

Date Published: 10-1-2019

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Recommended Citation

Patrick, A., Simmons, R., & Calk, R. (2019). Students' Expectations Within a Nontraditional College of Business Classroom. *Mountain Plains Journal of Business and Economics*, 20(1). Retrieved from <https://openspaces.unk.edu/mpjbt/vol20/iss1/1>

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STUDENTS' EXPECTATIONS WITHIN A NONTRADITIONAL COLLEGE OF BUSINESS CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

Students in a college of business classroom have various expectations regarding the faculty member and the course. If the faculty member fails to meet those expectations, the resulting misalignment can cause misunderstandings and other issues. This study attempts to understand the expectations of nontraditional students to assist faculty in identifying the potential areas of misalignment. Using a series of modified questions from Schmitt, Larsen, Miller, Badawy, Dougherty, Sharma & Benson (2013), this study reports the results of a survey of 152 upper-division undergraduate and graduate students from the college of business at a regional university with a teaching mission. The findings indicate that students' primary expectations included in-class discussions and text-book use, faculty interactions with students while in class, and timely responses by faculty to questions.

Keywords: Business Education, Teaching, Student Expectations

INTRODUCTION

Often too late, faculty discover that students have expectations about classroom (how learning processes are conducted within the actual classroom itself) and course management (how learning process are conducted throughout the semester both within and without the classroom) that differ from their own. This misalignment of expectations leads to issues for both the faculty member and the students. Failure to meet students' expectations regarding course management, both within and outside the classroom, has been shown to have an adverse effect on the faculty member's ratings on course evaluations (Bock 1979). Conversely, taking students' expectations into consideration when designing courses and planning for student interaction has a positive effect not only on course evaluations but on student learning as well (Trudeau & Barnes 2002).

There is an ever growing emphasis on measureable continuous improvement in college of business courses (Bryant 2013; Chalaris, Chalaris, Gritzalis & Belsis 2015; "CI Framework" 2005). The scope of the continuous improvement efforts includes both teaching methodologies and classroom and course management processes (Dickie & Jay 2010; Lewisson, Hellgren, & Johansson 2013; Matulich, Papp, & Haytko 2008). These methodologies and processes include

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the appropriate use of technology, the type and format of learning activities and assessments, and the timeliness and media of faculty / student interactions (Henry & Gibson-Howell 2011; Schmitt *et al* 2013). To the extent faculty in the college of business can understand students' expectations regarding these factors and then strive to continuously improve classroom and course management to meet, or perhaps revise, those expectations, course evaluations and student learning should also continuously improve.

This study seeks to understand students' expectations within a college of business course. Specifically, this study describes students' expectations relating to the use of technology both within and outside the classroom, the type and format of learning activities and assessments, and the timeliness of and media used for faculty / student interactions. This study encompasses students and courses across the college of business and, at the same time, is limited to those students taking classes within the college of business and their expectations regarding those college of business classes. The study examines students' expectations across delivery modes: online and face-to-face.

METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

To determine student expectations in the college of business classroom, we surveyed 500 randomly selected students from the 1,100 students enrolled in the college of business at a regional university offering undergraduate and graduate degrees to primarily working adults. Student subjects received invitations to participate in the online survey through their university email accounts. Participation was voluntary, and the subjects did not receive any form of compensation for completing the survey. A total of 152 students completed the survey for a response rate of 30.4 percent.

The survey instrument consisted of 14 questions. Ten questions adapted from Schmitt, *et al.* (2013) addressed student expectations regarding technology, nontechnology, and instructor issues in the classroom. Four questions asked for demographic information including date of birth, gender, classification (graduate or undergraduate), and the class format(s) in which the students were currently enrolled (face-to-face, online, or a mix of both).

The demographic results from the survey closely mirror the demographics of the overall college of business. Approximately 54 percent of the respondents were female. The mean (median) age was 37 (36) years old. There was no significant difference in age for undergraduate and graduate students in the sample. The respondents were predominately juniors and seniors (72 percent), with underclassmen and graduate students representing 2 percent and 26 percent of the sample, respectively. The majority of the students (60 percent) enrolled in a mix of online and face-to-face classes while 21 percent enrolled exclusively in online classes and 20 percent enrolled only in face-to-face classes.

