

Online resolution

As at many other institutions, there is increasing emphasis on distance learning at KCTCS colleges. We view that as cause for concern because we are unconvinced the institution is doing all it can to assure student success through its offering of online courses.

Data gathered by the BCTC Retention Committee in recent years has shown a significantly higher rate failure/withdrawal grades for online classes compared to in-person classes.

A study of Online Learning in the Virginia Community College System published in 2010 concluded: “Regardless of their initial level of preparation...students were more likely to fail or withdraw from online courses than from face-to-face courses. In addition, students who took online coursework in early semesters were slightly less likely to return to school in subsequent semesters, and students who took a higher proportion of credits online were slightly less likely to attain an educational award or transfer to a four-year institution.”

In light of this evidence, we recommend that the BCTC Faculty Council initiate a study of online learning at BCTC in conjunction with study of scholarly literature on the subject.

If, as we suspect it will, the study finds that first year students, especially those with relatively low reading levels, are prone to fail and often withdraw when they take online classes, it is hoped the Faculty Council will make recommendations that can be taken to the KCTCS Senate. For example, if the evidence shows incoming students are particularly at risk, then here are some recommendations that may be worth considering:

- No developmental courses should be taught online.
- Incoming students should not be allowed to take an online course unless they have an ACT, SAT, or a Compass score at least somewhat higher than the minimum that would exempt them from remedial reading.
- Transfer students and continuing students should be required to have a solid GPA (for purposes of discussion, 2.5)