

Criminal Justice 207: Program Evaluation Research
Comparison of CCE and Ground Programs

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Project Director/Instructor:

Yvette Farmer, Ph.D.

Graduate Students (in alphabetical order):

Margaret Mickelson

Lauren Pyle

Amanda Stan

Introduction

Popularity of Online Learning

The 21st century has brought dramatic technological advancements, making daily life easier by providing more people with access to resources that were once reserved for the minority of the population. One of the advantages to increased technology is the wider span of higher education around the world. Allen and Seaman report that as many as thirty-one percent of all college and university students have completed at least one course online and that 6.1 million students were enrolled in an online course during the fall of 2010 (as cited in Rehm, Allison, Bencomo, & Godfrey, 2013, p.235). These statistics not only demonstrate the growth in popularity of online courses but also give evidence for the potential success of more completely online higher learning programs as well. The potential success of such programs, specifically for working professionals aiming to increase personal knowledge in a given field, is reflected in the online College of Continuing Education (CCE) programs at California State University, Sacramento (or Sacramento State University).

The College of Continuing Education at California State University, Sacramento

Created in 1951, the CCE was designed as an extension of Sacramento State University to provide (university) resources to a wider range of individuals in the Sacramento area. Its mission statement reads as follows:

The CCE program strengthens the academic mission of Sacramento State by connecting the resources of the campus community with the needs of individuals, employers, and the capital region (California State University, Sacramento, 2014).

To fulfill its mission statement, the CCE programs provide online degree completion, weekend courses, summer sessions, English language training, custom training, and industry credentialing

and conferences to accommodate individuals' unique schedules. Individuals may participate in the program to obtain a degree or certificate (which are normally completed in six months to a year) to advance his or her career or may enroll in classes simply to gain additional knowledge about a given subject. The CCE has been accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), which means the college has been proven worthy of the trust that has been placed in it to provide higher education. This accreditation extends to all programs of study that the CCE provides, including the Division of Criminal Justice online degree completion program (California State University, Sacramento, 2014).

The Division of Criminal Justice Online Degree Completion Program in CCE

Division policy. The Division of Criminal Justice online degree completion program is relatively new, established in AY 2006-07. It seeks to serve practitioners in the criminal justice field who have completed general education and lower division requirements, but lack access to an on-campus degree program. This degree must be managed by the Division of Criminal Justice to ensure it meets all the same academic requirements as, and is therefore equivalent to, an on-campus (or ground program) degree.

This CCE program operates somewhat independently by assuming all the costs of marketing and student recruiting. However, the Division of Criminal Justice still has a large amount of control, as the Division Chair must approve the CCE Program Coordinator. The Coordinator, working with the Division Chair, schedules courses for the CCE program. This schedule should be consistent with student and program needs and reflect the diversity of courses offered on campus.

Instructors in the CCE program, who are primarily full-time faculty members in the Division, can also play a role in determining which courses are offered by requesting certain

classes to the CCE Coordinator who will relay those requests to the Chair. To teach in the program, all faculty members must meet the same qualifications as instructors teaching in the on-campus program, as well as meeting additional qualifications for online instruction. Full-time faculty members have priority over part-time faculty members in teaching within the program and the faculty assignment should be made on a rotational basis. The Chair makes the final selection of instructors based on past teaching performances and the impact that the assignment may have with regards to their ground program duties.

Courses and instructors should be evaluated using an instrument approved by the Division in accordance with University Policy. These evaluations will be reviewed by the Chair in an effort to improve program quality. Instructors will also receive a copy of these evaluations. The entire CCE program will also be reviewed through an annual report prepared by the Program Coordinator. This report will summarize activities from the previous year and will be provided to faculty prior to the spring semester break. Information in this report should include a description of the program, number of applicants, number of students enrolled, number of students graduated, number and description of courses offered, number and identification of participating instructors, and future direction and anticipated needs.

Program Coordinator visit. The Division of Criminal Justice CCE program is facilitated by Dr. Ricky Gutierrez. Dr. Gutierrez has served as the Program Coordinator since September 1, 2013. In a visit with Dr. Gutierrez, he identified certain duties that he engages in to ensure the program operates efficiently. He stated that his duties include: selecting instructors from both part-time and full-time faculty members with online teaching certification or experience to teach in the program; coordinating and analyzing the teaching load; examining courses for rigor and consistency across instructors; recruiting students for the program;

engaging in outreach for the program; advising all students enrolled in the program; evaluating transcripts, particularly student requests for transfer credits; developing a best practices rubric to make recommendations for a successful program; and determining the difference between a completely online course and a hybrid course (a course that employs both traditional classroom and online teaching methods) (R. Gutierrez, personal communication, January 31, 2014).

Dr. Gutierrez also identified certain characteristics of courses in the Division of Criminal Justice CCE program. The program runs year-round and each course runs for eight weeks. Courses are staggered, meaning that a student may begin one course and start another course a few weeks later. These course characteristics make it easy to obtain a degree within two years of beginning the program. This time frame is ideal for working professionals, displaced workers, and students outside of the University's jurisdiction; in other words, students who would otherwise be diverted from enrolling in the ground program at Sacramento State (R. Gutierrez, personal communication, January 31, 2014).

