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Kapi'olani Community College Online Learner Experience

Results and Analysis of Distance
Education Student Survey,
Spring 2018



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Introduction

Distance Education (DE) classes are particularly advantageous for non-traditional students who need a flexible schedule to accommodate their work and family obligations.¹ DE classes also support transfer pathways that prepare indigenous, local, national, and international students to further their education by overcoming the geographical and synchronous time constraints. In light of the broad access to education that DE enables, the DE Implementation Team at Kapi'olani Community College (Kapi'olani CC) conducted surveys to evaluate student and faculty experiences in DE. The DE Student Survey asked students to identify strengths and weaknesses in their online education. This report summarizes the successes as well as areas of needed improvement according to their responses that can help to inform program and institutional planning and support accreditation goals.

Methods

On March 19, 2018, a survey invitation was emailed via the University of Hawai'i (UH) system to 4,555 Kapi'olani CC students who were actively enrolled at the time of survey distribution and had enrolled in at least one DE class in Fall 2017 and/or Spring 2018 semesters. These learners could have previously taken online courses through other campuses in addition to their experience in Kapi'olani CC's DE classes. A total of 378 students participated in the survey; 323 students completed the survey while 55 students partially completed the survey. Although an 8% return rate was lower than anticipated, results were still representative of the population (95% confidence level; 5% margin of error).² The survey remained open until April 13, 2018 with reminders sent to non-survey-completers on April 2, 2018 and April 9, 2018.

The survey had a total of 29 questions: 24 quantitative and 5 open-ended. Questions 1 through 5 established the respondent profile such as gender, age, ethnicity, location of principal residence, and the number of hours worked for pay and/or caring for dependents. Question 6 asked about their familiarity with various student services, information, and resources that the College offers both on-campus and online. For questions 17-20, 21-24, and 25-28, online experience questions were repeated for students who (1) took only one online class (Questions 17-20), (2) the worst online learning experience for students who took more than one online class (Questions 21-24), and (3) the best online learning experience for students who took more than one online class (Questions 25-28). The four repeated questions were as follows:

¹ Park, J. H. & Choi, H. J. (2009) Factors influencing adult learners' decision to drop out or persist in online learning. *Educational Technology & Society*, 12 (4), 207-217.

² Nulty, D. (2008). The adequacy of response rates to online and paper surveys: What can be done? *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 33(3), 301-314.

- Q17, 21, 25: Please provide feedback regarding your online experience:
 - The class site (in Lualima or another learning management system) was easy to navigate and well organized. [Agree|Disagree]
 - The class was challenging in a way that motivated me to learn. [Agree|Disagree]
 - The feedback provided by the instructor was helpful. [Agree|Disagree]
 - The instructor sent out regular announcements and reminders to help me stay on track. [Agree|Disagree]
 - Online interactions with classmates and the instructor helped me to learn. [Agree|Disagree]
- Q18, 22, 26: The teacher or a counselor contacted me when I was struggling with my studies to help me get the assistance I needed. [Yes|No|N/A]
- Q19, 23, 27: If you could do it again, and if you had a choice, would you take the same class online (rather than face-to-face)? [Yes|No]
- Q20, 24, 28: Why did you choose the answer above? [open-ended]

[Appendix 1: DE Student Survey Questions](#) shows the survey as deployed to the DE students.

Results

Quantitative Results

Survey Respondent Profile

Most survey respondents are female (73%), 20 years or older (87%), and live on O’ahu (87%). They also work for pay (74%) and provide care for dependents (53%), which explains their top reason for choosing to learn online: “Flexible schedule to fit my work and/or life situation” (81%). Seventy-eight percent had taken an online class prior to the school year that they were surveyed, and 33% said they were enrolled in all online classes at the time of survey. (See [Appendix 2: Survey Responses](#).)

