May 2020

COVID19 Student Survey Spring 2020: Overview & Online Learning Assessment

Research Brief # 203

College of the Canyons

Santa Clarita Community College District

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COLLEGE OF THE CANYONS

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Introduction & Background

In response to the COVID19 Coronavirus pandemic, the college abided by the legislative stay-at-home order and transitioned to an entirely online/remote environment in week 6 of the spring 2020 term. As part of the adjustment to, and assessment of the impact of this shift, the office of Institutional Research, Planning and Institutional Effectiveness administered a student survey to examine experiences and needs of students' in light of this drastic change in college operations and instruction.

Effective March 16, 2020, all courses that were scheduled to meet face-to-face/on-ground were transitioned to a distance education format where instruction was changed to either synchronous or asynchronous mode giving instructors the option to correspond with students digitally using varying platforms the most common of which was Canvas, the learning management system used by the college. Student services including Admissions & Records, Financial Aid and Counseling were also provided in remote/online environment.

The reporting of the results of this student survey will be presented in various research briefs of which, this is the overview and first in the series (RB#203 thru RB#209). The briefs will be organized by particular topics that were covered in the survey (e.g. Overview, Future Plans, Access to Technology, Communications, and Challenges).

Method

Survey Instrument

A survey design team comprised of faculty, staff, and administrators met over a few meetings to develop the survey items. The 41-question instrument included 14 partially open-ended questions and 7 open-ended questions for students to write in responses. In addition to background and demographic questions, the survey included questions about the following general topics:

- students' assessment of their learning in an online/remote environment
- experiences with online courses
- plans for the future (completion of the current term, transfer and fall enrollment at COC)
- access to student services
- access to technology
- assessment of college's communications
- challenges that students are currently facing in the online/remote environment
- how the college can serve students to help them succeed

Data Collection

An online survey via surveymonkey was administered to students who were enrolled in the spring 2020 term 6 weeks after the stay-at-home order issued by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. The survey link was made available via a Canvas announcement and a text message. In order to maintain anonymity, the link was open and students could access it from either platform (Canvas/text). A note about completing the survey only once was included in the announcement. The data collection period started on April 27th and the survey closed on May 8th.

A total of 3,739 students responded to the survey. Of these students a total of 3,697 were included in the analyses based on their active enrollment in the spring 2020 term. The majority of the respondents completed the survey by accessing the link on Canvas whereas one-third accessed the survey via the text message announcement.

Representative Sample of Respondents

As part of the analysis, the respondents' demographics and self-reported enrollment mode in the spring term were compared with the overall student population. Race/ethnicity, age, first-generation status and enrollment in face-to-face or online courses were examined. With regard to race/ethnicity (Figure 1), there was an underrepresentation of students who identify as Latinx (32% among survey respondents and 44% in the general student population) and Black/African American (2.7% among survey respondents and 5% in the general student population), and an overrepresentation for students who identify as White (32% among survey respondents and 27% in general student population) and those who selected multiple race/ethnicity categories (17% of survey respondents and 12% in the general student population)[1].

In addition, first-generation college attendance was equally represented among survey respondents as in previous student survey samples as well as in a given enrollment term for the general student population[2]. The proportions for various age groups of the survey respondents was generally reflective of the general student population's age group proportions. [3] With regard to residence, a large majority of survey respondents, 68%, indicated that they lived in Santa Clarita Valley[4]. This is consistent with institutional analyses where in-district students comprised 65% of all enrolled (fall 2018).

