Supporting Students With Disabilities To Be Successful In An Online Learning Environment

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Pivot to Remote Learning - Spring 2020

Chat Poll Questions:

- Did you teach remotely during the spring 2020 semester?
- Have you been trained to teach online before the pandemic?
- Did you consider digital material accessibility when teaching remotely?
65% of faculty had no prior online teaching experience before the pandemic.

—Lederman (2020)
Purpose of the Study

This study was designed to:

• Determine what factors contributed to SWD’s positive and challenging experiences transitioning to online learning in the spring 2020 semester due to COVID-19.

• Determine what types of support The Community College (a pseudonym) offered to help SWD complete their online courses and how the LMS played a role in SWD learning online.

• Identify how the experiences of SWD registered in face-to-face courses who were forced online differ from SWD who were previously voluntarily enrolled in online courses.
Research Questions

1. In the transition to learning online in the spring semester of 2020, what types of support(s) did the college offer to help SWD complete their courses?

2. What were the positive experiences of learning online for SWD?

3. What were the challenges of learning online for SWD?

4. What factors helped SWD to cope during the transition from face-to-face to online learning?

5. Did the LMS present challenges or help SWD with learning online?

6. Did SWD, who were forced online during the transition, encounter additional positive or challenging experiences in comparison to SWD who chose voluntarily to take online courses?
METHODOLOGY
Data Collection and Instrumentation

Qualitative and Quantitative Qualtrics Survey

- **Likert-scale questioning** related to SWD positive and challenging experiences in their transition to online learning in spring 2020.

- **Open-ended questions** were used to gain a further understanding of the SWD positive and challenging experiences with the college support, coping skills, and LMS tools they utilized during the transition to online learning.

Semi-structured interviews

- The survey invited students to volunteer to participate in semi-structured interviews to expand on their responses in the survey. **All SWD declined to participate in the interviews.**

- Vice President for Academic Affairs of The Community College
Ten students with a diagnosed disability (disclosed and not disclosed) participated in the survey.

Participants

All 1,746 students who attended The Community College in spring 2020 and enrolled in face-to-face and online courses received a survey invitation.
Age of Participants

- 18-20: 30% (n=10)
- 20-29: 30% (n=10)
- 30-39: 20% (n=10)
- 40-49: 20% (n=10)
Participant Breakdown:

- Mental health: 30%
- Learning disability: 20%
- Neuro-cognitive difference (ADHD and Autism): 10%
- Chronic pain disorder: 10%
- Chronic post-traumatic stress disorder: 10%
- Multiple disabilities: 10%
- Mental health and other disabilities: 10%
Online Learning Experience of Participants

- 40% No online courses
- 20% One online course
- 20% Two online courses
- 10% Four or more courses
- 10% Four online courses
RESEARCH QUESTION 1
The top five just-in-time support services the college offered to help SWD complete their courses during the transition to remote learning

- Financial Aid
- Technical Support
- Chat function for immediate help
- Student Support Services
- Academic Advising
RESEARCH QUESTION 2

The positive experiences of remote learning for SWD

- 80% Ease of access to grades in the LMS
- 70% Access to the LMS on any technology device
- 70% Overall comfort using the LMS

Blackboard
RESEARCH QUESTION 2
The positive experiences of remote learning for SWD

Images and Videos

89%
SWD found using websites helpful

89%
SWD found images incorporated into course content helpful.

89%
SWD found instructor created videos helpful.
RESEARCH QUESTION 2
The positive experiences of remote learning for SWD

100%
SWD found their instructors helpful in providing course accommodations.

100%
Of the four SWD who used accommodations in their remote courses, all agreed that accommodations helped them complete their remote courses.
RESEARCH QUESTION 3

The top five challenging experiences of remote learning for SWD

- Testing Services
- Awareness of Student Accessibility Services (SAS)
- Lack of Confidence in remote learning
- Lack of Counseling Services
- Difficulty in communication and interaction
RESEARCH QUESTION 3

The top five challenging experiences of remote learning for SWD

- **Testing Services**
  - **60%** SWD found it difficult to take exams in Blackboard.

- Out of the 50% of SWD who were dissatisfied with testing services, **30% of the students had a mental health disorder.**
RESEARCH QUESTION 3

The top five challenging experiences of remote learning for SWD

- **Awareness of SAS**
  - 60% of SWD did not disclose their disability to the college.
  - Of the SWD who did not disclose their disability, **83% had a mental health disorder.**
“I didn't think there was anything they [SAS] could do/embarrassed.”

