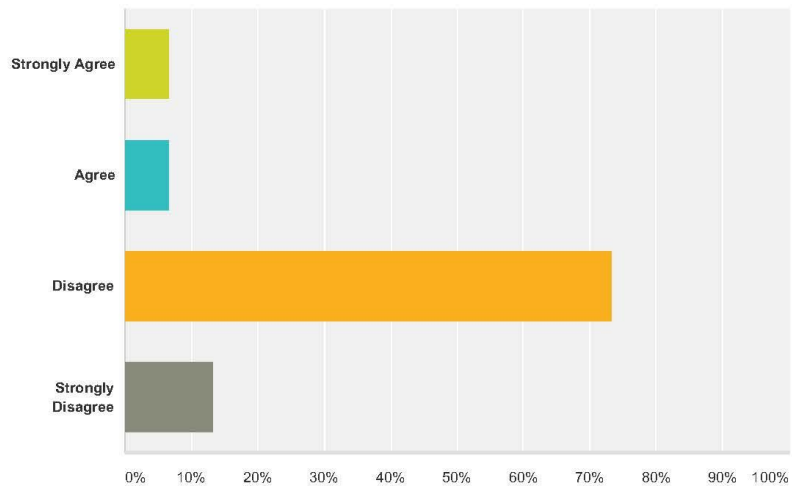
Answered: 15 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Strongly Agree	20.00% 3
Agree	66.67% 10
Disagree	13.33% 2
Strongly Disagree	0.00% 0
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>

**Q18 Learning is the same in a face-to-face class as it is Online?**

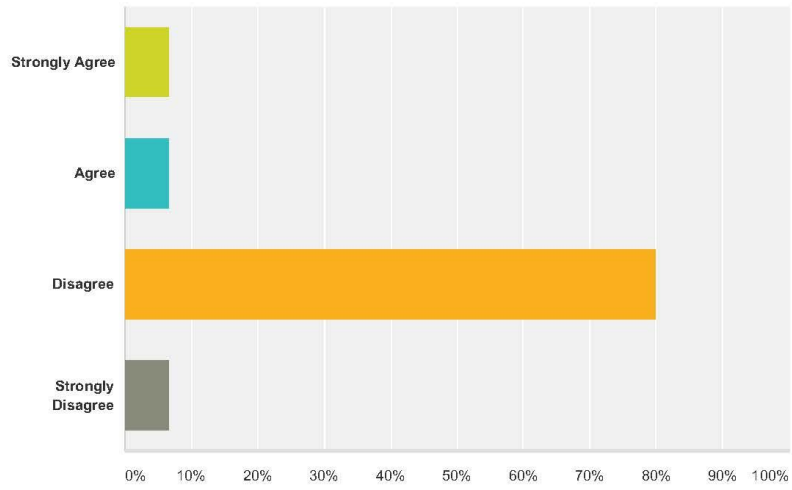
Answered: 15 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Strongly Agree	6.67% 1
Agree	6.67% 1
Disagree	73.33% 11
Strongly Disagree	13.33% 2
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>

**Q19 I believe that learning Online is more motivating than learning in a face-to-face class?**

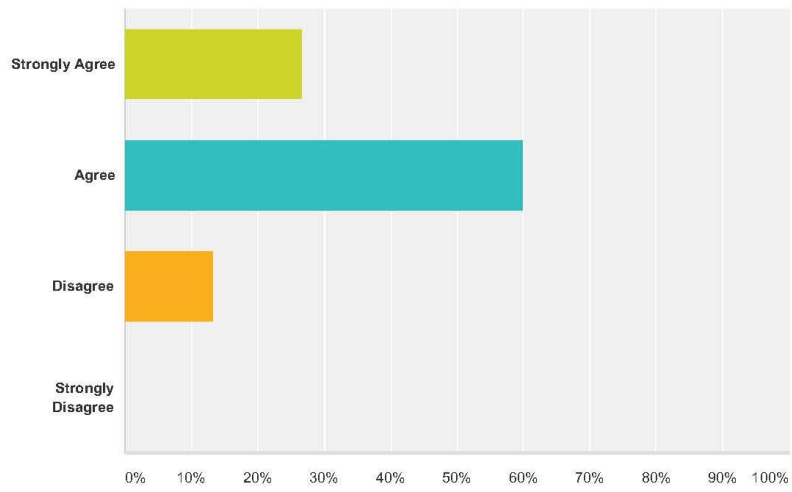
Answered: 15 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Strongly Agree	6.67% 1
Agree	6.67% 1
Disagree	80.00% 12
Strongly Disagree	6.67% 1
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>

