

DEMAND AND NECESSITY OF EVENING/WEEKEND COLLEGE COURSES

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ABSTRACT

In today's higher education system we are seeing more nontraditional college students. These nontraditional students are working towards a better future by getting a college degree. The key to success for nontraditional college students has been the existence of evening and weekend college courses [1]. Prior to the study we analyzed the university's past data from 2011 to 2014 on enrollment patterns by age, different temporal preferences of courses being taken by students, and graduation rates. In the analysis of university's past data, we discovered that evening and weekend courses are in high demand by non-traditional age students (older than 24 years of age). The demand could be due to the fact that nontraditional age students tend to have more out-of-school responsibilities such as work, dependents to take care of, or internships to attend. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has defined a nontraditional college student, a student that has any of the following seven criteria: being older than 24 years old, status being part-time at school, being financially independent, having dependents, being a single parent, and not enrolling into a four year institution straight out of high school. These seven criteria have been used in previous research to study and understand the needs and demand of nontraditional students. For the purpose of this study we will be using five of the NCES criteria to see how they affect the students preference for evening and weekend college courses. The main hypothesis of the study is that nontraditional students will prefer evening scheduled courses to morning or afternoon scheduled courses. The second hypothesis is that nontraditional student will prefer weekend scheduled courses more than traditional students.

In the mixed methods study, a 42-question survey was created to collect data on students' temporal preference as well as satisfaction levels of scheduled college courses. The online survey was sent out to approximately 20,000 students eligible to enroll in the 2015 fall semester at California State University, Dominguez Hills. With a total of 2,199 complete responses (11% response rate) we were able to group and correlate the students' preferences for evening and weekend-scheduled courses. In this study evening scheduled courses will be defined as courses scheduled between 5:15pm to 9:45pm and a weekend-scheduled course will be defined as any course offered on a Friday, Saturday, or Sunday. The five criteria being used are the following: age, enrollment status, work, dependents, and institution of origin. The research question guiding the study will be: How does each of the five criteria affect the students' preference for evening as well as weekend-scheduled courses?

Age was noted to have a big impact for the preference of evening and weekend courses. All respondents older than 24 years of age were classified as a nontraditional student based on age. From the sample size a total of 48.1% were of nontraditional age. When looking at preference for evening scheduled courses it was noted that an average of 60.1% of the students that preferred evening scheduled courses were of nontraditional age. Work also had a significant impact on higher preference of evening scheduled

courses. Respondents that worked 20 hours or more each week were considered nontraditional students due to the amount of hours they work. An average of 70.6% of students that prefer evening scheduled courses were nontraditional students based on their work status. In enrollment status students that were only enrolled part time were considered nontraditional student. When comparing their temporal preference it was noted that an average of 26.5% of the part time students prefer evening scheduled courses as compare to 12.5% morning courses and 13.5% afternoon courses. The amount of time spent taking care of a dependent can also affect the students' temporal preference of scheduled courses. Students that took care of dependents for more than 10 hours per week were categorized as nontraditional students. These nontraditional students based on the amount of time they spend taking care of dependent were 26.9% more likely to prefer evening scheduled courses compare to 18.8% morning and 20.7% afternoon courses. Lastly students that did not start a four-year degree granting institution after high school were considered to be a nontraditional student. These nontraditional students based on institutions of origin were 79.1% more likely to prefer an evening scheduled course as to a morning or afternoon course. These brief results clearly outline the desire for evening and weekend college courses by nontraditional college students. Being aware of these scheduling preferences can improve student success especially graduation and retention rates.

REFERENCES

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