What They Most Liked and Found Most Challenging In Online Learning

Flexibility was also the most liked factor in online learning. When asked what they liked about online learning in general, the respondents chose:

- More flexible for my work schedule/life situation (86%)
- I could do it on my own time (77%)
- Allowed for more flexible ways to learn (56%)
- Accommodated where I live (e.g. save time and gas OR off-island) (55%)

- I liked working independently (52%).

The challenges of online learning cited were:

- I need more self-discipline and motivation to complete classwork (40%)
- Once I fell behind, it was difficult to catch up (22%)
- It's hard for me to do the work without a teacher to help me in person (20%)
- My instructor was slow to respond (19%)
- The class setup was confusing and hard to follow (17.5%)

Experiences Specific to Online Classes

Responses to questions regarding experiences specific to online classes showed that course design (Q17, Q21, Q25) did not influence the overall experience as much as being contacted by the teacher or a counselor when they struggled (Q18, Q22, Q26). ([See Appendix 3: Online Learning Specifics by Best vs. Worst Experience.](#))

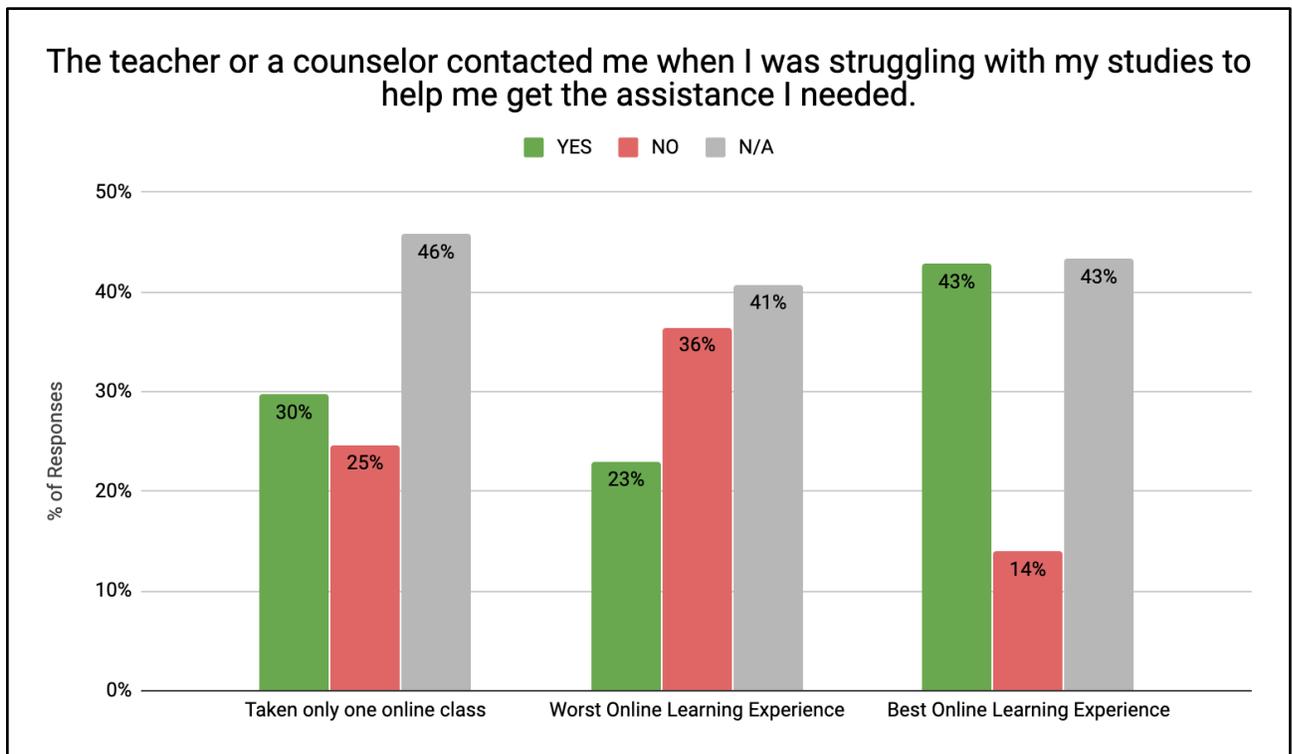


Figure 1. Student experience of being contacted by the teacher or counselor, in the worst vs. best online classes.