**Q20 I could pass a course Online without any teacher assistance?**

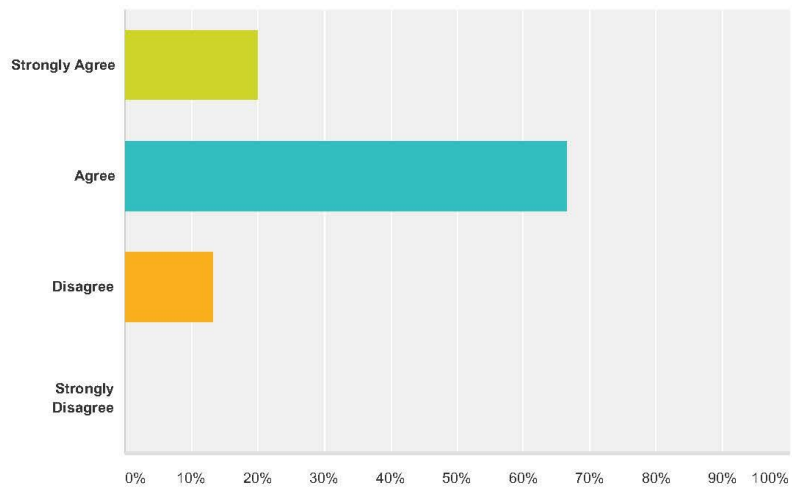
Answered: 15 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Strongly Agree	26.67% 4
Agree	60.00% 9
Disagree	13.33% 2
Strongly Disagree	0.00% 0
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>

**Q21 The pace of the Online course was just right?**

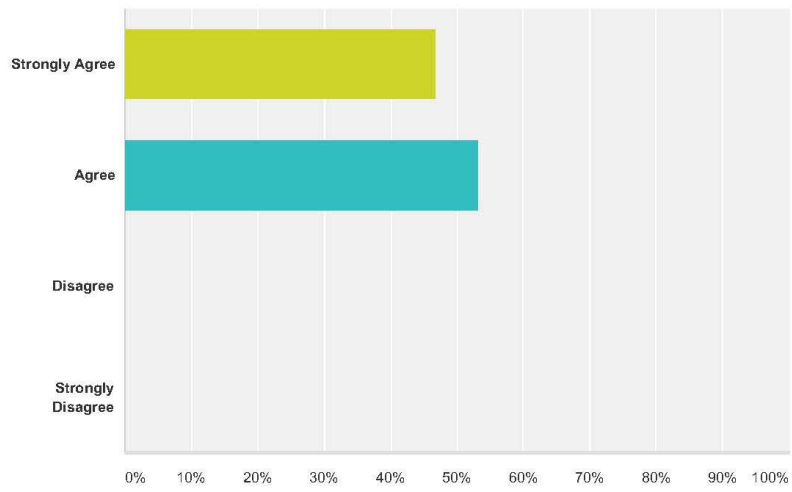
Answered: 15 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Strongly Agree	20.00% 3
Agree	66.67% 10
Disagree	13.33% 2
Strongly Disagree	0.00% 0
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>

**Q22 The Online Course was easy to navigate?**

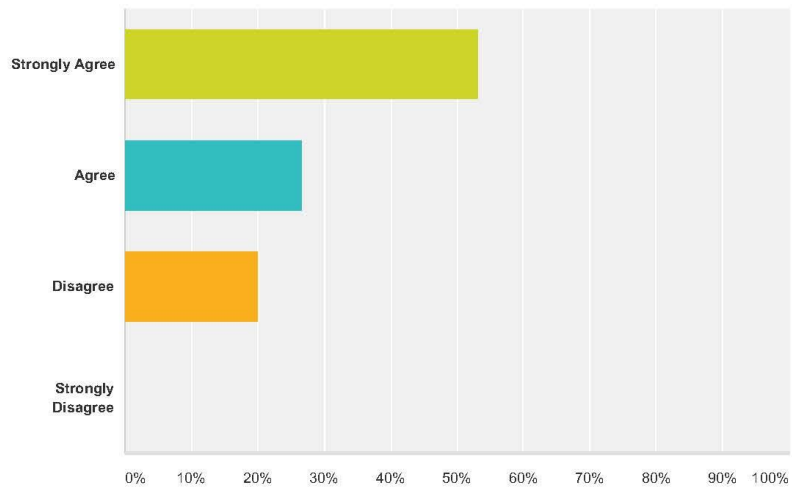
Answered: 15 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Strongly Agree	46.67% 7
Agree	53.33% 8
Disagree	0.00% 0
Strongly Disagree	0.00% 0
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>

