ECAR Study of Community College Faculty and Information Technology, 2020

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MAY 2020

Key Findings

- Community college faculty rated technology-related professional development and individualized consultations highly, but many faculty did not use support for services that could benefit students. Fewer faculty used technology support for finding and using open educational resources (OER) and web conferencing than they did other support services available at their institutions. Although community college faculty used support more than their four-year colleagues to make courses accessible to students with disabilities, around a quarter of faculty in this research had not used this service in the past year.

- Relative to four-year faculty, a larger proportion of community college faculty prefer teaching fully online or mostly online courses. This preference might reflect community colleges’ continued emphasis on online and blended courses, as well as students’ desire for online instruction. Overall, however, a majority of community college faculty still prefer to teach in face-to-face learning environments.

- A majority of community college faculty prefer to conduct nearly all teaching and learning activities in environments that are mostly or completely face-to-face. The top assignments or activities that these faculty preferred to do face-to-face or mostly face-to-face were student presentations, labs/demonstrations, student conferences, and lectures. Faculty prefer to issue assignments and distribute syllabi and course materials online or mostly online.

- Community college faculty encourage or require laptops and tablets in the classroom more than other devices but tend to ban or discourage smartphones. Faculty technology bans are strongly and positively associated with faculty’s perception of whether they could be better instructors if they integrated mobile technologies into their teaching. Faculty who didn’t think that leveraging a device in the classroom would make them better instructors more often banned that device. Training faculty in integrating technology in their teaching results in fewer bans of student devices in the classroom.
• A majority of faculty found online student success tools useful...when they used them. Most faculty reported that they had used these tools when they were available. The exception is tools that offer guidance about courses students might consider taking—38% of faculty had not used these tools when available. Suggestions about new or different academic resources for students (e.g., tutoring, skills-building opportunities) were rated highest in terms of usefulness.

**Recommendations**

• **Increase professional development and training opportunities for online instruction for both full-time and adjunct faculty.** Community colleges continue to provide and expand online offerings and degrees in areas such as assessment (competency) and crediting (microcredentials and digital badging). To address the needs of their communities and an expanding population of nontraditional students, two-year institutions will need to increase faculty skills and interest in online instruction.

• **Encourage faculty (including part-time and adjunct) to use services that could also benefit their students.** Increase faculty access to support for using OER and web conferencing, and for making courses accessible to students with disabilities. These services in particular align with the needs of community college students. Communicate to faculty that these services and supports are available so that faculty can assess how to use them to meet their students’ needs. Incentivizing the use of these services could increase use among faculty.

• **Increase training and professional development for faculty to use students’ smartphones as a learning tool in their classrooms.** Underrepresented students, who make up large numbers of the community college population, view smartphones as critical to their academic success. Given that these students are more likely to access resources, textbooks, or assignments via their phones, faculty need increased understanding of the degree to which these students value such devices and of how best to leverage them for learning.

• **Make online student success tools available to faculty who serve in advising roles, and encourage their effective use.** Faculty use of the online tools at their disposal gives students, particularly those in underrepresented groups, a roadmap that offers concrete guidance and direction on how to obtain their degree or transfer to a four-year institution. Tools that offer guidance on courses students should take can be especially useful to faculty who have advising or mentoring roles, as these tools can save community college students time and money by reducing the time it takes to complete a credential.

**Learn More**

Access the full report about faculty and information technology, along with related resources, on the [research hub](#).