Qualitative Results: Strengths

In addition to the 24 multiple-choice questions regarding learner profile and general learning and student support experience, the five open-ended questions resulted in valuable insights into students' online learning experience. Each open-ended question had a response rate of 61%, 25%, 51%, 46%, and 48%, resulting in an average response rate of 46%. A qualitative analysis was conducted by categorizing all 871 open-ended responses into 29 different theme areas that are detailed in [Appendix 4: Qualitative Responses Summarized by Theme Areas](#). The responses in each theme area was further grouped into positive experience/strengths vs. negative experience/challenges.

According to the qualitative student responses, the following five areas are the strengths of DE class offerings at Kapi'olani CC:

1. Convenience/Schedule (117 mentions)
2. Course Design (111 mentions)
3. Teacher/Teaching (69 mentions)
4. Learning (40 mentions)
5. Student Factors (17 mentions)

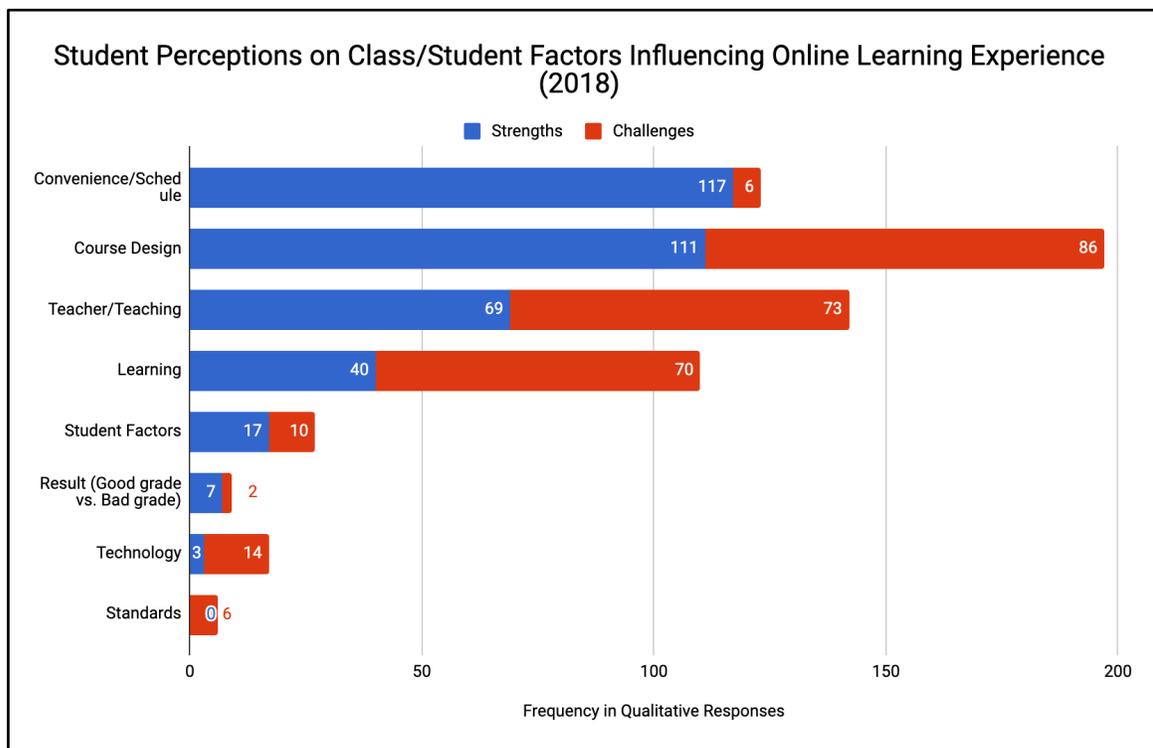


Figure 2. Student perceptions on class/student factors influencing online learning experience, strengths & challenges.

