ECAR Study of Faculty and Information Technology, 2019

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DECEMBER 2019

Key Findings

- **A majority (51%) of faculty prefer to teach in a blended environment that includes both face-to-face and online components.** However, combining the proportion of faculty who prefer a completely face-to-face teaching environment (43%) with those who prefer a mostly face-to-face environment (30%) reveals that faculty preferences skew heavily in the direction of face-to-face interactions with students. Comparatively, only 9% of faculty reported a preference for learning environments that are mostly or completely online.

- **Many faculty aren't using online student success tools, but when they do use them, a majority find them at least moderately useful.** For each of the four online student success tools in our research, between 27% and 39% of faculty reported not using them. When faculty used these tools, about a third rated them as very or extremely useful. Students find these tools more useful than faculty.

- **Faculty satisfaction with their overall technology experience has declined slightly. When faculty have good or excellent experiences with IT support services, their overall technology experience is good or excellent.** Overall, good or excellent ratings declined from 71% in 2017 to 64% in 2019. Compared with 2017, fewer faculty in 2019 rated the support services at their institution good or excellent, and fewer reported using their institution's help desk when they need support; yet when used effectively, both contribute to overall satisfaction.

- **Faculty's receiving training on integrating technology in the classroom is associated with increased use of mobile technology in the classroom.** Among faculty who received professional development training on integrating technology in their classroom, fewer than half (47%) reported banning smartphones in their classrooms. Among faculty who did not receive such training, 63% banned these devices.

- **Faculty give high ratings to support services for accessibility technology, when they use them.** A majority (60%) of faculty who used accessibility support services for students rated them good or excellent. Only 23% of faculty at AA institutions reported not using these services within the past year, suggesting high rates of accessibility support among these institutions in particular. At non-AA institutions, fewer students reporting disabilities and/or lack of faculty awareness of the technology needs of students who have disabilities might contribute to lower awareness and use of these services.

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Recommendations

- **Promote benefits and strategies for engaging in online teaching through mentoring and the creation of sustainable learning communities.** Academic departments need to consider changes to their tenure requisites to reward faculty who choose to engage in course development and online instruction. Faculty report strong preferences for face-to-face learning environments, but with increasing offerings and enrollments in online classes, institutions need to provide professional development to faculty who have the interest and skills to teach online.

- **Communicate to faculty and students the benefits of advising technologies. Gain buy-in by understanding faculty needs and advising processes, and integrate these technologies into existing software platforms.** Increasing awareness among faculty is necessary to implement online student success tools. But it's equally critical for institutions to implement a "bottom up" approach for putting advising technologies into effect. Without buy-in from faculty and absent a perception that these tools are a value-ad, the technologies will likely not be used often and will be seen as offering few tangible benefits to student success. Students already appreciate these tools, particularly students in underrepresented groups. Institutions need to capitalize on students' use of these tools and ensure that faculty have the appropriate tools seamlessly integrated into their advising activities.

- **Increase awareness among IT support services staff that quality services for faculty contribute to faculty's overall ratings of their technology experiences. IT support staff are first responders to faculty technology issues and can make a real difference in faculty experiences.** Ensuring faculty satisfaction in using remote-access software is an area where IT support services can improve faculty technology experiences. In addition, engagement with help desk services is associated with faculty's overall satisfaction with technology experiences at their institution.

- **Facilitate faculty professional development on integrating technology into teaching.** Promote professional development for faculty on effectively incorporating mobile technologies into their classrooms. Bans on all technology devices in the classroom will likely decrease student engagement. These bans disproportionately affect minority students and students with disabilities needing accommodations. Quash the "devices in the classroom" debate by leveraging mobile technologies in students' hands to increase engagement and learning.

- **Increase faculty awareness of student needs and accessibility support services, particularly among non-AA institutions.** Disability disclosure rates remain low among students, limiting faculty awareness and ability to address accessibility needs in the classroom. When faculty use accessibility support services, however, they report high levels of satisfaction with those services.

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