**Q23 How the Instructor sets up the navigation of the course is very important?**

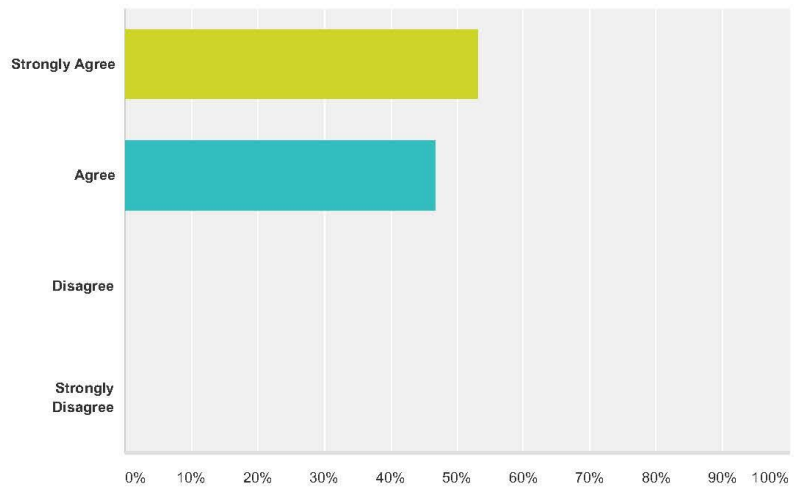
Answered: 15 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Strongly Agree	53.33% 8
Agree	26.67% 4
Disagree	20.00% 3
Strongly Disagree	0.00% 0
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>

**Q24 Did the e-learning unfold in a clear understandable way?**

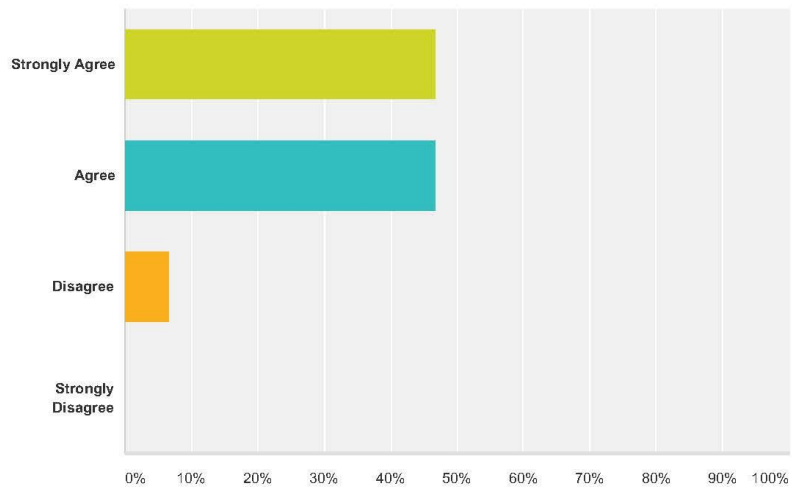
Answered: 15 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Strongly Agree	53.33% 8
Agree	46.67% 7
Disagree	0.00% 0
Strongly Disagree	0.00% 0
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>