1. Convenience/Schedule

Questions related to convenience/schedule covered the following areas:

- a. Pacing
- b. Saves time
- c. Schedule
- d. Traffic/parking
- e. Flexibility
- f. Live at a distance

Summary of Findings: Convenience and flexibility were the most positive qualities that students appreciated about DE classes. As one student commented, "More classes offered online would be awesome, especially for those who aren't able to attend classes in person." As the majority of Kapi'olani CC students are categorized as non-traditional students, it is important to provide courses that have the flexibility to meet the varying needs of this population that are often working adults with multiple responsibilities. Neighbor island students also take DE courses through Kapi'olani CC and these students are also an important part of our student body.

2. Course Design

Questions related to course design encompassed the following areas:

- a. Navigation and organization
- b. Clear patterns, instructions, expectations, course schedule
- c. Interactive design
- d. Static vs. dynamic course content
- e. Amount and difficulty of work
- f. Alignment with objectives: learning activities, resources, and assessments
- g. Currency of content
- h. Testing policies or F2F component
- i. Course materials
- j. Learning resources/OER
- k. General

Summary of Findings: Students commended courses with clear patterns, instructions, expectations, and schedule. According to one student, "The best course I took online at KCC provided the reading list and essay topics with due dates and requirements on day one, had an optional weekly chat session in the evenings, all exams and quizzes were taken online at home, opened the weekly test on Monday, and required only that it be completed by the following Monday." Students appreciated interactive activities and if a course offered Open

Educational Resources (OER). They commended the navigation and organization of particular courses and the alignment with objectives and activities with meaningful content and assessments.

3. Teacher/Teaching

Questions related to teacher/teaching encompassed the following areas:

- a. Empathy
- b. Engagement, passion, dedication
- c. Quality feedback
- d. Responsive/availability
- e. Grade updates frequency
- f. Supportive/encouraging/ helpful/friendly
- g. Regular communication
- h. Fairness
- i. General

Summary of Findings: Many students shared positive comments about their online instructors. As one student mentioned, “The best online course I had, the instructor was quick to respond to emails and updating course grades. This helped me stay on track and motivated me to continue working hard and completing assignments on-time or before the due date.” Students appreciated an active, empathic online presence by their instructors as well as Regular Substantive Interaction (RSI)³, which is a federal requirement for all online courses. It is clear that just like in F2F classes, the instructor presence is an important part of online learning and student success.

4. Learning

Questions related to learning covered the following areas:

- a. Preference (online vs F2F)
- b. Depth of Learning
- c. Content matches mode of delivery

Summary of Findings: Many students enjoyed online classes and preferred online learning. One respondent shared, “I felt like with my best experience with online courses I was able to feel more like I had control over what I was doing, and felt more comfortable.” For self-motivated and dedicated students, online learning clearly has many advantages for these

³ Online Learning Consortium, et al. (2018). *Regular and substantive interaction: background, concerns, and guiding principles*. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED593878.pdf>

individuals and many appreciated the unique mode of delivery and activities that online learning provides.

5. Student Factors

Questions related to student factors encompassed the following areas:

- a. Motivation/Self-discipline
- b. Time management
- c. Persistence
- d. Learner orientation
- e. Level of interest in content

Summary of Findings: For busy students, online learning is an attractive option that can help them achieve their educational goals while balancing their personal lives. As one student testified, "Online classes are a valuable educational system for many. Please continue to offer as many online courses as you can." Students were successful when they possessed a high level of self-discipline and motivation and were willing to persist throughout an entire semester of courses. As it has been recognized that the majority of online students are older female students, it might be helpful to identify additional personal factors that makes them successful in online learning.