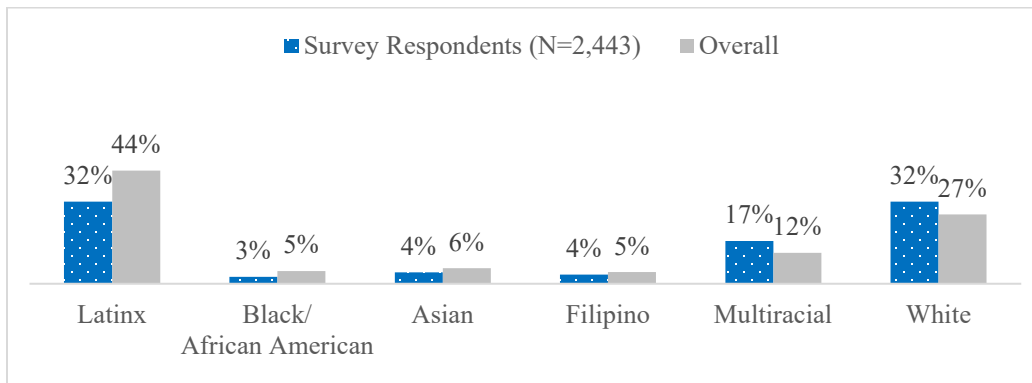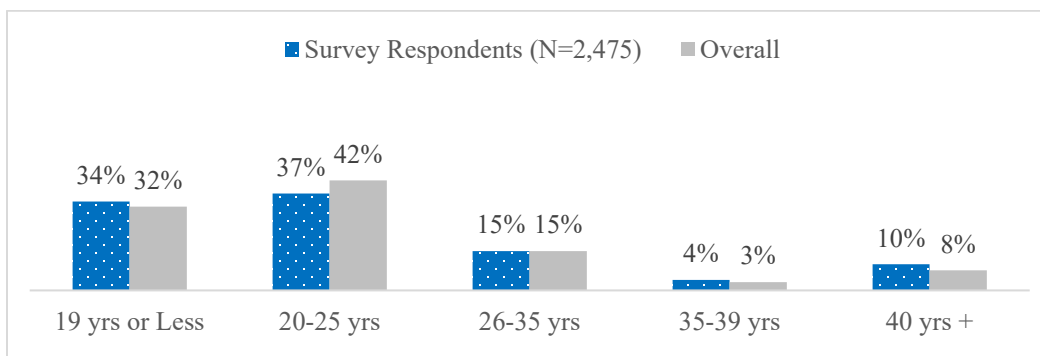*Figure 1. Race/ethnicity among Survey Respondents vs. overall student population*

Figure 2. Age groups among Survey Respondents vs. overall student population

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[1] The general comparison for race/ethnicity was based on the 2018-19 academic year enrolled students with a denominator of roughly 21,890 students (excluding ISAs).
[2] https://www.canyons.edu/_resources/documents/administration/irpie/fall19datahighlights.pdf
[3] The age comparison was based on fall 2019 actively enrolled students excluding Instructional Service Agreement (ISAs) students since the survey was not available to that group.
[4] The comparison was based on institutional enrollment data (320 enrollment file) where ISAs were excluded. When ISAs are included, the online-only rate decreases to 12% and face-to-face rate increases to 60%.

As an additional comparison for determining whether the sample of survey respondents was representative of the larger student population, the mode in which students were enrolled in at the beginning of the spring term was examined. Spring enrollment mode was derived from two separate survey questions where students were first asked to self-report their enrollment type with options like: I was only enrolled in online/hybrid classes, I was only enrolled in face-to-face classes, and I was enrolled in both online and face-to-face classes. Another question asked students about the location of their spring 2020 courses ranging from Valencia, Canyon country campus, to online, or other locations including local high school. Responses that were validated across both of questions were included in the analyses. Although, in general, 13% of students were enrolled in online-only courses, this rate was 7% among survey respondents based on their self-reported enrollment type. Inversely, the representation of face-to-face-only students was higher among survey respondents (65%) in comparison to the general student population (56%).

