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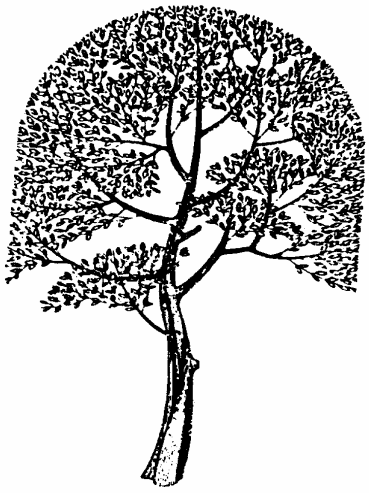

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2004 CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

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		Repurposing a Proprietary Console	

Implications of Student Perceived Barriers to Distance Learning

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Objectives:
The objective is for attendees to gain knowledge concerning the barriers students perceive regarding the online classroom and the implications for teaching drawn from this research.

Intended Audience:
This presentation is most appropriate for faculty, instructional designers, and support staff to online students.

Activities:
Discuss will be used to actively engage participants in thinking about the application of this research to their on online learning environments.

Abstract:
Implications of Student Perceived Barriers to Distance Learning

The purpose of this survey research is to identify students' perceived barriers to online learning in various environments: higher education, community colleges, and the workplace. Furthermore, the study is meant to identify the relative weight of the barriers depending upon selected demographic characteristics.

The significance of this research, from a practical standpoint, is that these efforts will help in guiding educators as they develop online courses and facilitate student learning. Additionally, since this is a first attempt to statistically verify a framework of students' perceived barriers, an emphasis is placed on identifying potential areas of future research.

The Current Study
There have been several attempts to identify the barriers to distance education (e.g., Betts 1998; Galusha 1997; Gellman-Danley and Fetzner 1997; Hara and Kling 1999; Rezabek 1999). These were mainly in the context of higher education and often from the perspective of the instructor or administrator in distance education programs. The prior barriers research has varied in its construction, generally the researchers used a theoretical approach or they used data gathering through a survey or case study.

The authors of the current study conducted an extensive review of the literature concerning students' perceptions of barriers to distance education (online education specifically). In his review of literature, Berge (1995) summarized the responsibilities of the online instructor using four categories: pedagogical, technical, social, and managerial. For the current study, and as a matter of convenience, we started with Berge's simple, straightforward framework. Each of the barriers identified from the literature was grouped into one of the four categories.

Pilot Survey
A pilot survey was constructed using a Likert scale for each of the 61 barriers. Ten demographic questions were also asked of each respondents: gender, age, ethnicity, place where the respondent is a student (e.g., post-secondary

graduate student, workplace, community college), self-reported online learning effectiveness, self-reported enjoyment of online learning, number of online classes completed, the number of online classes dropped, and the self-reported likelihood of that the respondent would voluntarily take an online class in the future. Additionally, voluntary comments were collected from respondents.

Conclusions of the Pilot Study.
The Berge model developed in 1995 that listed the responsibilities of faculty is not a very good way to categorize students' perceptions regarding perceived barriers to online learning.

Main Survey
Instead of the Berge framework, the main survey was grouped in six parts corresponding to the results of the factor analysis of the pilot study: technical, infrastructure/support services, social, prerequisite skills, motivation, and time/interruptions.

Theoretical Framework
The authors turned their attention to reviewing literature that spoke from the students' perspective and also matched the six factors that were concluded to be the best model for the responses to the pilot study. Garland (1993) had studied student perceptions of the situational, institutional, dispositional and epistemological barriers to persistence. Later, Schilke (2001) updating Garland's model of barriers to persistence in distance education and added a technical factor. While parts of all five Schilke's factors are included in the six factors coming from the current pilot study, the constructs are somewhat different for several of these.

ISETL 2004 Proposal
For ISETL 2004, we propose to review the results from the main study regarding students' perceived barriers to online learning. We also propose to use discussion with the attendees during the presentation to focus on the implications of this research to online teaching.

Citations:
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