Qualitative Results: Areas of Needed Improvement

Areas of improvement are important to address as they will help identify areas of needed action and possibly institutional resources. It is interesting to note, however, that while the first two areas (Course Design and Teacher/Training) are also the same as the areas of strength which is class related (see Figure 1), the rest of the questions relate to issues/resources external to the classroom and thus highlight the importance of providing integrated services to provide a holistic DE support system to ensure DE class success.

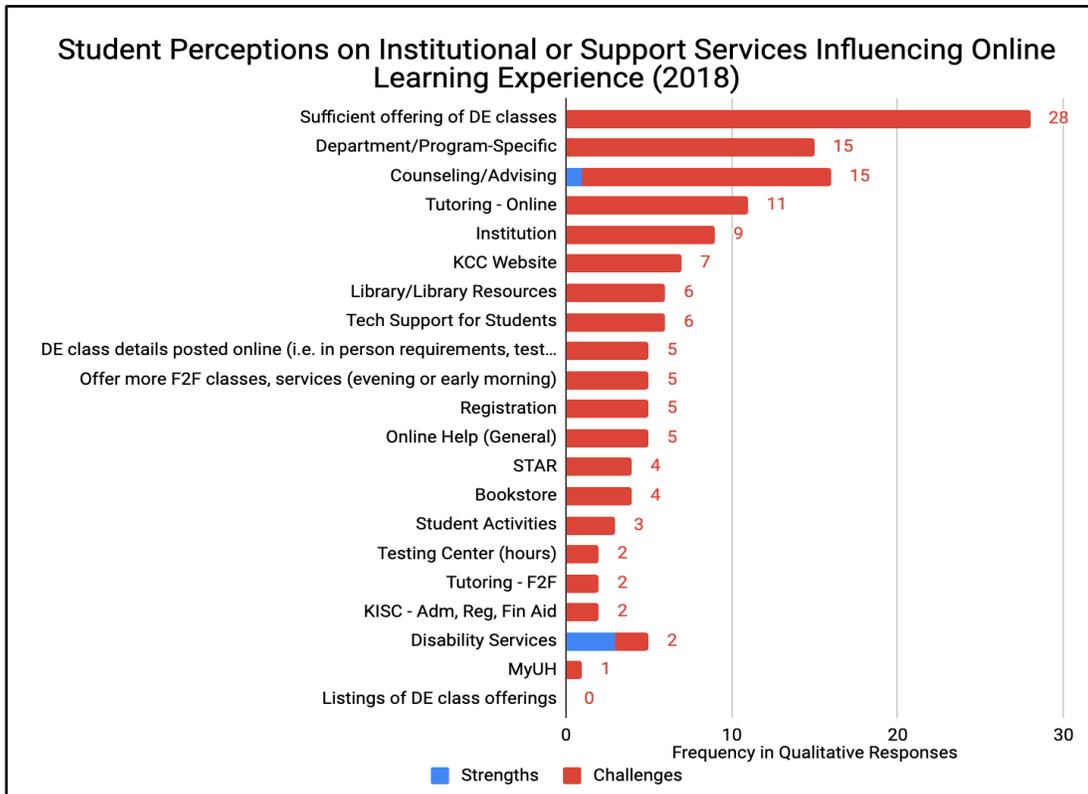


Figure 3. Student perceptions on institutional or support services influencing online learning experience.

According to student responses, the following seven categories are the notable areas of needed improvement:

1. Course Design (86 mentions)
2. Teacher/Teaching (76 mentions)
3. Sufficient Offering of DE classes (28 mentions)
4. Department/Program-Specific (15 mentions)
5. Counseling/Advising (15 mentions)
6. Tutoring (11 mentions)
7. Institution (9 mentions)

1. & 2. Course Design & Teacher/Teaching (areas covered addressed in previous section)

Findings and Observations: It is interesting to note that two categories overlapped in student responses indicating that students felt very strongly about the areas of Course Design and Teacher/Teaching. Students provided very specific comments and ways to improve online learning, such as “some online course instructors are not clear on dates at which assignments are due because they seem to be [sic] just copy/paste last semester’s info.” Students also mentioned the importance of the role of instructor in creating a positive

or negative experience as this student who noted, "I would never do it again. Even abandon the curriculum. I absolutely hate to have an instructor who is just too busy for me."