Descriptive statistics in Table 1 provide initial insight into student expectations with regards to the use of technology in the classroom. To assess student expectations regarding technology, the survey asked students to indicate whether or not they viewed the use of five technology-related items as important in the classroom. Five binary variables measure the responses for the importance of the following technology related items: Clickers, Electronic Learning Management System (ie. Blackboard, Canvas, etc.), E-textbooks, PowerPoint, and Social

Media. An index variable, Technology Expectations, measures students' overall expectations with regards to the use of technology by summing each student's responses for each of the five technology-related items. Thus, for the variable Technology Expectations, each student would have an index measure ranging from 0 – 5.

Table 1
Summary Statistics
Technology-Related Variables

| Variable | Min. | Max. | <i>M</i> | <i>Median</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>n</i> |
|--|------|------|----------|---------------|-----------|----------|
| Technology Expectations | 0.00 | 5.00 | 2.27 | 2 | 1.07 | 152 |
| Clickers | 0.00 | 1.00 | 0.35 | 0 | 0.48 | 152 |
| Electronic Learning Management Systems | 0.00 | 1.00 | 0.88 | 1 | 0.33 | 152 |
| E-textbook | 0.00 | 1.00 | 0.64 | 1 | 0.48 | 152 |
| Powerpoint | 0.00 | 1.00 | 0.88 | 1 | 0.32 | 152 |
| Social Media | 0.00 | 1.00 | 0.22 | 0 | 0.42 | 152 |

A 3 X 2 X 2 Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) examines whether student expectations for the use of technology in the classroom differ based on enrolled class type (face-to-face, online, or mixed), academic level (graduate or undergraduate), or gender. *Post hoc* pairwise comparisons test which groups differ significantly from each other for statistically significant factors. Similarly, *post hoc* tests examine significant interaction effects. Table 2 presents the results.

Table 2
ANOVA Results
Technology Expectations Relative to Gender, Academic Level, and Enrolled Class Type

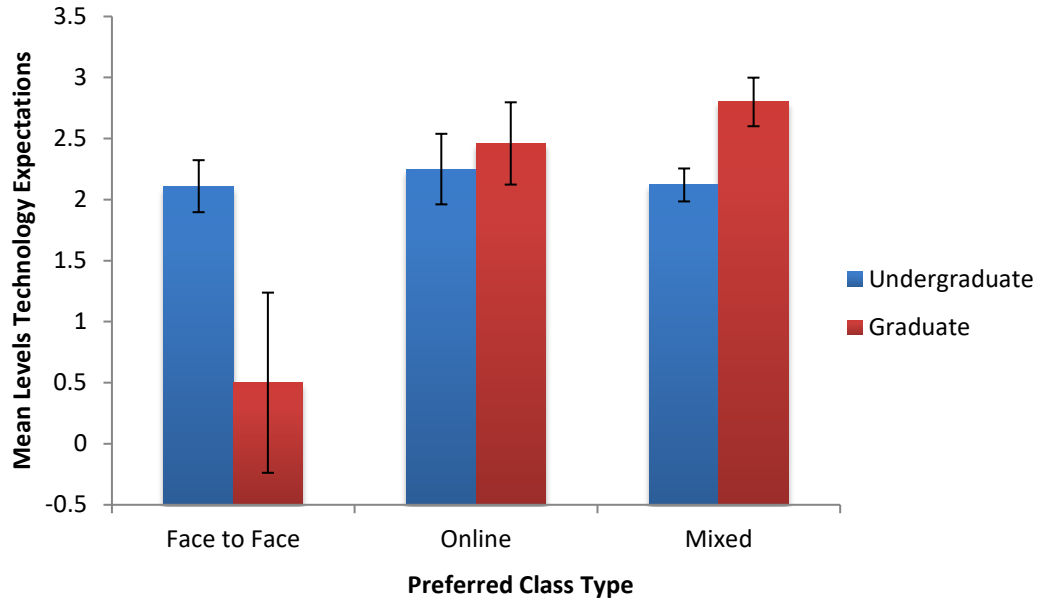
| <i>Variable</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>SS</i> | <i>MS</i> | <i>F</i> | <i>p</i> | η^2 |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Class Type | 2 | 8.94 | 4.47 | 4.10 | .019 | .056 |
| Gender | 1 | 3.19E-5 | 3.19E-5 | 0.00 | .996 | .000 |
| Academic Level | 1 | .661 | .661 | .606 | .438 | .004 |
| Class Type * Gender | 2 | 2.81 | 1.41 | 1.29 | .278 | .018 |
| Class Type * Academic Level | 2 | 9.21 | 4.60 | 4.23 | .017 | .058 |
| Gender * Academic Level | 1 | .546 | .546 | .501 | .480 | .004 |
| Class Type * Academic Level * Gender | 2 | .978 | .489 | .449 | .639 | .006 |