**Q25 The flow of the Online course is extremely important?**

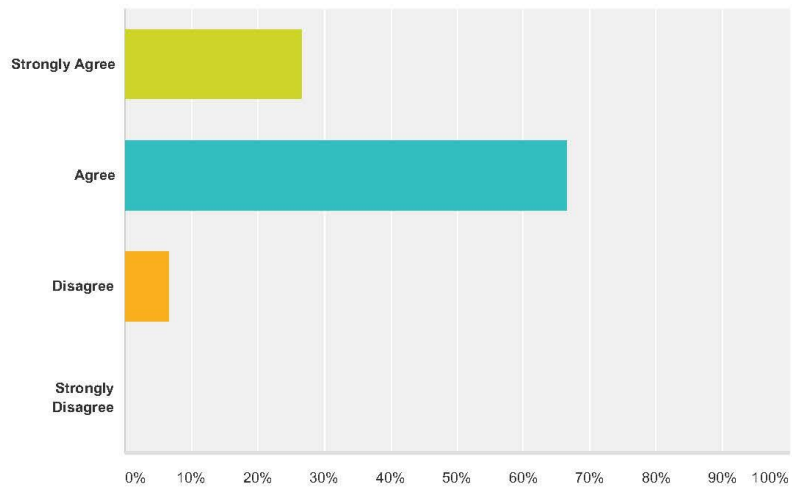
Answered: 15 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Strongly Agree	46.67% 7
Agree	46.67% 7
Disagree	6.67% 1
Strongly Disagree	0.00% 0
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>

**Q26 I found the Learning Management System easy to use and had a positive experience?**

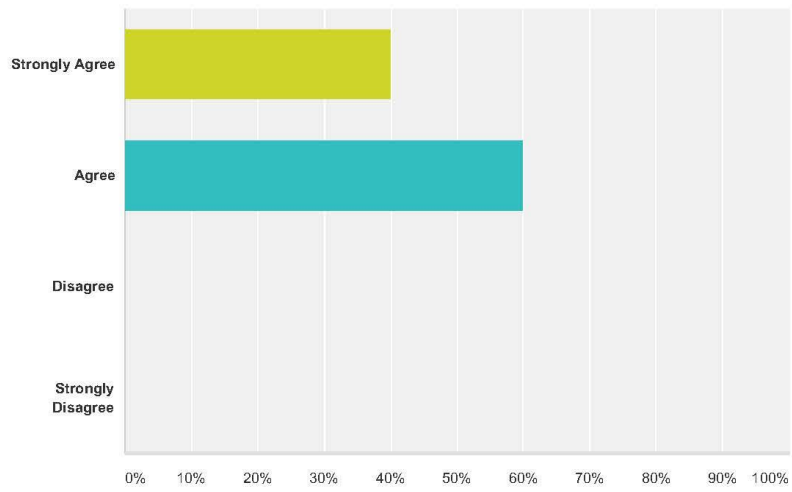
Answered: 15 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Strongly Agree	26.67% 4
Agree	66.67% 10
Disagree	6.67% 1
Strongly Disagree	0.00% 0
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>

**Q27 The Learning Management System features and functionality are extremely important to online success?**

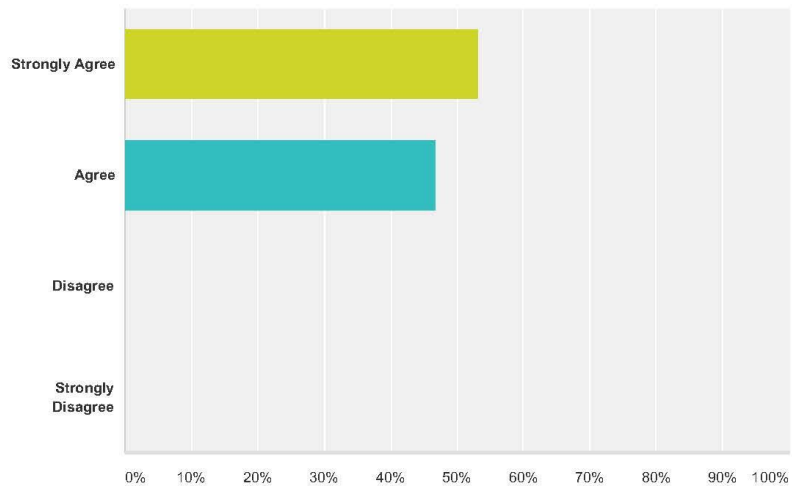
Answered: 15 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Strongly Agree	40.00% 6
Agree	60.00% 9
Disagree	0.00% 0
Strongly Disagree	0.00% 0
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>