Perceived changes in the program. Since the outset of the program, Dr. Gutierrez stated that he has observed certain changes to the program regarding the student population and teaching methods employed. At the beginning of the program, there were approximately twelve students enrolled in each course at a given time. However, according to Dr. Gutierrez, there are now close to thirty students enrolled in each course, with some courses' student populations extending beyond the thirty-student cap. Dr. Gutierrez stated that this increase in students in the online program may challenge the original mission of the program, which focused on providing resources primarily to working professionals, and the change in student population begs the question of how engaged students are in such a large online environment (R. Gutierrez, personal communication, January 31, 2014).

Dr. Gutierrez also made the observation that online instructors are beginning to engage in more personal interactions with their students. According to Dr. Gutierrez, at the beginning of the program, all work, communication, and discussion were done in an online format. However, he has noticed a change in that instructors in this CCE program have begun to engage in more traditional teaching methods, encouraging students to meet and discuss in more live interactions. This increase in more personal interactions, again, suggests to Dr. Gutierrez that there is a challenge to the original mission of the program that should provide resources to those students whose schedules limit their ability to meet with others at a physical location (R. Gutierrez, personal communication, January 31, 2014).

Research Question

There have been no formal assessments of the Division of Criminal Justice CCE program but the time and opportunity for one has come. With the recent changes in the CCE program that move it away from a completely online program into a program with more traditional components, it only seems natural to compare the current online program with the ground program at Sacramento State. Therefore, the current evaluation will seek to address the following research question:

How does the Division of Criminal Justice CCE program compare to the ground program at Sacramento State with regards to:

- A) student demographics,
- B) the proportion of full-time versus part-time faculty employed,
- C) variety of courses offered,
- D) instructors' teaching experiences, and
- E) instructors' perceptions of student experiences?

Literature Review

Development of Online Education

Online education has become a staple in educational innovation during the 21st century. Snell and Penn (2005) observe that colleges and universities have expanded their missions to include online education in order to raise revenue and offer higher education to a larger population of students who may not be able to attend traditional classes (p.18). Additionally, Kaya and Tan (2014) assert that online programs offer a chance at education for all individuals, regardless of geographical or economic factors which previously prevented individuals from accessing higher education (p. 206). Online education is currently taking place in a variety of environments including non-profit traditional distance learning such as the United Kingdom's Open University, which offers courses by correspondence; traditional universities and private e-learning for profit partnerships, which include bundling services such as marketing and IT needs with traditional non-profit institutions; private for-profit companies; and for-profit universities (Snell & Penn, 2005, p. 19). Despite the expansion of online educational opportunities, McKee, Green, and Hamarman (2012) report that studies show there is no significant difference in learning outcomes between online and face-to-face courses (p. 383). This corresponds with the findings of McGready and Brookmeyer (2012) who compared student outcomes between concurrent online and on-campus sections of an introductory biostatistics course offered at a United States school of public health. Their research asserts that there are no statistically or substantively significant differences between the online and on-campus sections in the final exam scores, which was their primary outcome variable (p. 144).

The amount of online learning has increased significantly in recent years. Rehm et al. (2013) observe that sixty-five percent of higher learning institutions include online learning and

growth in online education is expected to continue at ten percent a year, while fully online programs continue to increase enrollment (p. 235). McKee et al. (2012) concur with the assumption that online education will increase and maintain that at least half of all college and university presidents predict that a majority of students will be taking online courses in ten years (p. 380). There seems to be little doubt that the trend towards online education will continue as technology provides more opportunities for both the traditional and non-traditional students.

Online Learning Communities

An online learning community is simply a virtual meeting place on the internet, either through social networking or computer technology where instructors and students can meet for the exchange of ideas and instruction (Samuel Merritt University, 2014). According to Dominguez-Flores and Wang (2011), online learning communities represent the most effective delivery format in terms of students' acquisition of the skills necessary to identify, evaluate, and manage information necessary to conduct research (p. 495). Online learning communities encompass not only informational tutorials exposing the students to the technology required to be successful in online learning, but also a means of linking instructors and their ideas beyond the barrier of distance. These communities assist students to develop new skills through online technologies and achieve higher order thinking skills as educators share their knowledge and experiences (Dominguez-Flores & Wang, 2011, p.496). Murdock and Williams (2011) acknowledge that the concept of developing learning communities is based on a constructivist pedagogical foundation which stresses the significance of collaborative learning and the social construction of knowledge (p. 306). Kalman and Leng (2007) contend that a strong emphasis on classroom discussion, which is a central feature of the pedagogic approach, creates the "learning community" of the classroom (p. 51). This interaction makes it possible for students to connect

productively with the instructor and other students in a meaningful way. Furthermore, Murdock and Williams (2011) believe learning communities are important to the mission and goals of an institution, achieving learning objectives, and to decrease student attrition rates (p. 307).

