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## **I'll Take My Lecture to Go, Please**

York University

It looks like students can be open-minded after all: When provided with the option to view lectures online, rather than just in person, a full 82 percent of undergraduates kindly offered that they'd be willing to entertain an alternative to showing up to class and paying attention in real time.

A new study released today suggests not only a willingness but a “clear preference” among undergraduates for “lecture capture,” the technology that records, streams and stores what happens in the classroom for concurrent or later viewing.

The study, sponsored by the University of Wisconsin-Madison's E-Business Institute, tackles the much-discussed question of students' preferences for traditional versus online learning with unusual rigor. Based on a survey of more than 29,000 undergraduate and graduate students at the university, the study had a response rate of over 25 percent. Almost half of the undergraduates — 47 percent — had taken a class with lectures available for online viewing.

The responses potentially address two of the biggest obstacles some observers see to more widespread adoption of lecture capture technology and other elements of distance education: a willingness to learn remotely, and the cost barrier.

Students who responded to the survey clearly understood the benefits of lectures that are available as Webcasts, such as making up for missed classes — which, at 93 percent, ranked as the top advantage — and “watching lectures on demand for convenience” (79 percent) or other reasons, such as reviewing lectures before class.

Over half, moreover, said they saw value in having access to course materials (such as lectures, potentially) even after the semester was over, much in the same way that some students keep their old textbooks for future reference.

At the same time, the survey addresses potential cost concerns, which have given pause to administrators who worry about the financial strains of scaling up their educational efforts as well as to students who would bristle at added technology fees for all of their classes. Over 60 percent of respondents said they would pay for lecture capture capabilities, and of those, 69 percent said they would be willing to pay on a “course-by-course” basis rather than bundled fees.

“I think one of the things that surprised us a bit was the undergraduate preference,” said Sandra Bradley, practice director at the university's E-Business Consortium and co-author of the study.

“I think we were maybe anticipating that we would see it a bit higher with graduate students,” whose preference was only slightly lower, at 79 percent.

Sean Brown, vice president of higher education for Sonic Foundry, which specializes in rich media and lecture capture applications for higher education, said the study was a validation of his company’s internal research. He will be featuring the study’s results in a live Webcast to higher education professionals today. As a member of the E-Business Consortium based at the university, he added, the company’s marketing department initially supported some of the study’s administrative costs, but those did not in any way influence the outcome.

“There’s a lot of positive feelings ... but to have empirical evidence that it’s having an impact and about how students feel about” lecture capture, he said, was valuable feedback.

— [Andy Guess](#)