**Q28 The Online course contained opportunities for interactive learning (discussions, journals, blogs, groups, etc.)?**

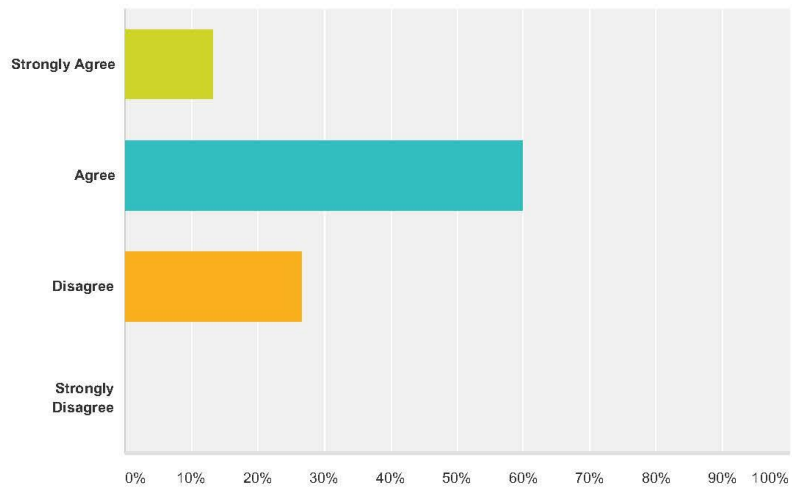
Answered: 15 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Strongly Agree	53.33% 8
Agree	46.67% 7
Disagree	0.00% 0
Strongly Disagree	0.00% 0
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>

**Q29 Interactivity using discussions, journals, blogs, and groups is extremely important in an Online course?**

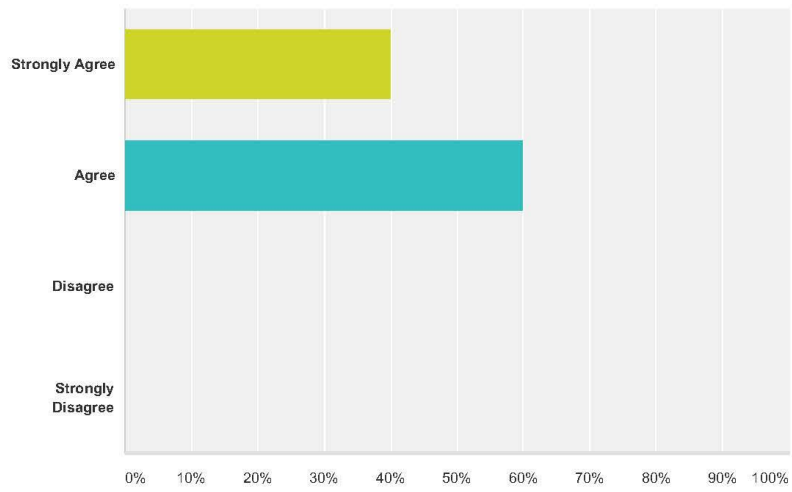
Answered: 15 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Strongly Agree	13.33% 2
Agree	60.00% 9
Disagree	26.67% 4
Strongly Disagree	0.00% 0
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>

**Q30 My Instructor communicated with me regularly in the Online Course?**

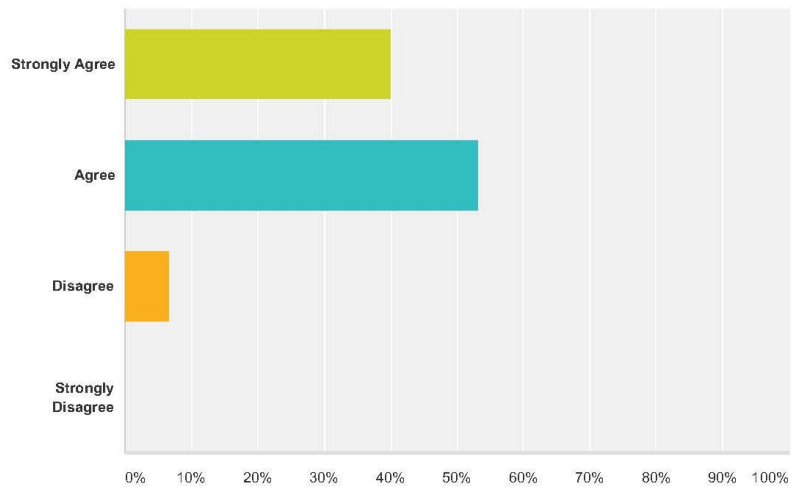
Answered: 15 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Strongly Agree	40.00% 6
Agree	60.00% 9
Disagree	0.00% 0
Strongly Disagree	0.00% 0
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>