In looking at the effectiveness of operating the online technology, Cho (2012) observes that students who attend an online orientation performed significantly better than students who did not attend an orientation to online learning environments (p. 1052). Cho's analysis of online student orientations suggests four learning objectives for these students, which include: developing an understanding about the nature of online learning, using Blackboard skillfully for their own learning, solving technical issues they may encounter while using Blackboard, and developing self-awareness about learning skills required for online education (p. 1055). To effectively help students with technology, all four objectives should be met.

Dominguez-Flores and Wang (2011) further evaluated the effectiveness of online help by assigning students to four experimental groups. Group 1 received the traditional one time face to face interaction with the librarian; group 2 participated in an online learning community; group 3 was required to complete four library online tutorials; and group 4 participated in the online community and completed four online tutorials (p. 499). The results demonstrate group 2, which participated in the online community without the use of online tutorials, performed significantly better than the other three groups (p. 500). The research concluded that the online learning community was more effective when enhancing the acquisition and development of information skills. Surprisingly, when both online communities and online tutorials were combined, the accumulation and development of information skills were not increased (p. 500). The study concluded the tutorial alone did not provide students the necessary tools for success. Therefore, to train students to be proficient online learners, additional help may be advisable.

In determining the effectiveness of online learning, Deggs, Grover, and Kacirek (2010) evaluated the expectations of graduate students participating in an online degree program. Their focus sought to identify those variables with online education that influence outcomes (p. 691). Data collected through e-focus groups determined that student expectations were consistent with the expectations upon enrollment. Students found personal rewards and satisfaction in situations which allowed them to use their acquired knowledge for real world activities. The students preferred timely feedback from the instructor and saw lack of access and communication as leading to confusion and feelings of isolation. Overall, the students viewed access, communication, and feedback as essential to maintaining their level of comfort with the online degree program (p. 697).

Advantages and Limitations to Online Learning

There are certain advantages to online learning for the institution, the instructor and the student. One advantage for the institution is that it is not obligated to provide and maintain classroom space. With online learning, the institution can recruit instructors from all over the world which benefits both the institution and the students. Such open and diverse recruiting practices result in a wider range of expertise (Kalman & Leng, 2007, p. 52) among instructors. An economic advantage for the student is a decreased need for commuting, thus reducing their transportation costs and parking fees. Kaya and Tan (2014) summarize several advantages for the student including mass education, standardization of education, providing independent learning, freeing the student from having to endure the classroom environment at definite days and times, and reducing the cost, especially in terms of transportation expenses (p. 209). Hummer, Sims, Wooditch, and Salley (2010) address additional cost savings including potential

lost work hours when students are forced to attend traditional on campus classes, childcare expenses, and room and board costs associated with residential students (p. 288).

While there are benefits, there are also disadvantages to online learning. Kaya and Tan (2014) acknowledge there are also limitations to online learning, including lack of socialization among students, the inability of instructors to assess the practical skills of their students, and the lack of face-to-face educational relationships (p. 209). Rehm et al. (2013) express concerns that online courses may only appeal to students who do not work well in groups and to those who engage in destructive behavior such as “flaming” (expressing aggressive comments) or “lurking” (the act of looking at comments without responding) (p. 246). Such actions can jeopardize the academic goals of other students in the course and due to the nature of online learning, the instructor may be unable to rectify such situations.

Modifying Teaching Methods to Accommodate Online Learning

Online instructors may attempt to structure and operate their online classes using their existing methods in face-to-face learning. Online teaching requires different teaching styles than face-to-face teaching. For example, Mckee et al. (2012) acknowledge instructors teaching within brick and mortar settings may rely on passive learning for the low participator who may still benefit from robust debate which occurs in the classroom setting (p. 385). Gillingham (2009) concurs with this finding by acknowledging students who choose not to participate in an online discussion may still benefit simply from their physical presence in a classroom (p. 431). Furthermore, Baran, Correia, and Thompson (2011) identified specific roles that face-to-face teachers may engage in as follows:

- Pedagogical – facilitating the learning in discussions;

- Social – encouraging and promoting working together;
- Managerial – organizing and designing logistics of discussion; and
- Technical – providing a transparent technology environment to the learners (p. 427).

An essential element to the success of any program is using the available technology optimally to create online learning communities. This allows the instructor to interact with the students at the same level as face-to-face environments. For instance, Deggs et al. (2010) found that faculty who developed such strategies as creating a student homepage, placing requirements on student participation, utilizing online group activities which students could use in “real-world” situations, and communicating with their students provided students with motivation and a sense of community (p. 692).

