Three to Get Ready:

A Survey Study Identifying Challenges of Student Readiness for Online Learning and How to Remediate Them

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"What Lies Ahead?" Quality, Engagement,
and Student Voices in Online Learning

Little Research Has Been Conducted on Student Readiness

Most have focused on outcomes of online education, such as:

- *Kofoed, M. S., Gebhart, L., Gilmore, D., & Moschitto, R. (2021, May)* who found that "Final grades for online students dropped by 0.215 standard deviations… We find that the shift to online education had negative results for learning."
- Xu, D., & Xu, Y. (2019, February 28) who found "that students in online courses are between 3 percent and 15 percent more likely to withdraw, compared to similar students in face-to-face classes at community colleges."
- Krieg, J. M., & Henson, S. E. (2016, October 1) who found that "students' grades in follow-up courses can be expected to be nearly one twelfth of a grade point lower if the prerequisite course was taken online."

Research on Student Readiness

Those that have explored readiness found a lack of preparedness:

- *Yilmaz Ince, E., Kabul, A., & Diler, I. (2019, November 30) who found that "There was a significant difference in all of the questionnaire items according to the availability of internet at home… affects their opinions about distance education."*
- *Sari, T., & Nayır, F. (n.d.) who found that "It can be certainly suggested that the participants are not ready for the distance education process and there is a lack of application in this regard; such as technology support and distance education training, and moreover, the participants do not have sufficient knowledge and experience about distance education."*

Why Is Student Readiness to Learn Online a Concern?

Lack of student readiness to learn online rated as "extremely" or "moderately stressful" by 66.13% of online adjunct faculty

"*Leader of the Band(-width):*" *How Faculty Supervisors Can Reduce Online Adjunct Faculty Stress* (co-researchers Danielle Babb and Suzanne Minarcine) presented to the American Public University System Engage Summit (2022).
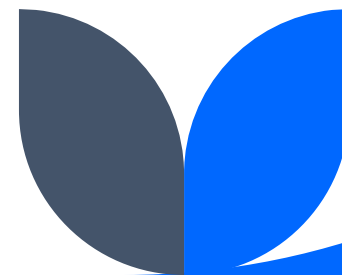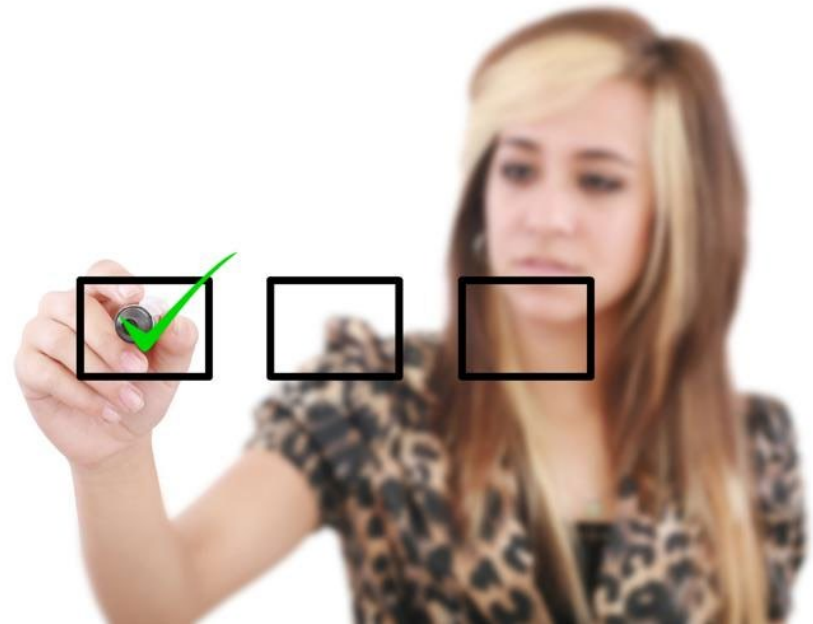
Our Readiness Road Map

Why is student readiness to learn online important?

Our survey study:

1. Results of rating items
2. Results of open-ended questions

What did we learn about student readiness?

Research Design and Procedures of Our Study

Survey with 20 rating items

Based on your observations of online students, please indicate if each of the following 20 items has occurred:

- Always
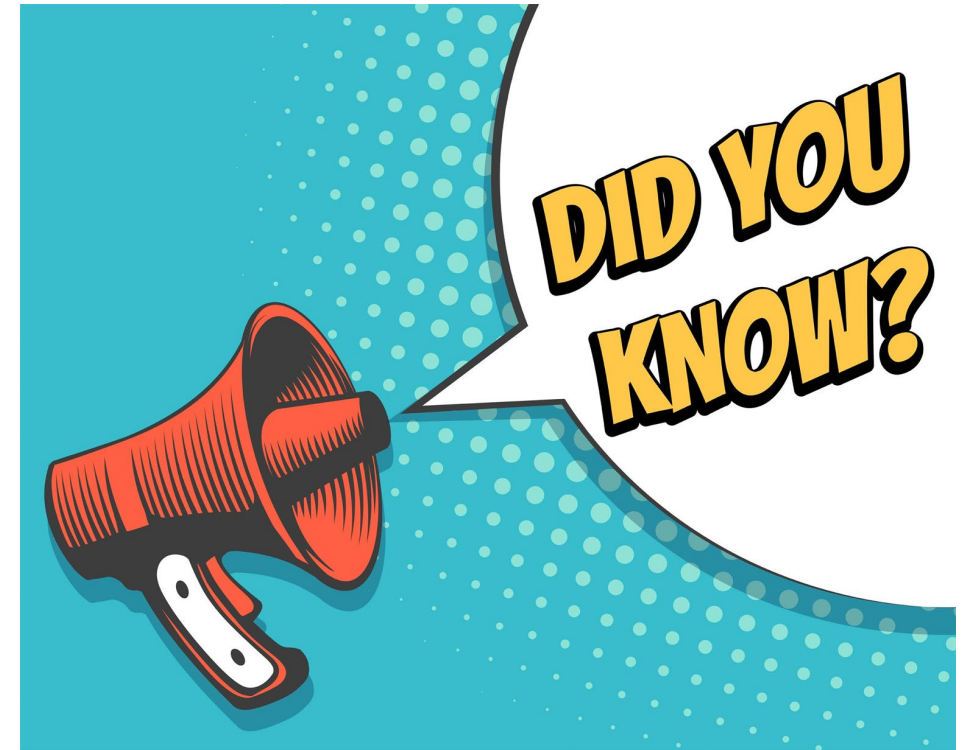- Frequently
- Occasionally
- Never
- No response

Research Design and Procedures of Our Study, continued

Two open-ended questions:

Question #1: What are the biggest challenges to student readiness to learn online?

Question #2: What can schools do to better prepare students to learn online?
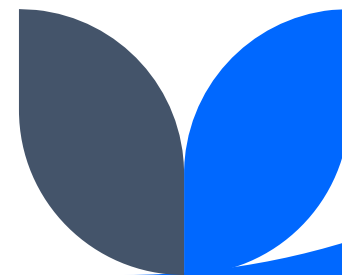
Research Design and Procedures of Our Study, continued

Disseminated by SurveyMonkey to faculty and administrators of a Pacific Northwestern University

Doctoral, master's and bachelor's degrees (business, education, and IT)

Received 140 responses:
- 111 faculty
- 3 administrators
- 26 both

Research Design and Procedures of Our Study, continued

Added percentages for "always" and "frequently"

3 clusters (factors) emerged

Lower percentages reflect areas of concern

Factor #1: Technology Issues

Item	Total percent "Always" and "Frequently"
Securing dependable Internet access to the online classroom.	90.72
Securing dependable computer access to the online classroom.	90.71
*** Being willing to contact tech support instead of asking the instructor for help.	67.14 ***

Factor #2:
Student Discussion Participation Issues

Item	Total percent "Always" and "Frequently"
Checking into the online classroom during the first week of the course.	87.86
Following rules of netiquette in discussion postings.	86.43
Knowing how to make a discussion post.	83.57
Posting any replies to others (classmates or instructor) in discussion forums.	83.47
Participating in discussions on time.	80.00
***Making substantive discussion posts reflecting application of learning content.	64.29 ***
***Making replies to others that go beyond "Good job" or "I agree/I disagree"	44.29 ***

Factor #3:
Communication and Course Navigation Issues

Item	Total percent "Always" and "Frequently"
Do not attempt to make bulk submissions of past-due assignments.	90.00
Contacting the instructor if they are going to be absent from the online classroom for long stretches of time.	88.58
Do not escalate complaints to advisors or department chairs without giving the instructor an opportunity to resolve any concerns.	88.57
Do not make excuses for why assignments are not submitted on time.	77.86
*** Knowing how to locate learning materials in the online classroom.	75.00***
*** Knowing how to locate written instructor feedback on assignments and discussions.	66.43***
*** Applying course instructions contained in the posted course syllabus.	66.42***
*** Knowing how to search for sources of information (e.g., literature) online.	64.49***
*** Not needing reminders about information that has been posted in announcements or sent by e-mail	57.85***
*** Asking for help from the instructor as needed.	54.68***

Conclusions Regarding Readiness based on Survey Rating Results

- Students seem to get started OK

- Technology and connectivity is not an apparent major concern

- Knowing how to post discussions is OK

- Making substantive reply posts is a concern (more than "good job/I agree")

- "Course-in-progress" areas are a concern:

  1. Knowing how to search the literature,
  2. Knowing how to find instructor feedback,
  3. Needing reminders to keep engaging in the course,
  4. Asking the instructor for help when needed.