The results reveal no statistically significant differences in student expectations of the use of technology based on gender or academic level but did reveal a statistically significant difference based on class type. The main level effect for class type ($F_{2,138}=4.10$, $p=0.019$, $\eta^2=.06$) and the interaction between class type and academic level ($F_{2,138}=4.23$, $p=0.017$, $\eta^2=.06$) suggest appropriate *post hoc* pairwise comparisons. For graduate students, those who preferred face-to-face classes had lower expectations of technology than those who preferred online classes ($p = .017$) or a mix of classes ($p = .003$). For undergraduate students, there were no statistically significant differences in the expectations for technology across the preferred class types

Figure 1 shows the mean levels for the Technology Expectations variable based on student classification (undergraduate or graduate) and preferred class type (face-to-face, online, or mixed).

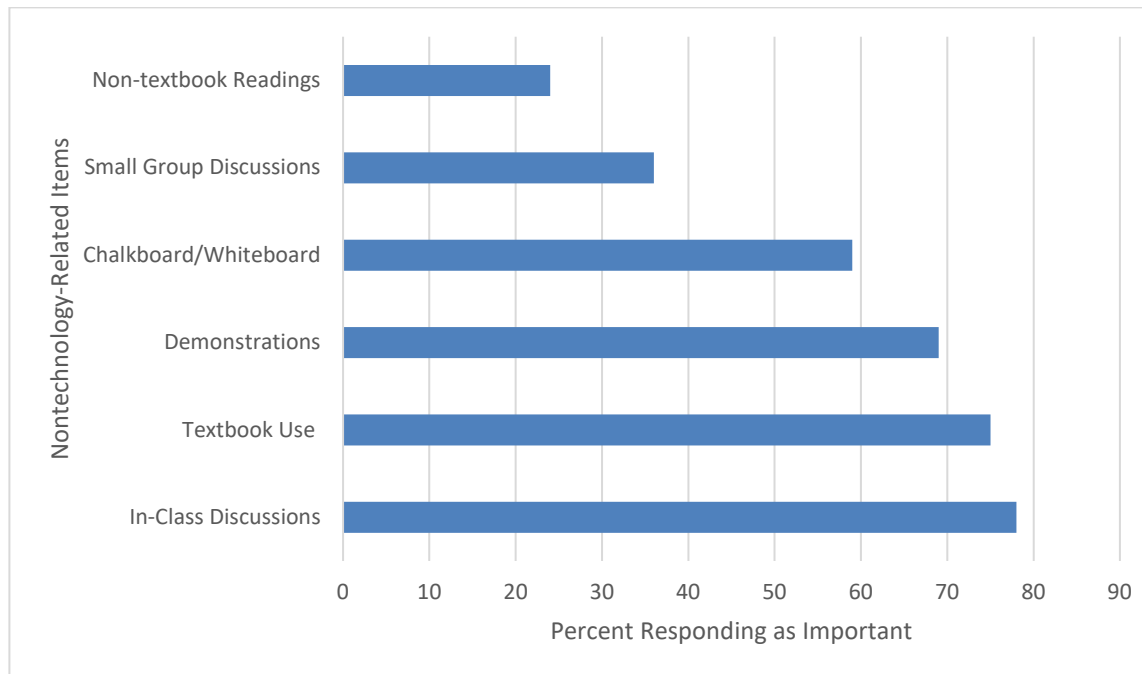
Not surprisingly, mean student expectations for the use of technology are higher when students are enrolled in online and or a mix classes than only in face-to-face classes. Graduate students have higher mean expectations for the use of technology than undergraduates when enrolled either only in online or a mix of classes but have a much lower mean expectation than undergraduates when only in face-to-face classes. Undergraduates have a relatively high mean expectation for the use of technology across all class types.