Clearly, faculty control their course design (e.g. courses updated regularly in each semester with a clear course organization), as well as their engagement level with students. These factors should be emphasized and shared with all faculty who are considering or currently teaching online.

3. Sufficient Offerings of DE classes (questions addressed this specific issue)

Findings and Observations: Some students reported that they would appreciate a greater number of online course offerings to enhance their learning and progression in their degree programs.

4. Department/Program Specific

Questions related to department/program specific covered the following areas:

- a. Availability
- b. Awareness of
- c. Availability of information posted online
- d. Response/response time

Findings and Observations: Responses pointed out that there is a lack of information posted online about general campus and program information, not limited to online programs. Responses also indicated limited operational hours, lack of response in returning phone calls, lack of perceived helpfulness at different offices across campus, etc.

5. Counseling/Advising

Questions related to counseling/advising encompassed the following areas:

1. Availability of online options
2. Ability to schedule appointments online
3. Helpfulness

Findings and Observations: Some students requested a greater availability of online options for counseling/advising, especially in relation to academic and degree planning.

6. Tutoring

Questions related to tutoring covered the following areas:

- a. Availability

- b. Availability of subjects

Findings and Observations: Some students were critical of online and face-to-face tutoring options for online students. It is important to note that the online tutoring service provider at the time of the survey (Brainfuse) has since been replaced by Tutor.com and thus future surveys need to evaluate the effectiveness of this new provider in addressing student needs.

7. Institution

Questions related to the Institution covered the following areas:

- a. Response or response time
- b. Availability of posted information online
- c. Phone (direct numbers, 24/7 services, availability)
- d. Use of varied modes to communicate (Google Hangouts, texts)

Findings and Observations: Some comments received indicated a general perception that the campus could improve in areas such as more consistent response to email messages and phone calls and that there should be clearer ways to access information related to tutoring services, student clubs, contact information for programs and individuals, and using STAR.

Next Steps/Recommendations

From the highlighted areas, it is clear that the overlap between Course Design and Teacher/Teaching, should be prioritized in future studies. It is important to note that the high rating of both factors could potentially be related to learner preferences or learning styles that were not asked of the students that could influence their answers (e.g. a student who is a kinesthetic learner may not find online education that often has a lot of visual elements/text as engaging or meaningful). In addition, 28 students commented on a lack of sufficient DE course offerings. In order to address this challenge, it is imperative for the institution to encourage and support quality DE courses, along with growth in online course offerings. The following initiatives address these important priorities of sufficient DE course offerings, course design, and teacher/teaching:

1. **Course Eligibility Form and Procedures:** In alignment with [ACCJC expectations](#), each course must be examined to determine if it should be eligible for online delivery. The DE Implementation Team developed a worksheet through the Faculty Senate Distance Education Committee (FSDE) & Faculty Senate (FS) that is in current use for all departments.