Question 1: Biggest Challenges to Student Readiness to Learn Online?

Time management challenges
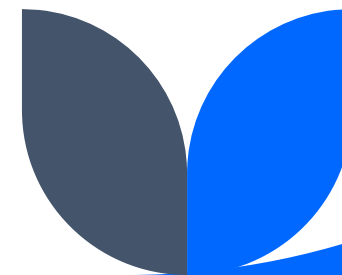
Lack of study skills

Unrealistic student expectations

Maintaining continual engagement in their course

Focus on grades vs. learning itself ('siloed thinking')

Lack of readiness to learn from peers
(e.g., discussion participation)

Writing skills

Less about technology and more about dispositional skills
(organization, self-motivation)

Question 2: How Can Schools Better Prepare Students to be Ready to Learn Online?

Mandatory orientation taught by instructor:
1. how to navigate LMS,
2. how to use library resources,
3. academic writing skills,
4. academic integrity
5. online discussions

"No strings" practice module:
a "sandbox course"

Enlist cooperation of advisors in helping students with realistic expectations (e.g., time commitment)

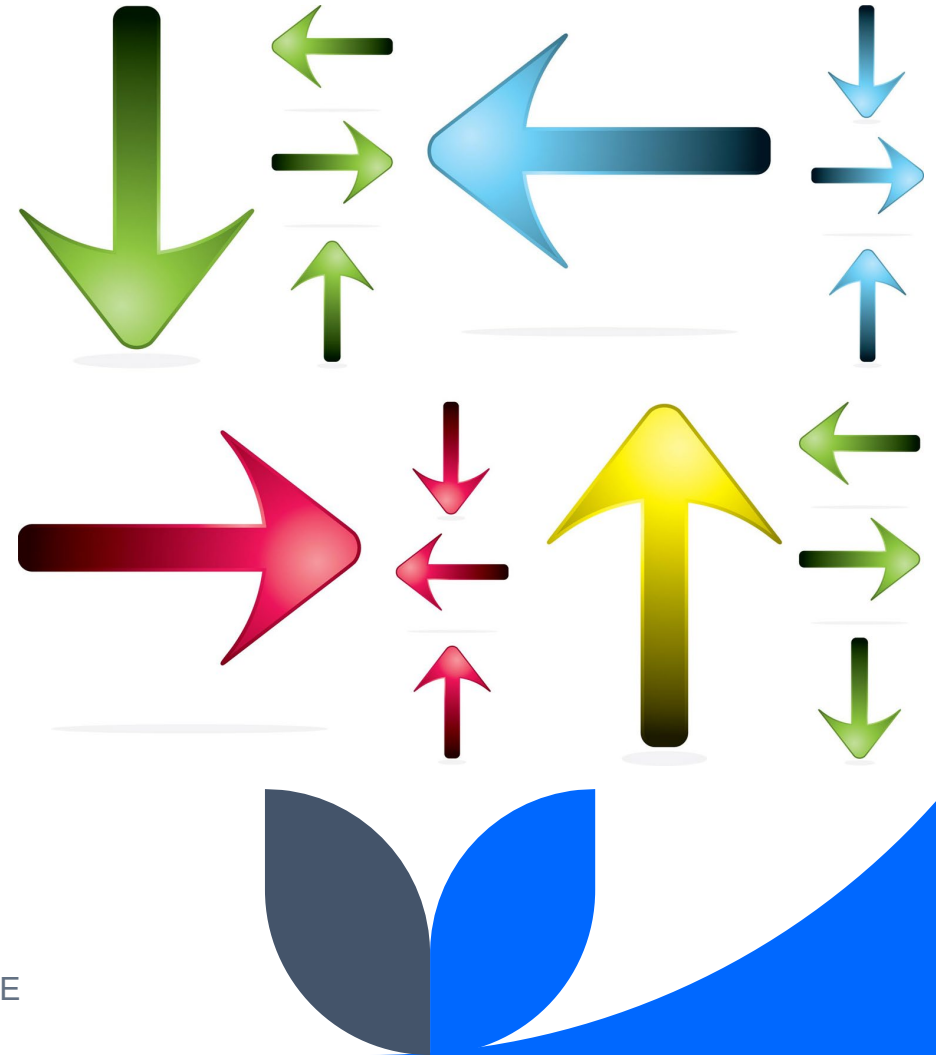Relate online course work more to students' professional experiences

Future Research Directions

Factor analysis to validate emergent factors

Differences in readiness by level
(e.g., bachelor's, master's, doctorate)

Student perspectives regarding own readiness to learn online

Evaluate a readiness orientation to see if it is effective

In Conclusion…

"Give me six hours to chop down
a tree and I will spend the first four
sharpening the axe."

—Abraham Lincoln