Best Practices

Online education limits the barriers to access that traditional educational settings provide. For the student and the instructor, technical support and ability are necessary for success. According to Mckee et al. (2012), online courses are generally administered through Content Management Software/System (CMS). Despite any limitations to the system itself, using the same system across courses increases the likelihood students will be familiar and comfortable with the system as they move through the online program (p.386). While the proper technology and consistency in its use are important, training and proficiency in the program are equally important to success for the student and the instructor. A lack of access to technology and different levels of technological skills possessed by the student can impede an online student’s progress. This can lead to difficulty accessing online resources provided by professors and diminish the experience for the student. Mckee et al. (2012) note that many colleges offer

resources through institutional technology departments in the form of technical support or professional development (p. 387).

Online courses should be planned out well in advance of delivery. Organization or lack thereof will dictate how the students interact within the course. McKee et al. (2012) contend that a well-designed course should read like a map, alerting students to what they should currently be focused on, while allowing them to see what is ahead (p. 388). Furthermore, since CMS allows instructors to recycle their material for use in later semesters a customized design can save the instructor a great deal of time and effort in the future. Finally, the course should be arranged in such a way that is easy for the student to follow without ambiguity as to what is expected at each point of the course. McKee et al. (2012) state that a course calendar is advised to keep students on track and motivated (p. 389). Such organization will reduce anxiety for the student and reduce any conflict with the instructor regarding their expectations.

Due to the nature of online programs there is a tendency to use a large number of adjunct faculty. Murphy, Hall, Levant, and Glueckauf (2007) suggest programs should employ a core full-time faculty large enough to assume a leadership role in maintaining the goals of the program (p.101). Furthermore, Murphy et al. (2007) indicate that accreditation should include standards that ensure unique demands on faculty are addressed with policies and procedures focusing on workload, competence, and sufficiency (p. 101).

McKee et al. (2012) stress the importance of establishing ground rules for both the instructor and the students to acknowledge and follow diligently throughout the course (p. 390). Such rules may decrease the undesirable actions of “flaming” and “lurking”, and thus enhance the learning environment for the entire class. Furthermore, McKee et al., (2012) acknowledge written communication, especially in the form of discussion groups, can easily be misinterpreted

as the forms of communication used in online discussion groups lack tone, clarity, and can easily be taken out of context (p. 391). Encouraging students to be aware of these pitfalls can assist in preventing conflict before it has a chance to take root.

In some cases, the question of authenticity regarding student work has come under scrutiny. To remedy this problem, Murphy et al. (2007) recommend the use of proctored tests in testing centers, and the use of software to detect plagiarism issues (p.100). Additionally, Kalman and Leng (2007) express the need for quality assurance in online learning programs especially since the public image that online learning is associated with lower academic qualities and standards. Hummer et al. (2010) convey that for some employers, online degrees can be equated with spam email imagery promising Ph.D.s in exchange for money and some experience (p. 288). Battling these commonly held opinions can prove difficult. Hummer et al. (2010) suggest current evidence indicates that employers are more interested in the reputation of the institution than how the degree was obtained (p. 288). Kalman and Leng (2007) maintain there must be a relationship between the university, its partner organization, and the community of instructors in order to uphold certain standards (p. 59). Furthermore, Kalman and Leng (2007) point out that it is important for instructors to accept and enforce the standards and practices of the parent university (p. 59). Ultimately, the quality of teaching is dependent on the quality of communication between teachers and learners.

Hummer et al. (2010) found that leading institutions in online education initially marketed themselves to a large demographic of individuals who desire a postsecondary degree but are unable to pursue a degree by traditional means (p. 287). These previously underserved student populations may include a stay at home parent, military personnel, those working full-time and those unable to attend traditional classes due to distance. Murphy et al. (2007) express

some concern in the need for systematic and sustained efforts to ensure the diversity of the student population and include students from various racial, ethnic and personal backgrounds (p.101). The factors contributing to a student's need to obtain an online degree, e.g., an inability to attend traditional courses due to their vocation, distance, or current life circumstances, would not appear to hinder diversity. While conducting research on a criminal justice program, Hummer et al. (2010) note that online students, who may not have sought a college education otherwise, have proved to be an asset to the program (p. 287).

Methods

In an effort to address the research question, which inquires about the comparison between the Division of Criminal Justice CCE and ground programs, the evaluation team used a multi-method approach. They began their work by examining a number of written records followed by conducting a focus group with faculty members who teach in both the CCE and ground programs. Engaging in each of these research activities allowed the team an opportunity to obtain information from different sources. These activities also required team members to learn about and follow various research procedures.

Examining Written Records

Several records were obtained during the course of this research. The records included: CCE recruiting documents; CCE annual reports; CCE student database; Division of Criminal Justice Policy manual; Division of Criminal Justice Fact Book; and Division of Criminal Justice course schedules. The types of information extracted from these documents included, but were not limited to: purpose or mission of the CCE program; student demographics; teaching assignments; and course-related information for classes offered in CCE and in the ground programs.

Conducting a Focus Group

The research team developed a set of questions to ask faculty teaching in both CCE and ground programs who voluntarily agreed to participate in a focus group. Although twelve full- and part-time faculty members were invited to participate, six full-time faculty members answered questions related to the similarities and differences between the CCE and ground programs. Initial focus group questions targeted areas such as their interests in online teaching,

students, classroom activities (discussions, tests, etc.), participation, and academic dishonesty.