Figure 1
Students' Expectations for Use of Technology



The survey asked students whether or not they viewed the use of six nontechnology-related items to be important in the classroom: chalkboard/whiteboard, demonstrations, in-class discussions, nontextbook readings, small-group discussions, textbook use. Figure 2 shows the percentage of respondents who listed each nontechnology-related item as important. The two items most frequently listed as important were in-class discussions, with 78% listing as important, and textbook use, with 75% listing as important.

Figure 2
Students' Expectations for Nontechnology-Related Items



In a manner similar to the analysis of the importance of the technology items, the variable Nontechnology Expectations measures the sum of each student's responses for each of the six nontechnology-related variables with each student's measure ranging from 0 – 6. The Nontechnology Expectations variable had a mean (median) of 3.38 (3.0). A 3 X 2 X 2 Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) examines whether student expectations for the use of nontechnology items in the classroom differ based on enrolled class type (face-to-face, online, or mixed), academic level (graduate or undergraduate), or gender. None of the variables or interaction terms were statistically significant, suggesting that there is no statistically significant difference in expectations of nontechnology classroom components by gender, class type, or school level. Due to the lack of any statistical significance in any of the variables or interaction terms, Figure 2 simply states the percentage of respondents rating each variable as important.

Finally, the survey asked about student expectations of the instructor. Specifically, the survey asked respondents about student expectations regarding four instructor related items: interacting with students in the classroom, holding office hours, being available outside of office hours, and knowing students names. The survey also asked what students consider a timely response to emails or phone calls.

Figure 3 shows the number of respondents who list each of the four instructor-related items as important. Respondents most frequently marked interacting with students in the classroom as important (88%). Interacting in the classroom was followed by holding office hours (59%), being available outside of office hours (48%), and knowing students' names (35%).

