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WHO IS TEACHING ONLINE COURSES? :
A PRELIMINARY REVIEW

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Abstract

Many research papers have explored the classic curriculum questions of what we are teaching and how we are teaching. The development of the World Wide Web in the early 1990's has extended the issue one step further to include the concern of where we are teaching. The Web has indeed allowed the forum for teaching to move beyond the traditional face-to-face (F2F) classroom to online or "virtual" classrooms.

This non-traditional forum has indeed become popular, but the researchers of this paper would like to know exactly how popular it has become? Is this just a novelty forum that is being used by a select few on campus, or is being used by many across campus? Is it really "replacing" the traditional classrooms altogether, as some would like to suggest, or is just a small percentage of faculty who are using it? In particular, it would be interesting to know if this forum is being used more by one particular group of faculty on campus, such as technology professors, than by others. Is the web being used to teach proportionally more undergraduate or graduate courses? Who is benefiting the most by technology?

This research-in-progress will attempt to answer some of these questions by exploring one regional university's use of WebCT, a web-based tool that allows academics to teach online classes. In particular, the researchers are currently in the process of collecting data about the number of classes being taught using WebCT, the number of faculty using WebCT, and categorizing the information by discipline, college, and classification level (undergraduate or graduate). This data will then be compared to the summary of class listings overall for the campus to see what percentage of faculty and discipline areas are represented in the web-based courses. Future research will include a comparative analysis with other universities.

Keywords: online teaching, virtual classrooms, WebCT, internet courses, web classes