A CASE STUDY OF STUDENT VIEWS OF AN ADULT-CENTERED PROGRAM BY SITE FOR A MULTI-SITE BUSINESS PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

Operating a college degree program at multiple sites offers many challenges. It is imperative that administrators continually review data to insure that programs offered are consistent in meeting student needs and providing quality consistency across all elements of the program(s) offered. This case study is an examination of one effort to collect data and implement statistical analysis to determine whether problem issues can be identified.

The results are useful in providing a framework by which an institution of higher learning can approach the issues of identifying concerns of students. The results can be useful to the individual institution but also provide a basis that others may wish to utilize for similar circumstances.

INTRODUCTION

The institution that is the subject of this case study operates with a main campus augmented by four regional learning centers that attract a significant number of students. At all five sites, the focus of educational services is directed towards adult students who are entering degree programs that range from the Associates degree to the Master's level graduate degrees. Other programs are offered; however, the focus of this case study is limited to the business programs.

This institution has been offering adult degree programs for over two decades. Programs have been revised over time as market conditions and internal resources have changed. Currently the programs operate with a mix of full-time and adjunct faculty members who are utilized to fulfill the mission of the institution.

In spring 2008, administrators of the business program decided to undertake a significant survey as one source of data to supplement course surveys and anecdotal information that is commonly collected in the program. Twelve hundred surveys were distributed with eight hundred twenty four completed and returned which provide the data for this analysis.

The collection of data and preparation of cross tabulation tables provided the raw data and allowed a general overview of responses. However, the authors of this study desired to use the data to make inferences that would identify issues that need to be addressed so the concept was to complete Chi-Square Tests of Independence to determine if statistically significant differences were being observed by site location and by program.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The authors of this paper found relatively limited literature on the subject of multi-campus delivery of educational services. Briscoe and de Oliver [1] provided a case study related to how a multiple campus

university affected the access to educational services for underprivileged. Their conclusions indicate that the underprivileged group is likely to receive different services at a branch campus. Dengerink [2] explored the structure of universities with multiple campuses. This non-empirical paper examines the organizational structure that affects both the overall university and local constitutencies.

METHODOLOGY

The surveys were distributed to classes in the program at all the sites. All responses were confidential and students were assured that individual forms would remain anonymous. Basic demographic information was collected that identified the degree program, the learning site attended, percent of the program completed, field of employment, and a few other items that were useful but would not identify the specific student. Participants were also afforded the opportunity to provide comments on any aspect of the program they desired and over 500 comments were received. All surveys were returned to the main campus site for tabulation and analysis.

 The survey itself focused on five main issues:

  (1) Faculty Effectiveness (16 questions)
  (2) Curriculum Effectiveness (16 questions)
  (3) Study Group Effectiveness (16 questions)
  (4) Satisfaction of students (7 questions)
  (5) Recommendations for Change (10 questions)

While the paper will be too long if all the responses to the survey are included, samples of the responses by location are shown below. The methodology for analysis will be used on all the data; however this paper will be limited to analyzing the results from a select number of questions.

RESULTS

An example of the responses received for one of the questions related to faculty effectiveness is shown below in Table 1.

Table 1. Faculty Effectiveness in Communicating Biblical Attitudes and Values, Response by Percent.

	Site 1	Site 2	Site 3	Site 4	Site 5	Overall
Not Effective	.9	1.4	.6	1.0	.5	.9
Not Very Effective	2.8	6.4	.6	.5	2.5	2.3
Somewhat Effective	10.2	21.3	18.8	19.7	10.5	16.3
Effective	43.5	39.0	44.2	40.4	41.5	41.6
Very Effective	42.6	31.9	35.7	38.5	45.0	39.0

- Note column totals may not equal 100 due to rounding

Chi-Square statistic = .31.772
p-value = .011

As shown above, the Chi-Square statistic is significant at the .05 level of significance. This indicates that students at different locations perceive a significant difference in faculty effectiveness in communicating a significant core mission of the university. This analysis does not give enough detail to show why this difference is perceived; however, it is an indication that further analysis is needed.
An example of the responses received for one of the questions relating to curriculum effectiveness is shown below in Table 2. p-Value = .181

Given the lack of significance of the Chi-Square statistic, it appears that students do not perceive a difference in the inclusion of core mission attitudes and values in the curriculum therefore there is little basis to be concerned that curriculum (in this dimension) is perceived differently at the different locations. This is the expected outcome as the same written module is provided for each course no matter at which the course is offered,

Table 2. Effectiveness in Emphasis on Biblical Attitudes and Values in Curriculum by Location, Response by Percent.