Figure 3
Students' Expectations for Instructor-Related Items

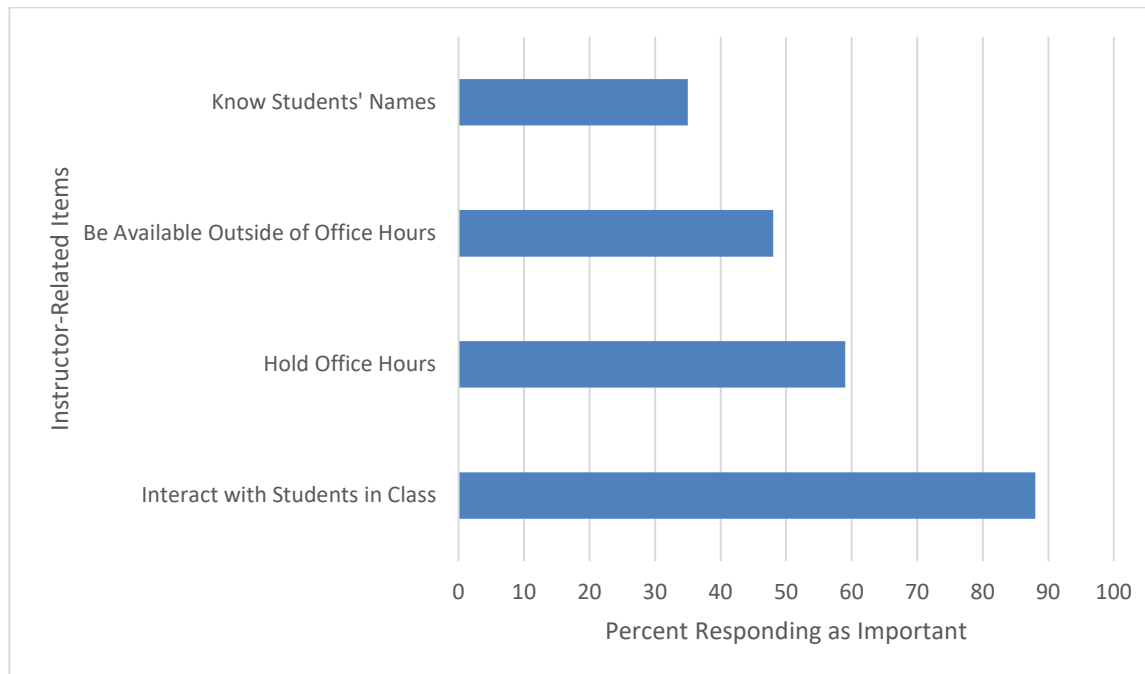
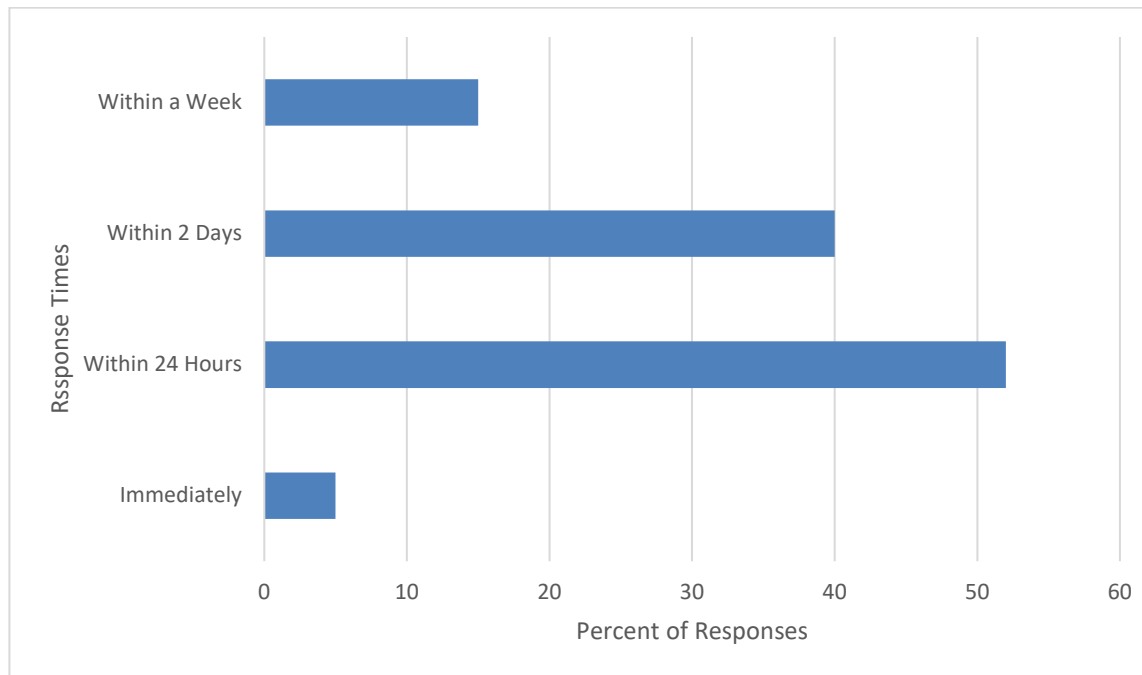


Figure 4 shows what respondents consider to be a timely response by the instructor to a student email or phone call. Just over half of respondents (52%) expect instructors to respond within 24 hours. The next most frequently given time frame was two days followed by one week. Few students expect an immediate response.

Figure 4
Students' Expectations for Timely Instructor Responses



DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study seeks to quantify student expectations in a college of business classroom with respect to the use of technology, the use of nontechnology items, and interactions with the instructor. Although the students in the study are somewhat unique in that they are nontraditional students at an upper-division and graduate university, the results of this study closely align with those of Schmitt, *et al* (2013) and, therefore, support the generalizability of the results showing that student expectations are generally consistent across demographic variables. Those student expectations are, arguably, not unreasonable.

At a summary level, students expect instructors to make use of available technology, interact with students in the classroom, make use of the required textbook, and respond to student emails and phone calls in a timely fashion. A conscientious instructor would surely seek to do all of these things. Given the consistency and reasonableness of student expectations, instructors should be able to manage and meet those expectations and thereby avoid any misalignment and misunderstanding. This, in turn, will enhance the classroom experience for both the students and the instructor.

An obvious limitation of this study is that the data is purely descriptive of what students expect and does not address why students hold those expectations. For example, the data show that students rate textbook use as important. What is unknowable from the data is why. Future research might examine why students hold their expectations and how faculty might effectively manage those expectations to maximize the students' classroom experience.

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