**Q31 Regular communication from the Instructor is important in an Online Course?**

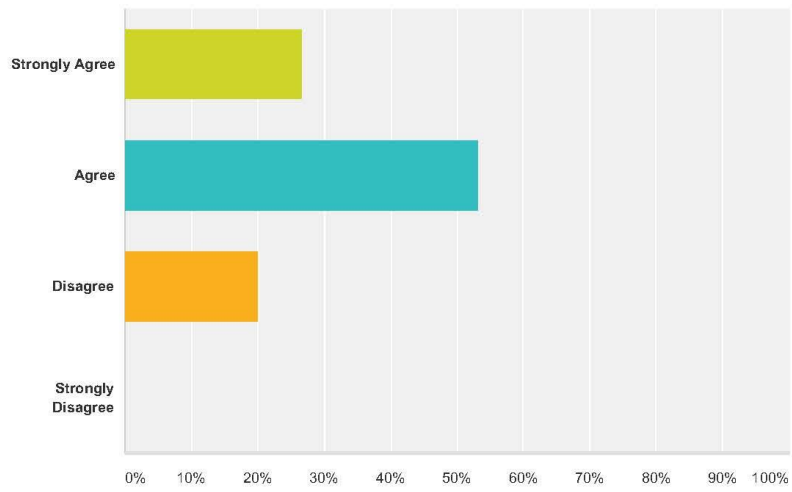
Answered: 15 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Strongly Agree	40.00% 6
Agree	53.33% 8
Disagree	6.67% 1
Strongly Disagree	0.00% 0
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>

**Q32 The content in the Online course was diverse and interesting?**

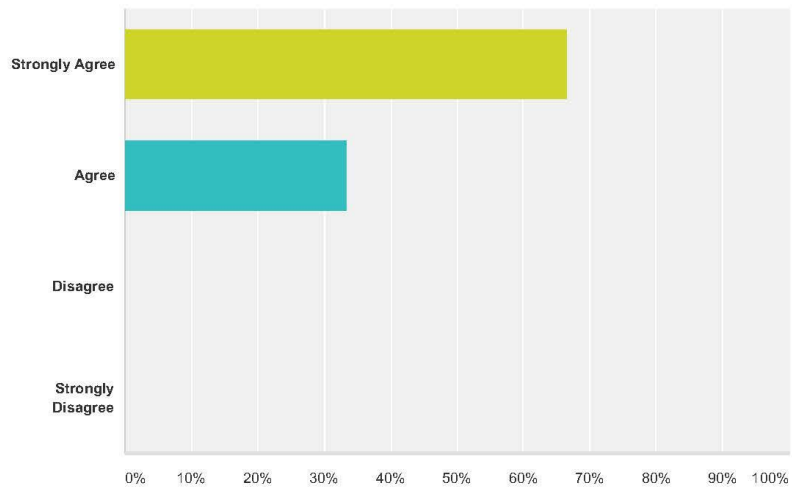
Answered: 15 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly Agree	26.67%	4
Agree	53.33%	8
Disagree	20.00%	3
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>15</b>