The full list of questions included:

1. How did you become interested in teaching online for CCE?
2. Briefly describe the training you received to teach online classes.
3. How do you structure your CCE and ground classes?
4. How do you measure participation in your CCE and ground classes? Do you feel students in online classes benefit from discussions in the same way that ground students benefit from in-class discussions?
5. In what ways do you interact with students in CCE and ground classes?
6. What type of additional training have you had to provide to students in online classes?
7. How do assignments in your CCE and ground classes differ?
8. Briefly describe the type and number of tests given in your CCE and ground classes. Do you use the same tests for your CCE and ground classes?
9. How do you determine whether academic dishonesty has taken place in your CCE and ground classes?
10. How does the feedback from students in your CCE and ground classes differ?
11. What similarities and differences do you notice among CCE and ground students?
12. What other similarities or differences have you noticed between CCE and ground classes?

Other questions were also asked including a question by a participant that related to instructor perceptions of critical thinking skills among the CCE and ground students.

Answers to all of the focus group questions are discussed in the next section.

Data Analysis

Demographics

An examination of the CCE student database and the Sacramento State Criminal Justice Division's Fact Book allows for a limited comparison of students by gender and age. Table 1 shows the percentage of male and female students by program location (i.e., CCE or ground, respectively). In the CCE program, there is hardly any difference between the percentage of males and females and only slightly more males in the ground program.

Table 1

Gender and Program Location (Percent)

Location	Female	Male
CCE	49.7	50.3
Campus	48.4	51.6

Sources: CCE student database and Criminal Justice Division Fact Book

A comparison of the percent of students in two age categories can also be made using the CCE student database and the Sacramento State Criminal Justice Division's Fact Book (see Table 2). The age categories available for comparison include: 18-24 and 25 and over. Students in CCE are predominantly 25 years and older; while most students in the ground program are 18-24 years of age.

Table 2

Age and Program Location (Percent)

Location	Age 18-24	Age 25 and over
CCE	1.8	98.2
Campus	83.3	16.7

Sources: CCE student database and Criminal Justice Division Fact Book

Review of Course Scheduling in CCE and the Ground Program

The review of course schedules for the CCE and ground programs is limited to five years (2008 – 2012) and focuses on common courses taught in both CCE and the ground program during a given semester. In Spring 2008, there were four such upper division courses. In CCE, there was only one section of each class, and they were equally split between full-time and part-time faculty. In contrast, the ground classes offered considerably more sections of each of the same classes, up to seven sections of a given class. More full-time faculty taught in the ground classes as compared to CCE classes. The number of students in the CCE classes ranged from 14 to 24, while the ground classes ranged from 28 to 47 students.

During the 2008 Summer session, no similar courses were taught in both CCE and the ground programs. In the CCE program, three courses were offered—one taught by a part-time instructor and the other two taught by full-time instructors. The number of students in the classes ranged from 4 to 20.

In Fall of 2008, the CCE and ground programs had three courses in common. All three of the CCE classes were taught by full-time faculty. The faculty who taught in CCE taught the same courses in the ground program. The ground program was mainly taught by full-time faculty. As with the other 2008 semesters, the CCE classes only offered one section, whereas the ground

program offered up to nine sections of each class. The amount of students in the CCE classes ranged from 27 to 34, and the ground classes had a range of 34 to 44 students.

During the Spring of 2009, the CCE program and the ground program offered seven courses in common. The CCE courses were taught predominantly by full time instructors with the exception of one part- time instructor. The ground program consisted of both full-time and part-time instructors. Furthermore, CCE only provided a single section for each course. Four of the instructors in the ground program also taught the identical course in the CCE program. The average class size is also generally smaller for the CCE program with a range from 12 to 35 students while the ground program had a range of 20 to 52 students per section.

The Summer of 2009 had three courses taught in both the CCE and the ground programs. One instructor taught the same course in both programs. Each program employed both full- and part-time faculty members. The range of students in the CCE program was 1 to 17 students and the ground program had a range of 31 to 43 students. Only one section was offered per course in both the ground and the CCE programs.

The CCE and ground programs offered four courses in common during the Fall of 2009. Again, the ground program offered multiple sections with a range of 28 to 47 students compared to 18 to 30 students in the CCE program. Both the CCE and the ground programs enjoyed the experience of full-time instructors with some part-time instructors teaching in both programs. Three instructors taught in both programs and the ground program offered a greater variety of instructors compared to the CCE program.

The Spring 2010 semester listed six courses taught in both the CCE and ground programs. The ground program provided multiple sections with 30-75 students in each course as compared to the 12 to 29 students in courses offered within the CCE program. The ground

program offered a variety of instructors for the courses compared to the CCE program's singular choice. Four instructors taught in both the CCE and ground programs. The instructors in the CCE program were full-time with the exception of a single course taught by a part-time instructor. The ground program also employed primarily full-time instructors with one part-time instructor teaching a single section in two courses.