Figure 3. Spring 2020 Enrollment Mode among Survey Respondents vs. general student population
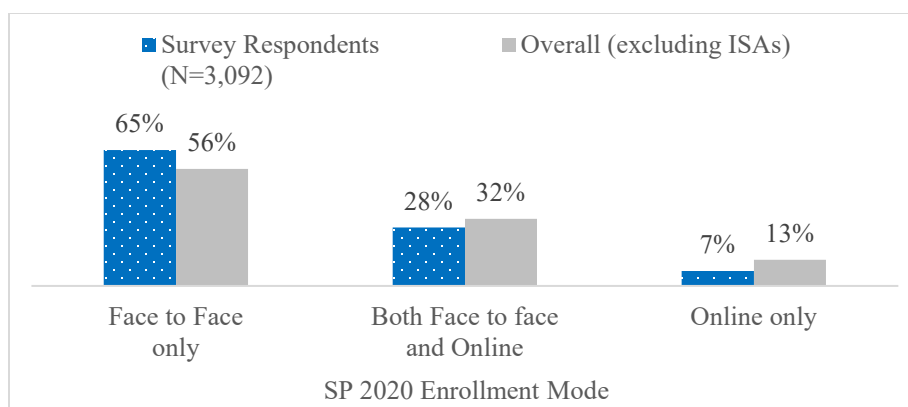
Results

Student Affiliation

Students were asked whether they were part of a listed program/special population on campus and a total of 2,098 students responded to the question. The majority, 1,433 students, indicated that they were not part of any of the programs. Representation of college promise students was the highest with 277 students indicating that they were part of the program. Students affiliated with the Disabled Student Programs & Services was the next most common group that was represented among survey respondents followed by college assistants. Table 1 presents additional groups that were selected (percentages are not reported because students could be participants in multiple programs).

Table 1. Student Affiliation with Special Populations. Mark all that apply (N=2,098)

Special Population Type	N
College Promise	277
Disabled Students Programs & Services	166
College Assistant	75
Concurrent Enrollment/High School Student	61
Veteran	59
CalWORKs	47
COC Athletics	46
Associated Student Government (ASG)	13
Foster Youth/RISE Program	10
None of the above.	1,433

Learning Assessment

One question about student experiences on the survey asked about how well students perceived their learning to be in an online environment in comparison to an on-campus, classroom format. Overall, respondents indicated that they are "not able to learn as well" in an online format as in an on-campus format (62%) followed by those who indicated that they "learn about the same" (25%) with 13% indicating that they learn better in an online environment. These rates varied when the responses were disaggregated by the type of courses students were enrolled in at the beginning of the spring term. For those who were enrolled in online-only courses, only 22% indicated that they are "not able to learn as well" whereas this proportion was 69% among those who were enrolled in face-to-face-only courses (Figure 4). In addition, to the type of courses students were enrolled in at the beginning of the spring term, another background question addressed the level of experience students have with various modes *prior* to the spring term. The same pattern held when the learning experience was disaggregated by experience with various enrollment modes. Students reporting that they had previously only taken online classes before this semester were less likely to select the "I'm not able to learn as well in an online environment" (35%) in comparison to those indicating that they had taken both online and face-to-face courses (58%) and those indicating that they had only enrolled in face-to-face courses (69%).