**Q33 The content is important to the Online course and student success?**

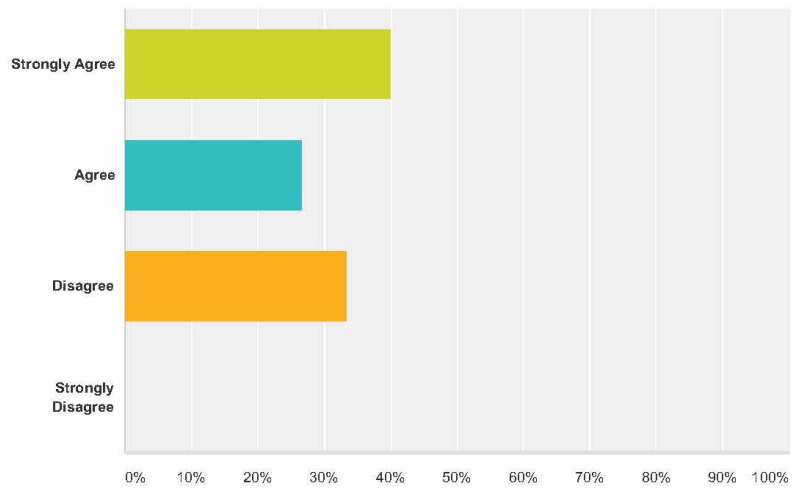
Answered: 15 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Strongly Agree	66.67% 10
Agree	33.33% 5
Disagree	0.00% 0
Strongly Disagree	0.00% 0
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>

**Q34 I'd like to see more YouTube videos, samples, journals, and other components as part of my Online content in a course?**

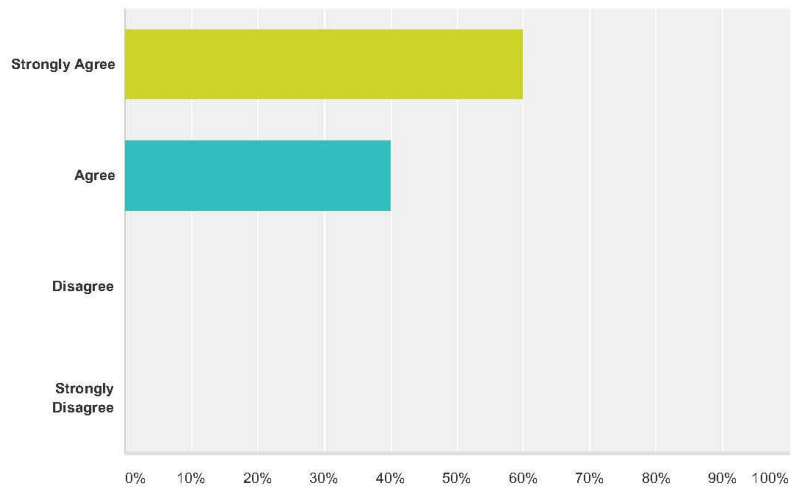
Answered: 15 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Strongly Agree	40.00% 6
Agree	26.67% 4
Disagree	33.33% 5
Strongly Disagree	0.00% 0
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>

**Q35 The quizzes and tests were a good representation of the material covered in the Online course?**

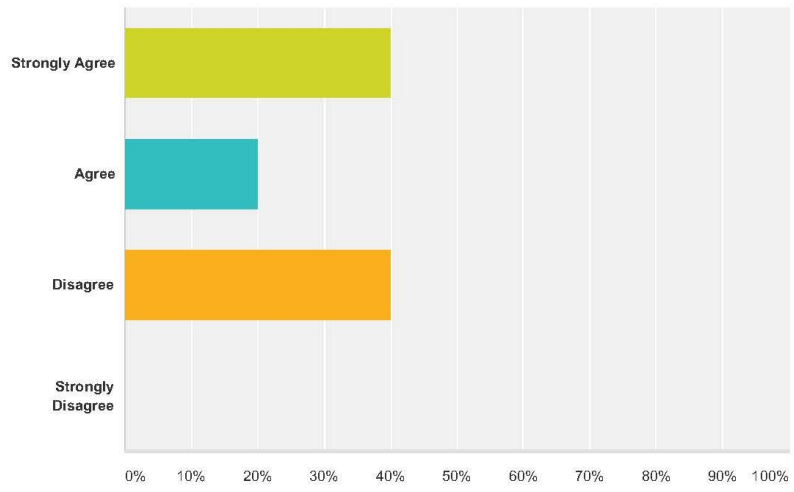
Answered: 15 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Strongly Agree	60.00% 9
Agree	40.00% 6
Disagree	0.00% 0
Strongly Disagree	0.00% 0
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>

**Q36 I want to see more options for demonstrating the knowledge of concepts I've learned in the course besides quizzes and tests (i.e., Labs, Demonstrations, Papers, PowerPoint Presentations, etc.)?**

Answered: 15 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Strongly Agree	40.00% 6
Agree	20.00% 3
Disagree	40.00% 6
Strongly Disagree	0.00% 0
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>