In the Summer of 2010, CCE offered a single course consisting of one section with 16 students. The course was taught by a full time instructor. The ground program did not offer the same course during this term.

The Fall 2010 semester listed CCE and the ground programs offering 4 courses in common. The range of students within the CCE program was 15 to 38, while the range of students in the ground program was 30 to 55 students. Three instructors taught in both the CCE and ground programs. Again, there was a fairly balanced mix of part-time and full-time instructors in both programs. Furthermore, the ground program offered a variety of sections and instructors whereas the CCE program was limited to one section per course and each section was taught by a single instructor.

In the Spring 2011 semester, seven courses were compared in the CCE and ground programs. Six of the seven courses offered in the CCE program were taught by full-time faculty members and the seventh course was taught by a part-time faculty member. The data show that the courses in the ground program were taught by a mix of both full-time and part-time faculty members. Each course in the CCE program was taught by one instructor while each course in the ground program was taught by as many as 2-6 different instructors. Five of the instructors who taught a CCE course also taught the same course in the ground program. Four of these five instructors were full-time faculty members. All courses offered in the CCE program had one

section while courses offered in the ground program ranged from 2-8 sections. The amount of students in each CCE course ranged from 19 to 40 students while the amount of students in the ground program ranged from 27 to 75 students.

In the Summer 2011 semester, there were no similar courses offered in both the CCE and ground programs. CCE offered two courses during this term, one taught by a full-time faculty member and the other taught by a part-time faculty member. One of the courses had a total of ten students, while the other course had a total of 18 students.

In the Fall 2011 semester, six courses were compared in the CCE and ground programs. All six courses in the CCE program were taught by full-time instructors while there was a mix of both full-time and part-time faculty members teaching in the ground program. Each course in the CCE program offered one section taught by one instructor whereas the ground program offered several sections of the same courses and a variety of different instructors. Four instructors who taught in the CCE program also taught the same course in the ground program; all four of these instructors were full-time faculty members. The range of students in the CCE program was 20 to 31 students while the range of students in the ground program was 35 to 57 students.

In the Spring 2012 semester, eight courses were compared between the CCE and ground programs. Courses in the CCE program were taught by six full-time faculty members and three part-time faculty members. The majority of instructors in the ground program were full-time faculty members although there was a mix of both part-time and full-time faculty. Seven out of the eight courses in the CCE were taught by one instructor and the eighth course was shared by one full-time and one part-time faculty member. There were two courses in the ground program each with one section taught by one instructor and the other six courses has multiple sections taught by different instructors. There were four instructors who taught the same course in both

the CCE and ground programs. The range of students in the CCE program was 16 to 35 while the range in the ground program was 29 to 72 students.

In the Summer 2012 semester, one course was compared in the CCE and ground programs. This course was taught by one instructor in the CCE program and a different instructor in the ground program, although both were full-time faculty members. The course in both programs offered only one section but there were more students enrolled in the ground program course, a total of 41, than in the CCE program course, which had a total of 22 students. The CCE program offered an additional course that was taught by one full-time faculty member with a total of 13 students. The ground program did not offer the same course during this term.

In the Fall 2012 semester, six courses were compared in both the CCE and ground programs. All courses offered in the CCE program were taught by full-time faculty members while the courses in the ground program were taught by a mix of both full-time and part-time faculty members. Each course in the CCE program offered one section taught by one instructor while courses in the ground program offered multiple sections taught by different instructors. Three instructors who taught in the CCE program taught the same course in the ground program. The range of students in the CCE program was 20 to 30 while the range in the ground program was 35 to 57 students.

Overall, the data revealed some patterns. CCE usually schedules one section of a given course; while the ground program offers numerous sections of each course. With more faculty teaching in the ground program, it offers a diverse choice of instructors for many of its criminal justice courses. Since full-time faculty members have priority over part-timers for teaching opportunities in CCE, there is a great deal of overlap in instructors teaching in the programs. In

general, there are smaller class sizes and a greater proportion of full-time faculty members in the CCE program as compared to the ground program.

Focus Group of Faculty Teaching in both the CCE and Ground Programs

On April 3, 2014, the research team conducted a focus group with six participants. All six participants were faculty members who teach in both the CCE and the Sacramento State University ground programs. They were asked a series of questions in an effort to compare their teaching experiences as well as their perceptions of student experiences in both the ground and CCE programs.

In Question 1, participants were asked how they became interested in teaching online for the CCE program. All participants stated that there was a strong financial incentive to teach in the online CCE program. Four participants stated that their past experience led them to teach in the program. These four respondents became involved in online teaching at other universities and colleges so when the opportunity to teach online became available here, it seemed like a natural progression to step into teaching in the CCE program. Two participants explained another reason why they became interested in working in online programs is the different and unique type of students they get to work with. One participant indicated that they became involved in teaching in the CCE program because they started teaching hybrid courses in the ground program. When they were asked to teach in the CCE program, they received a great deal of support from the CCE staff. Another participant added that they became involved in the CCE program because they took WebCT trainings to add more skills into their teaching skill set. When the training was complete, their experience progressed into teaching in both the ground program and the online program.

