Online Learning: What the Students Are Saying?

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Sarah McKinley (Class of 2019) & Chandler Randol (Class of 2018)

27th Annual Ann Ferren Conference on Teaching, Research, and Learning
Friday, January 8, 2016
What are students saying about their online learning courses?
Let's ask them...

http://i.imgur.com/sfoMh.jpg
Schedule:

-- We'll consider data from the 80 undergraduate 2015 summer online courses Student Evaluations of Teaching (SETs)

-- We'll listen to dozens of students tell us in their own words what they do and don't like in online courses

-- We'll talk about what it takes to build and sustain productive, enjoyable, rewarding online-course communities

-- We'll hear from two AU undergrads about their own online-course experiences

-- We'll open the room for discussion so we can learn from each other
Examining the SETs data from
2015 Summer Online – 80 undergraduate courses:

- Students want good activities
- Students want good instructor feedback
- Good activities and good feedback are necessary but not sufficient
- Class size matters
- Response rate invalidates all this?
Yes, of course – close relation between instructor evaluation and course evaluation – the instructor is integral to a good course
Relationship between instructor feedback and course evals – esp. for lower course evals

y = 0.6463x + 1.9504  
$R^2 = 0.623$

y = 0.587x + 1.4757  
$R^2 = 0.6357$

y = 0.1944x + 4.9462  
$R^2 = 0.1484$
Relationship between activities and course evals – esp. for lower course evals (no, not as dramatic as for feedback)
If you look at the whole universe, class size doesn't seem to matter – but...
**Sweet Spot:** 8 to 10 students

**Avg Course Evals > 6.0:** 6, 8, 9, 16, 18 students

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<th>courses</th>
<th>students</th>
<th>avg eval</th>
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<td>4 - 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>8 - 10</td>
<td>6.05</td>
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<td>19</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>20 - 29</td>
<td>5.07</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>33, 43</td>
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<th>courses</th>
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<td>14</td>
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<td>22</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>21 to 33</td>
<td>5.22</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>&gt;40</td>
<td>1.5</td>
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Bar chart showing class size groups and course evaluations.
We probably need to be a little skeptical of all this because of the very low response rates

• only 12% of courses had > 33% response rate
• 3/4 had ≤ 25% response rate
• > 25% had only one response
• > 33% had only 1 or 2 responses
• no obvious relation btw response rate and course eval
What about when you actually talk to students? (which we will be doing here in a few minutes)

LIKES:
Convenience and flexibility - for work, intern, travel, etc.
- although need structure too
  - some struggle for self-discipline w/o class times
- less stress, my own pace
- time to reflect before answering (cf. a classroom)
Accessible instructors - for questions, but also a one-time individual video chat (office hrs)
- at least one synchronous, live online get-together
- ask questions of us outside of class – ask/gauge how we are doing
LIKES, continued

Great communities: how to do that?
   Melissa Young is next...

Videos from the instructors
   - introducing the topic each week, etc.
   - not 40-min lectures, but solid intros, connecting the dots, etc.

Variety of presentations
   - books, videos, range of online sources, etc.
   - balance between text and video
LIKES, continued

Technical favorites:
-- ability to speed video to 1.5x speed
-- transcript with video
-- good online collaboration tools
   (Facebook, wordpress, LinkedIn, Google Docs, etc.)
DISLIKES

Lack of interaction with other students
- they don’t want it to be an "independent study"
- tough to get "hallway chatter" about assignments, etc.
- I suggest an "online hallway" - forum for
  unsupervised/ungraded student interaction
- they want to learn from other students
- on the other hand: needs to be useful interaction
- group assignments can be "torture"
- and most students repeat same thing in discussions
DISLIKES, cont'd

Unavailable / unresponsive instructors
- I have a question....
- How am I doing / how can I do better?

Technical / pedagogical:
- unorganized / difficult to navigate web pages
- reliance on textbooks instead of online opportunities (CSPAN, Netflix, loc.gov, etc.)
- preference for a few, high-point deliverables of classroom over many low-point deliverables typical of online courses
But one thing we don't ask about on the SETs is,

*How was your learning community?*

...next panelists on this
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But you do have to wonder: to what degree did Holbrooke make himself the hero of the tale? Did he leave anything out?

estsi1
October 22, 2015 at 1:02 am

Nice approach, Katalin. Holbrooke was indeed an oversized personity whom many dismissed as arrogant (compare, for example) the short clips we see of SecState Warren Christopher. Do you think that approach was helpful in the BIH process?

krs018
October 24, 2015 at 1:47 am

It was definitely a strange experience for me watching the clips. I read the entire book BEFORE watching the clips, and after finally

I enjoyed reading Holbrooke this week; I found him to be informative and his perspective fair and honest. A few things struck me as particularly

interesting; I think what influenced me most seems to have been him as
Panelists:

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