

EXPLORING COMMON CHARACTERISTICS AMONG COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
STUDENTS:  
COMPARING ONLINE AND TRADITIONAL STUDENT SUCCESS

A Dissertation  
by  
ELIZABETH HORD JONES

Submitted to the Graduate School  
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DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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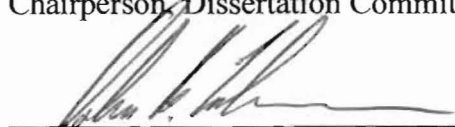
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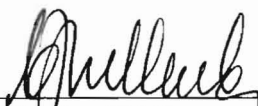
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## ABSTRACT

### EXPLORING COMMON CHARACTERISTICS AMONG COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS: COMPARING ONLINE AND TRADITIONAL STUDENT SUCCESS (May 2010)

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The internet has had a major impact on education, increasing online education opportunities, particularly for community college students who would not typically have access to higher education. Community college students, who are often nontraditional students, enroll in online courses due to their flexibility and convenience. Previous studies report mixed results regarding the performance of community college students in the online environment as compared to their performance in the traditional seated environment. This study examines course entry characteristics of students in both the regular and online sections of an introductory computer class in a North Carolina community college. These characteristics are compared to student performance on a standardized final assessment, focusing on demographics, technology self-efficacy, and motivation.

The research design used in this study utilized correlation analysis and stepwise multiple regression to determine if the independent variables of demographics, technology self-efficacy, and motivation might predict the dependent variable, student performance on a

standardized final exam. A 3-part survey was administered to students enrolled in CIS 110 – Introduction to Computers, during the fall semester of 2009 at Gaston College in Dallas, North Carolina. This survey was developed from a combination of two previously documented instruments as well as a section to collect demographic data. The 28-question Online Technologies Self-Efficacy Survey (OTSES) instrument validated in 2000 by Miltiadou and Yu was used to determine the students' past experience with technology. The first portion of the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire developed by Pintrich, Smith, Garcia, and McKeachie (1991) was used to gather information about the students' self-motivation. The third section consisted of a 9-question section used to gather the demographic information including gender, age, marital status, family obligations, and course enrollment status.

Results of correlational and stepwise multiple regression analyses of the survey data were compared to the final assessment scores of the students who participated in the survey. This analysis revealed that neither demographics, technology, nor motivation could be used as predictors in the seated courses. Demographics could not be used as predictors in the online courses. Eleven technology and nine motivation factors were found to be significant in the online environment. The significant technology indicators can be grouped into three areas: 1) interaction with web sites; 2) using e-mail; and 3) using the course delivery system. Significant motivation factors focus on the students' confidence and belief in their own abilities to do well.

The results of this study support the premise that technology self-efficacy and motivation play a role in a student's ability to be successful in the online environment. As the use of the internet to deliver course material increases and the community college

student continues to demand the flexibility and convenience of this mode of delivery, administrators and faculty in the community college environment must understand the factors that contribute to online student success. Implications for practice and policy, and recommendations for further research are presented.