Question 2 asked participants to describe the type of training they received to teach online classes. Four participants explained that CCE is really good with training and helping instructors understand the system through technical support and one-on-one trainings. Two respondents stated that they received training from other universities and colleges that they were able to carry with them into the CCE program. Two respondents also stated that they completed WebCT and other trainings and workshops. One of the respondents elaborated that they acquired more formalized training which included receiving several certificates. Another respondent stated that these trainings and workshops are offered throughout the year, although primarily during winter and summer breaks, and can take place over several weeks or a two hour period in one afternoon. One respondent indicated that their training consisted of setting up appointments for one-on-one trainings and assistance with CCE technical support. They added that they still take advantage of these one-on-one appointments to learn more about the system.

Question 3 asked participants how they structure their CCE and ground classes. Three of the participants stated that their assignments are all the same for CCE and ground classes. Two participants use discussion threads for CCE classes. Two participants added that their classes started out the same, but the assignments have been changed. One participant stated their assignments in the ground program changed due to plagiarism issues and their assignments in the CCE program changed due to time constraints and technology. One participant stated their CCE and ground classes mirror each other, with the same assignments and online quizzes, which are intended to encourage students to engage with the assigned reading material.

Question 4 asked how participation is measured in CCE and ground classes. Four of the participants use attendance sheets in their ground classes and count attendance as participation. Two participants use the discussion threads as participation in CCE classes. Two other

participants use quizzes to measure participation in their CCE classes. One participant uses live real-time meetings for their online classes to host discussions for the online students.

In a follow-up question to number 4, participants were asked if they feel their students in online classes benefit from discussions in the same way that ground students benefit from in-class discussions. Two of the participants felt that discussion threads were not helpful and that students do not benefit from them, while another participant felt that CCE students are very much engaged in the discussion threads and that they are more professional. One participant brought forward the concern that CCE students may not even read the book or the material and just base their posts off of what other students have posted. This participant acknowledged that students in the ground program may not read the material and could base their contribution to the discussion off of others' comments.

In Question 5, focus group participants were asked how they interact with their students between the ground classes and CCE classes. All of the participants use email as a primary mode of communication with students. Two of the participants utilized office hours to interact with their students and two felt comfortable enough giving their cell phone numbers to students as contact information. Only one respondent specifically stated they would not give out their cell phone number. Other answers mentioned included one participant who utilizes Blackboard collaboration meetings for live discussions. Another participant includes their comments in discussion threads to interact with CCE students.

In Question 6, participants were asked what type of additional training they provide to students in online classes. All of the participants advised they would help students with small problems by walking them through an issue. Four of the participants advised they give instructions to their students for small issues and refer them to an assigned tech support

employee for any larger issues. One professor states they do not give much instruction because of the increase in the number of online classes. Presumably, this is because a larger number of students are familiar with the technology used in online courses.

Participants were going to be asked a separate question for number 7, to describe how the assignments in CCE and ground classes differ; however, that question was answered throughout various other descriptions given about the participants' classes.

Question 8 asks the participants to describe the type and number of tests given between the CCE and ground programs. All of the participants agreed that the type and number of tests are the same. One participant explained that they were in the process of changing their methods of giving tests.

Question 9 asks how the participants determine whether academic dishonesty has taken place in their CCE and ground classes. Four of the participants advised they use Google to check for plagiarism. Two participants stated they create assignments that are unique which makes cheating or plagiarism difficult. Two respondents indicated they look for changes in writing style as well as discrepancies in font size and color to detect plagiarism. Only one of the participants said they use turnitin.com to check for plagiarism.

In Question 10, participants were asked how the amount and type of feedback from their CCE students differs from the amount and type of feedback from their ground students. With regards to amount, most indicated there was no difference in feedback from ground and CCE students. However, with regards to type, three of the five respondents noted that there was no difference among feedback while two of the five stated the feedback from their ground students was more positive than that of their CCE students. They believed this was in large part due to the

fact that ground students can experience mannerisms and humor in class that CCE students might miss without face-to-face interaction that occurs within a traditional classroom.

Question 11 asked participants what similarities and differences they notice among CCE and ground students. Participants responded that CCE students are generally older. Two of the five respondents also stated that CCE students are more capable of balancing work and schoolwork than are ground students. One of the respondents indicated that it is generally easier for CCE students to integrate theory and practice. One respondent stated that CCE students possess a longer professional history. A final remark showed that all five respondents agreed with the comment that CCE students are better writers than ground students.