	Site 1	Site 2	Site 3	Site 4	Site 5	Overall
Not Effective	4.6	7.1	4.7	2.4	5.1	4.6
Not Very Effective	5.6	14.3	5.4	8.7	8.6	8.6
Somewhat Effective	22.2	28.6	27.5	31.4	24.4	27.2
Effective	44.4	28.6	38.9	34.8	36.0	36.1
Very Effective	23.1	21.4	23.5	22.7	25.9	23.5

- Note column totals may not equal 100 due to rounding

Chi-Square Statistic = 20.940

A central feature of the academic services offered in this program is the role of the Study Group. Adult students are assigned to groups of three to five who work on group projects and provide support and encouragement to the members of the group. Each site has Academic support personnel who provide services to students in general and Study Groups in particular. An example of the responses received for one of the questions relating to Study Group Effectiveness is shown below in Table 3. The responses to this question are significant at the .10 level of significance. At this level of significance, there appears to be differences across locations for this important component of the programs.

Table 3. Effectiveness in Study Group Communication by Location, Response by Percent.

	Site 1	Site 2	Site 3	Site 4	Site 5	Overall
Not Effective	2.9	1.4	0.0	1.0	.5	1.0
Not Very Effective	2.9	4.2	5.4	1.0	3.2	3.2
Somewhat Effective	13.5	12.5	12.8	18.2	13.4	14.4
Effective	30.8	34.0	39.6	45.3	37.6	38.4
Very Effective	50.0	47.9	42.3	34.5	45.2	43.0

- Note column totals may not equal 100 due to rounding

Chi-Square statistic = 24.924
p-value = .071

An example of the responses received for one of the questions relating to overall student satisfaction is shown below in Table 4. The results from Table 4 below confirm anecdotal evidence that had been obtained by the university. As a result , plans were made to change one of the facilities that house the offerings at Site 3 and efforts have been made to improve Site 5.

Table 4.Satisfaction With The Condition of the Facility Location, Response by Percent.

	Site 1	Site 2	Site 3	Site 4	Site 5	Overall
Very Satisfied	44.0	27.2	14.3	26.1	19.9	24.9
Satisfied	47.7	46.3	26.6	53.6	42.2	43.7
Somewhat Satisfied	6.4	13.6	26.6	12.8	24.3	17.5
Somewhat Dissatisfied	.9	10.9	18.8	6.6	7.8	9.2
Dissatisfied	.9	2.0	13.6	.9	5.8	4.7

- Note column totals may not equal 100 due to rounding

Chi-Square Test statistic = 58.32
p-value = .000

An example of the responses received for one of the questions concerning program change is shown below in Table 5. Based on these responses, it appears there are no differences in student perceptions of being offered business elective courses online which the university has not done in the past.

Overall this is a very simplistic approach to identifying significant perception differences across locations where degree programs are offered. As an initial step, this survey and statistical analysis of the data allows the university to identify the most pressing needs that should be addressed. Further analysis of the data will allow a more complete view of what is happening at each site and will provide the basis for administrators to make strategic decisions based on data rather than relying on anecdotal information.

Table 5. Attitudes Towards Offering Business Elective Courses On-Line by Location, Response by Percent.

	Site 1	Site 2	Site 3	Site 4	Site 5	Overall
A Significant Improvement	49.1	62.2	60.0	57.1	60.4	58.3
Somewhat of An Improvement	23.6	21.0	24.7	20.0	19.3	21.3
No Real Change	10.4	7.0	7.3	9.5	7.9	8.4
A Negative Effect	.9	2.1	.7	2.4	1.5	1.6
No Opinion	16.0	7.7	7.3	11.0	10.9	10.4

Chi-Square Test Statistic = 9.9
p-value =.87

REFERENCES

[1] Briscoe, Feliccia M. and Miguel de Oliver (2006) "Access to Higher Education: A Conflict Between Landed Interests and Democratic Ideals", Education and Urban Society, Vol. 38:2, pp. 204-227.

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[3] Lebowitz, Gloria (1997), "Library Service to Distant Students: An Equity Issue," The Journal of Academic Librarianship, July 1997, pp. 303-308.