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Examining and Testing the Use of an Online Orientation

Betty D. Dennis

Western Michigan University, betty.dennis@wmich.edu

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Examining and Testing the Use of an Online Orientation

Extended University Programs

Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI 49008



Introduction

A growing population in higher education is the adult learner, those students who are 25 years or older. There has been a dramatic increase in the number of adult students entering college (Wlodkowski and Kasworm, 2003). WMU has also seen an increase in adult learners. Eighty-three percent of the students enrolled in courses at regional locations and over 60% of those students taking classes fully online are adults. While receiving a quality education, off-campus students typically feel disconnected from the core of the institution and may feel invisible to the rest of the campus (Rix, 2008). In an effort to retain these students and provide them an exemplary student experience, Extended University Programs (EUP) is creating an online orientation geared specifically towards the needs of adult learners enrolled at regional locations and online.

This grant is being used to support the design and analysis of the online orientation. It will consist of modules designed in Desire2Learn course management system that are focused on financial aid, library services, writing services, registration and catalog, graduation auditing, and career and employment resources.

Student Learning Outcomes

- 1) Students will be able to identify and remotely access all currently available WMU student and academic support services.
- 2) Students will be able to select the appropriate tool(s) from the appropriate support entities to assist with a given issue.
- 3) Adult students will develop and or refresh the skills and institutional knowledge to be a successful student.
- 4) Students will gain familiarity with and ability to use WMU's E-Learning system to participate in academic courses.

Assessment Goals & Objectives

- 1) Introduce and help adult students understand campus resources.
- 2) Familiarize adult students with WMU's Elearning system and other online resources.
- 3) Increase retention for online and regional location courses.
- 4) Build a sense of community and affinity for WMU.
- 5) Assess and track variables that influence student success including student satisfaction.
- 6) Assess and track students yearly until graduation.
- 7) Examine prospective students from inquiry to enrollment.



Data Collection

The built-in capability of WMU's E-Learning system, coupled with student data in Banner allows us to track all of these variables each semester. We will also consult with each department to assist with creation of content for each module. Instructional designers from EUP will ensure data is packaged in a manner that will maximize the team's ability to collect and analyze data. Banner and Cognos will also be used to identify adult students, enrollment, grade point averages, and academic standing.

Results

As we reached out to the student support services areas, it became clear that there is a need for an online orientation for all students. Therefore, we've started a great collaboration to build an online orientation that will allow all students, graduate and undergraduate, main campus and off-campus, to use as both an orientation and a resource that can be used for multiple uses.

Students will be able to go into the portal and pre-select their student type. Based on their selection, services will show specifically designed to help them navigate WMU.

Storyboards are being written for financial aid, library services, writing services, registration and catalog, graduation auditing, and career and employment resources to be ready by May 2014 and then the overall project will be done by October 2014.



References

- Rix, K. (2008). Differences by degrees: Providing services to adult students based on degree level pursued (Doctoral dissertation, Western Michigan University). Dissertations & theses, 2008. 3316932.
- Wlodkowski, R. & Kasworm, C.E. (Eds.) (2003). Accelerated Learning for Adults: The promise and practice of intensive educational formats. New Directions in Adult and Continuing Education. (No. 97) San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.