—A student with a mental health disability
RESEARCH QUESTION 3
The top five challenging experiences of remote learning for SWD

50% of SWD did not use counseling services during remote learning.

Lack of Counseling and Psychological Services
RESEARCH QUESTION 3

The top five challenging experiences of remote learning for SWD

- 50% lack of confidence in organizing online coursework
- 50% lack of confidence in meeting assignment deadlines
- 30% lack of confidence in taking notes during class instruction
- 30% lack of confidence in meeting assignment deadlines
- 30% lack of confidence in taking notes during class instruction
“I have ADHD, and trying to pay attention to a computer all day or remember to do more work at home is extremely difficult.”

—A student with ADHD
Forty percent of SWD had difficulty with communicating with faculty and classmates in their remote courses.

Fifty percent of SWD identified as dissatisfied with faculty and classmate interaction.
Students with mental health disorders or a combination of mental health and other disorders reported 20% extremely dissatisfied with Technology Services and 10% extremely dissatisfied with Tutoring Services than other disability types.
RESEARCH QUESTION 4
The top five support services/people that SWD found very helpful to helpful during the transition to remote learning

Classmates: 80%
Friends: 70%
Faculty: 70%
Academic Advising: 70%
Financial Aid services: 60%
RESEARCH QUESTION 4

The people/services that were ranked by SWD as not helpful at all or did not use [these] services offered by The Community College.

- Counseling and Psychological Services: 60%
- Student Accessibility Services: 50%
- Tutoring Services: 50%
- Student Support Services: 40%
RESEARCH QUESTION 5

The challenges of the Blackboard LMS during remote learning for SWD

- Difficulty with the submission of assignments: 40%
- Difficulty with the organization of the course: 30%
- Difficulty communicating with faculty and classmates: 40%
- Difficulty taking online exams: 60%
RESEARCH QUESTION 5

The helpfulness of the Blackboard LMS during remote learning for SWD

- Comfort level using LMS: 60%
- Ease of access to course grades: 70%
- Ease of access to LMS on any technology device: 80%
RESEARCH QUESTION 6

The differences between the SWD who were forced to take remote courses compared to those who voluntarily enrolled in online courses

SWD who had taken **more than four online courses** at The Community College before the remote transition were *slightly* more confident with:

- Finishing assignments by deadlines,
- Organizing their instructional materials, such as creating study aids and completing course readings for online coursework,
- Taking notes during online class instruction,
- Using the library to get information for online assignments, and
- Participating in online class discussions
Summary of the Findings
SWD OVERALL POSITIVE EXPERIENCES

- Comfort using Blackboard
- Ease of access to grades
- Instructors providing accommodations
- Use of images and video in instructional course materials
SWD OVERALL CHALLENGING EXPERIENCES

- Faculty and peer communication
- Online testing services
- Confidence with remote learning
- Lack of knowledge of Student Accessibility Services
Graduate and professional students with major depressive disorders were two times higher in 2020 than in 2019, and diagnosed generalized anxiety disorders were 1.5 times higher in students than in 2019.

—(Chirikov et al., 2020)
Reflection

Padlet Reflection Questions:
https://padlet.com/danalgullo/evj8yghck01tjal6

● What were your positive experiences of remote learning?
● What were your challenging experiences of remote learning?
## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR H.E.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Higher Education (H.E.)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expand Office of Disability Services outreach for students with mental health disorders</td>
<td>Institutions should focus on mental health awareness and support services. Colleges and Universities should offer free counseling and psychological services on campus and online through web conferencing.</td>
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<td>Promote mental health awareness</td>
<td>Office of Disability Services and Instructional Designers should partner to offer Universal Design for Learning, mental health awareness, and accommodation laws workshops for faculty.</td>
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<td>Lack of online course design or online teaching pedagogy training</td>
<td>Create an Instructional Design and Technology team to assist faculty in online course design, provide strategies to increase faculty and student interaction, UDL training, and provide faculty with alternative testing options that meet the needs of SWD.</td>
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<td>Lack of student training on online learning skills and LMS tools</td>
<td>IDT could collaborate with Student Academic Services to create a required training course that focuses on the LMS tool basics and how to be a successful online student that focuses on time management and independent learning skills.</td>
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Thank You!

Feel free to contact me:

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REFERENCES