With the twelfth question, participants were asked to identify any other similarities or differences between CCE and ground classes. Three of the respondents stated that the main difference was the duration of the classes. They went on to clarify that ground classes are sixteen weeks and CCE classes are eight weeks but there is the same amount of material to cover. One participant added that the online structure of the CCE class requires students to work independently. This participant believed that the independent nature and accelerated workload of the online classes weed out some students in CCE classes.

An additional question was asked by one of the participants about the difference in critical thinking skills between CCE and ground students. All participants agreed that the critical thinking skills are evident in both CCE and ground classes because the same assignments are required in both types of classes. However, three of the six respondents stated that it is easier to see the critical thinking skills in students with the use of discussion threads than in face-to-face classroom discussions. Therefore, the three respondents concluded that it is easier to see the application of critical thinking skills in CCE students' work than in ground students' work.

Towards the end of our session with the focus group, participants were given a chance to express additional comments or concerns. Every participant but one vehemently agreed that Blackboard 9.1, the technological format that the CCE program is dependent on, is an ineffective and confusing platform for online education. Two of the participants added that technology should be a tool for an online course but should not drive course direction. Another participant concluded the session by stating that with an online education program, it is important to think about intellectual property issues and ensuring protection of the quality of educational materials.

Discussion and Conclusion

The goal of this project was to compare the Division of Criminal Justice CCE and ground programs. Toward that end, the research team analyzed existing records and collected new data via a focus group of faculty members teaching in both programs. Together, these data will help the research team examine five ways in which the programs were compared.

Student Demographics

The two programs did not differ much in terms of gender composition. Both programs reflect almost equal proportions of males and females. With regard to the age group of students served by the programs, there was a strong difference. The ground program predominantly enrolls students between the ages of 18-24 and the CCE program almost exclusively enrolls students in the 25 and over age group. This is an important distinction since older students are likely to have more work experience and more professional skills that they can draw upon for classroom assignments.

Full-time vs. Part-time Faculty

The research team examined the percentage of full- and part-time faculty members assigned to various courses taught in both the CCE and ground programs over a five year period. Both full- and part-time faculty members teach courses in both programs. Almost all of the CCE courses are taught by full-time faculty members whereas there are more part-time faculty members in the ground program. This finding is not consistent with the literature that indicates online programs are often taught by adjunct faculty.

Variety of Courses

The examination of courses for this research focused primarily on common courses. In doing so, there were often few courses to compare relative to the catalog of course offerings.

Compared to the CCE program, the ground program offers a greater variety of courses and consistently offers numerous sections of courses providing students with a variety of instructors from which to choose. The CCE program serves far fewer students and the times in which students attend to their course responsibilities are much more flexible than in the ground program and these circumstances may contribute to the limited number of sections available during a given semester. In addition, since only a subset of faculty members teach in the CCE program, the courses may be limited to topics reflecting the expertise of those particular faculty members.

Instructors' Teaching Experiences

The focus group data provided answers to many questions related to teaching experiences. Many of the faculty members reported having previous experience with online instruction prior to teaching in the CCE program. Some of the instructors mentioned that an attendance sheet was circulated in ground classes, which was then used as a measure of participation in the course. In contrast, online courses required student interaction to earn credit for participation. A number of participants also indicated that they structure their courses in a similar manner (e.g., same tests and assignments), but some participants also include activities such as online discussions which may or may not be required in the ground program. The use of discussion threads may provide the opportunity for students to demonstrate critical thinking skills. Three of the respondents indicated that it is easier to see the application of critical thinking skills in CCE students as compared to ground students. Some participants discussed the ways in which they could detect academic dishonesty, while a few faculty members indicated that they do not have time to closely monitor plagiarism in their CCE courses. This is unfortunate as the literature on best practices for online education recommends using software (e.g., turnitin.com) to detect plagiarism.

Instructors' Perceptions of Student Experiences

The focus group data also provided information regarding the perceptions held by instructors about student experiences. Most of the participants agreed that CCE students are more mature students and better writers as compared to ground students. Since the CCE students are generally older than ground students, they may have had more writing practice prior to enrolling in the CCE program. A couple of participants commented that CCE students are more capable of balancing work and schoolwork than are ground students. Given the age of the CCE students, they may have more experience meeting the demands of multiple responsibilities.

Conclusion

In the course of this research, the team found both similarities and differences among the CCE and ground programs. These programs are similar with regard to the same faculty teaching courses in both programs and their positive perceptions of CCE students. The CCE and ground programs are different in terms of the age of students served, the variety of courses offered, and class sizes. Given the older population of students served in the CCE program as well as the younger students enrolled in the ground program, one might reasonably assume that their needs differ and the Division of Criminal Justice should emphasize quality courses and programs that contain similar content, but are flexible enough in their structures to accommodate the student populations served by the two programs.

Limitations and Future Research

The research activities were limited by the time frame for the course. In other words, all tasks had to be completed within a 15 week period. Due to the short duration of the study, the research team was unable to contact students about their experiences with the CCE and ground

programs. In the future, researchers may want to conduct a survey and/or interview current students and graduates as they should be included in a thorough evaluation of the programs.

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