Figure 4. Assessment of Learning in Online format in comparison to on-campus format by Enrollment mode in Spring 2020
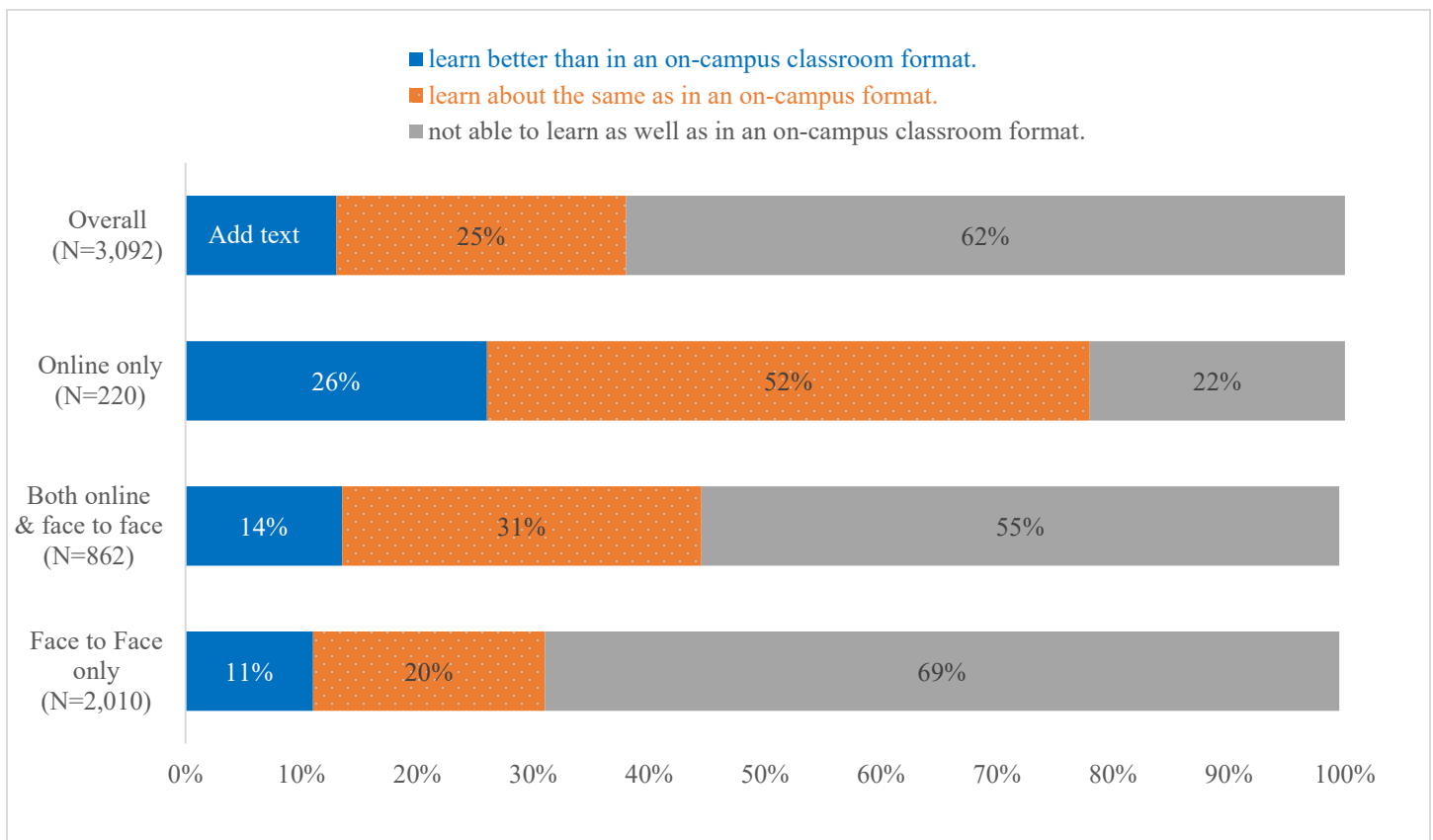
Learning assessment was further disaggregated by various demographic factors, and age was the correlate that showed the most variability in whether students perceived to learn better, the same, or not as well in an online format (Figure 5).

Respondents who self-reported an age of 25 years or older[5] were less likely to indicate "not able to learn as well" (49%) whereas 65% of respondents who were younger than 25 indicated so (Figure 5). This correlation is also largely due to the pattern that older students are more likely to be online-only students than students who are 19 or less, again alluding to the significance of enrollment mode in assessment of learning in an online environment.