2. **Teaching Online Prep Program (TOPP):** To ensure quality online learning experience for students, TOPP provides completely online professional development for online faculty. TOPP guides faculty to design, develop, and facilitate engaging online courses that also comply with federal, state, and campus regulations and policies. Participants have expressed that the experience of being an online learner was invaluable.
3. **Required TOPP+3TEs Proposal:** To expand Kapi'olani CC's DE offerings, and in alignment with ACCJC expectations, a [2-part proposal](#) for training DE teachers was approved. The Teaching Online Prep Program (TOPP) is now required for prospective online teachers who will be awarded 3 Teaching Equivalencies in the semester they take TOPP and design the class.
4. **DE Class Review Process & Rubrics:** A proposal for a supportive review process, along with rubrics as review instruments, were created in order to expand Kapi'olani CC's DE offerings and ensure the compliance of online classes with federal and state laws and ACCJC standards. The team researched a range of similar tools they used to inform the development of two custom quality assurance rubrics for the process. These tools are intended to not only ensure DE courses meet minimum requirements, but to promote constructive, collegial conversations about continuous improvement of DE course design and facilitation in a cost-effective review process. The DE Class Review Process was approved in November of 2019, rubrics (developed by the DE Implementation Team) will be finalized and peer reviewers will be trained in Spring 2020, and the Process will be implemented beginning in Fall 2020.
5. **Development of Online Certificate & Degree Pathways:** Related to the issue of offering more online courses is the development of more online certificate and degree pathways. Progress is being made in this particular area. As of Spring 2020, Kapi'olani CC will have a fully-online AA Degree pathway, AA Degree with concentrations, and certificates available in the following areas:

Degrees & Concentrations currently available:

- Associate of Arts (AA) in Liberal Arts
- AA in Liberal Arts with a Concentration in Business Administration
- AA in Liberal Arts with a Concentration in Family Resources
- AA in Liberal Arts with a Concentration in Secondary Education

Certificates of Competence

- Certificate of Competence - Entrepreneurship
- Certificate of Competence - Management
- Certificate of Competence - Payroll Preparer

Certificate of Competence - Tax Preparer

Other concentrations and certificates scheduled to be available in Fall 2020:

Degrees & Concentrations

Associate of Arts (AA) in Hawaiian Studies

Associate of Science (AS) in Information Technology

Certificates of Achievement

Certificate of Achievement - Accounting

Certificate of Achievement - Information Technology

Certificate of Achievement - Information Security and Assurance

Certificates of Competence

Certificate of Competence - Help Desk Services

Certificate of Competence - Information Security and Assurance

Certificate of Competence - Programming

6. **Online Course Components:** In an effort to address student needs and comments received related to all components of a class being able to be completed regardless of location, efforts are being made to reconsider accessibility and communication with students. The college has secured a contract with ProctorU to provide the option of online test proctoring. Online instructors are reminded to re-examine their course components to assure that learning activities and assessments are able to be completed by students, regardless of location. Lastly, online instructors are encouraged to provide information that appears in the comments that are listed with online classes to indicate any specific requirements of time or location in order for students to be aware of these factors at the time they are selecting and registering in online classes.
7. **Tech Support for Students:** Although this issue was mentioned only 6 times in the qualitative responses, it is an ongoing issue often discussed by the Library who is currently shouldering the burden of giving tech support to all students, including online students. Some student responses indicated a need/desire for technology support. In 2018, Student Congress conducted a student survey about student interest in on-campus technical support. While 75% of students said that they would use such a service, most students also reported that they would be unwilling to pay an extra student fee. Discussion to address this need for a designated space on-ground and on-line for students to receive tech support when they need it should continue, in order to help them succeed in online learning.

The findings of the survey also indicate institutional needs and issues that according to students need to be addressed. While survey findings can be divided into issues related to DE classes and external to DE classes, it is clear that a holistic approach and understanding of DE issues is needed to ensure DE student learning, achievement, and success.

Conclusion

This DE student survey is clearly aligned with Kapi'olani CC's strategic planning that promotes student success, learning, and achievement. The robust responses that the survey generated demonstrates a need for future surveys to help further identify student needs as well as positive directions in DE planning and resource and resource allocation. Informed data collection is also a critical part of assessment that will not only ensure compliance with ACCJC assessment standards, but inform future directions in DE that will shape the writing of the next DE plan. As this is the latest student survey of DE experiences at Kapi'olani Community College, disseminating these survey findings will inform major campus stakeholders (Administration, Staff, Faculty) and beyond.

Appendixes