

ABSTRACT

A Case Study of Community College Students' Perceptions Regarding Faculty's Practice of
Online Course Delivery: Virginia Community College

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This case study focused on students who had matriculated in online courses in the Business Management Program. The setting for the study was a Virginia community college. The purpose of this study was to examine the social, faculty and administrative, and technology influences on students' perceptions of online learning. Students' conveyed experiences and perceptions of the tools and practices faculty used to implement online learning were coded and categorized to generate grounded theory that may be used to govern distance learning implementation.

Data were collected through document reviews, semi-structured interviews, and field studies. The interview participants were selected from the 2008 graduates of the Business Management Program. Data from personal memos and field studies were collected through students' comments on individual courses. Interview data included descriptions of all the distance learning courses in which the interviewees had participated. The constant comparative method was used to analyze and code the data into themes that emerged and were applied to establish grounded theories that may prove to be useful in governing the tools and practices of distance learning in higher education.

The findings of the study indicated that as the number of online courses that a student successfully completed increased, so did the student's preference of distance learning over the

traditional classroom environment. The study also revealed that students were reluctant to participate in distance learning if their first experiences in this method of delivery had been negative; therefore, administrators should be more supportive and evaluative in selecting online faculty. Findings also indicated that even though students enjoyed the time and place flexibility and convenience of distance learning, they still expected instructors to create and implement an environment that cultivated students' social and academic success within the educational environment.