Figure 5. Assessment of Learning in Online format in comparison to on-campus, classroom format by Age group
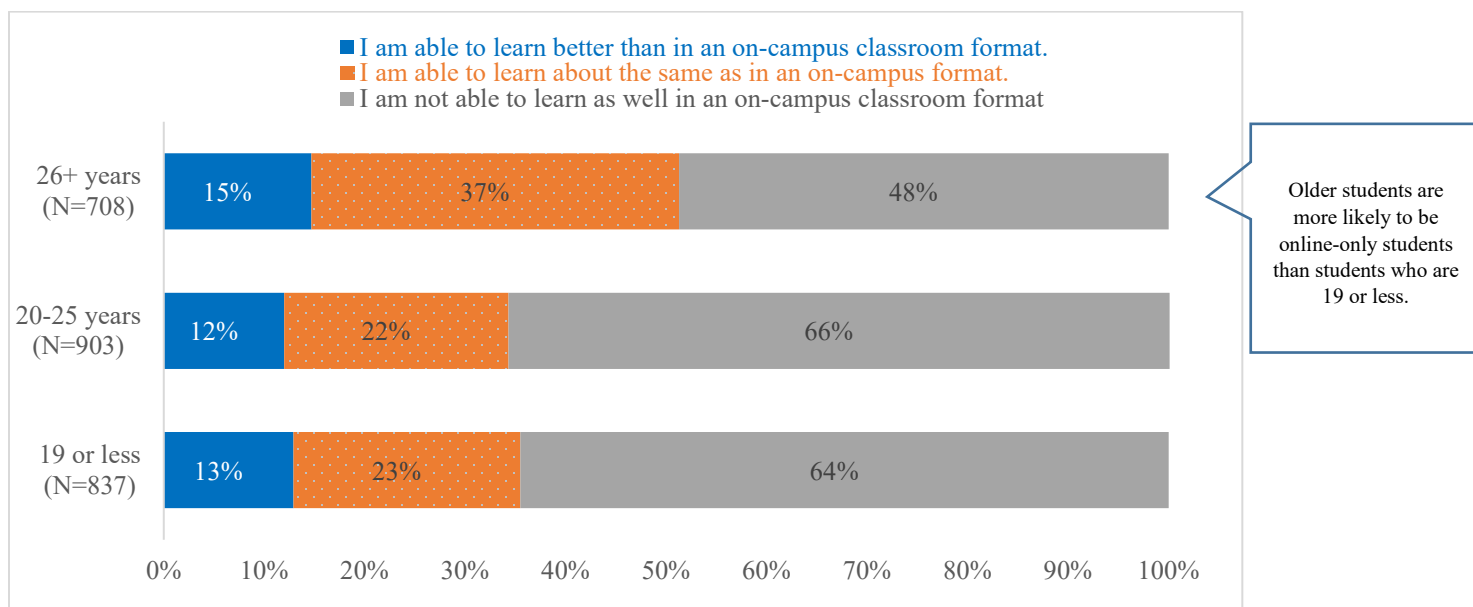
Student Engagement

Since the face-to-face component of learning and engaging with other students was no longer a viable option, the survey asked students about how they were engaging with other students remotely. Students could select multiple options and the most common response was social platforms like Zoom, Google hangouts, Discord followed by Canvas. The third most common was students who indicated that they do not currently engage with, or connect with other students.

Table 2. Student Engagement Platforms (Most to least common)

Platform Type	N
Social platforms (e.g. Confer Zoom, Google hangouts, Discord)	1,341
Canvas in courses	1,142
I do not currently engage/connect with other students.	914
Email/Text/Phone calls	121
Clubs/Orgs	117
Alliances	75

Recommendations

Based on the overview and results of the COVID19 student survey on learning assessment, enrollment mode and student engagement results, the following recommendations should be taken into consideration:

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[5] Rates were similar across age-groups older than 25 so these groups were combined and doing so also balanced the group sizes per age group.

- Consider implementing and promoting support services for the majority of students who perceive that they do not learn as well in online environments as in an on-campus format.

- Explore options for promoting student-to-student engagement in courses as it contributes to student success.

For questions about this research brief, please contact Preeta Saxena, Ph.D., Senior Research Analyst (661)362-3072, or Daylene Meuschke, Ed.D., Associate V.P. Institutional Research, Planning and Institutional Effectiveness at 661.362.5329. The Institutional Research, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness office is located in BONH-224 on the Valencia campus.