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A Qualitative Analysis of Graduating Business Seniors Core Course and Online Course Perceptions

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Abstract

Business schools need to maintain student academic satisfaction. A key component of a business school's curriculum is its core or required courses and online courses experiences. Using qualitative open item analyses, this study asked graduating business students for their perceptions of required core courses and their online course experiences. Consistent demographics and school background variables allowed the Fall, 2021 and Spring 2022 graduating samples to be combined. Student records allowed the graduating students to be split into qualitative versus quantitative majors to promote comparison across common categories. There was much overall agreement between qualitative and quantitative majors on the most valuable part of their core experience, as well as how to improve this experience. However, quantitative majors were more likely to mention specific core courses as being valuable than qualitative majors. In addition, quantitative majors were more likely to voice concerns about better professor instruction and poor course structure versus qualitative majors. Finally, quantitative majors were more likely to express that online courses were not as learning effective as in-person courses. Results are further discussed.

Keywords: graduating business seniors, qualitative analysis, business core courses, online course perceptions

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction to the Problem

With the continued unpredictable impact of Covid-19 variants on higher education (Katella, 2022), all universities and colleges, including business schools, need to continually assess their curricula to maintain student satisfaction as part of retention (Swani, Wamwara, Goodrich, Schiller & Dinsmore, 2022). An Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) report (Bisoux, 2021) noted that one Covid-19 impact was the need to increase and maintain both online and hybrid (mix of online and in-person) course offerings to maintain enrollment levels. Marks, Haug and Huckabee (2016) found that undergraduate business student satisfaction was affected by their curriculum perceptions. Generally, an AACSB (AACSB, 2022) business curriculum is split into several components for an undergraduate: specialized courses within one's major, non-business course electives, and business core courses outside of one's major. Depending on the size of the curricula, undergraduate business majors must take a certain number of business core courses to gain a basic knowledge about business concepts and functional business skills (Athavale, Davis & Myring, 2008). This core course curriculum component generally represents a significant number of credits within a business student's degree program. Moreover, since these core courses must be taken by all business students, regardless of major, these courses impact a large number of students. As such, an on-going assessment of business students' perceptions of their core courses seems warranted. The goal of this study was to qualitatively examine business student perceptions of their core courses, and given the relevance of Covid-19, also perceptions of their online course experiences. Prior empirical research has emphasized a quantitative, but not qualitative, research approach when investigating business core courses. A quantitative research approach typically uses closed-item surveys for statistical analyses, versus a qualitative research approach asks open item questions (Streefkerk, 2022).

1.2 Describe Relevant Scholarship

As noted above, prior work on business core courses has used a quantitative research design to investigate business student perceptions of their required core courses. Using a sample of 165 graduating business students, Blau (2019) asked respondents if six required business administration (BA) courses "added value to their education." Each course was represented by an item. Two scales resulted from these six courses, labeled, BA Unique (4 items) and BA Generic (2 items). The BA Unique scale consisted of core courses (items) not typically found across AACSB curricula (AACSB, 2022), such as "Professional Development Strategies" (BA 2101), "Excel for Business Applications" (BA 2104), "Business Communications" (BA 2196), and "Integrative Business Applications" (BA 3103). However, the BA Generic scale was composed of items (courses) more common AACSB curricula, i.e., "Business Society and Ethics" (BA 3102), and "Global Business Policies" (BA 4101). Blau (2019) found that the BA Unique scale had stronger positive relationships to student program degree satisfaction and perceived Business School reputation for employers versus the BA Generic scale. However, sample size limitations prevented using all 21 required core courses. In a follow-up study, using a much larger sample size of n = 509, Blau, Goldberg and Szewczuk (2020) asked graduating business students about the perceived added education value for all 21 required core courses (items) and factor analyzed these items, into three reliable scales, called Lower-level Foundation, e.g., marketing, economics (seven course items); Business Administration, e.g., global business policies, ethics (seven course items) and Quantitative, e.g., finance, statistics (three course items). Blau et al. (2020) found that the Quantitative scale had higher perceived added value versus both the Lower-level Foundation and Business Administration scales. In addition, Blau et al. (2020) utilized four grading assessment learning perception (GALP) scales, i.e., exam-based, individual engagement, team-based and individual creative. They found that the Business Administration scale had a significantly higher positive average correlation to these four GALP scales than the Lower-level and Quantitative scales. Absent from both prior studies was open item analyses to further explore these quantitative results.

To help understand differences in business student curricula perceptions, prior research (Blau, Pred, Drennan & Kapanjie, 2016) has distinguished between quantitative versus qualitative business majors. Building upon prior work (Sanford, Ross, Rosenbloom, Singer & Luchsinger, 2014) Blau et al. (2016) classified accounting, finance, risk management and insurance, management information systems, actuarial science, economics, and statistics as quantitative majors versus human resource management, management, marketing, international business, entrepreneurship, legal studies, and real estate as qualitative majors. Blau et al. (2016) found that the number of prior online or hybrid courses and perceived ease of use of technology were each positively related to the perceived favorability of online courses for qualitative majors, but not quantitative majors. However, again there were no open item analyses to further explore these quantitative findings. This study will use this expanded categorization for distinguishing quantitative versus qualitative business majors.

Thus, the goal of this study was to ask graduating business students open item questions about their core course and online course experiences, and to compare qualitative versus quantitative major responses. Given the exploratory nature of this study, and absence of prior qualitative research, this led to the following three general research questions.

1.3 Research Questions

RQ1 – there will be difference(s) in the perceived most valuable core course experience of qualitative versus quantitative majors

RQ2 – there will be difference(s) in qualitative versus quantitative majors' perceptions of how to improve their core course experience

RQ3 – there will be difference(s) in qualitative versus quantitative majors' perceptions of their online course experiences

2. Method

2.1 Participants and Procedure

The Senior Student Satisfaction Survey (SSSS), an online Qualtrics link, was emailed to all Fall 2021 graduating undergraduate business students, and then again to Spring 2022 graduates. Identical items were asked in both surveys and survey administrations were near the end of each semester. A large state-supported university business school in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States was the research setting. For the Fall 2021 survey, voluntary responses were returned by only 86 out of 388 students (22%). This also included any Summer 2021 graduates. Despite repeated emails to increase the response rate, voluntary responses were received by only 274 out of 942 students (29%) for the Spring 2022 survey. Since this graduating survey was part of an ongoing

evaluation process, the University Institutional Review Board waived the informed consent requirement. These graduating seniors were required to take 21 core courses as noted by Blau et al. (2020).

2.2 Measures

Demographics. Three record-based variables were measured: gender, race, and state residency. Gender was coded as 0 = female, 1 = male. Race was coded as 1 = Hispanic, 2 = Asian, 3 = White, 4 = African American, 5 = Multiracial, and 6 = unknown. State residency was coded as 0 = out of state, 1 = in state.

School Background. Three record-based variables were measured: full-time/part-time status, where 0 = full-time (taking at least 12 credit hours/semester), 1 = part-time (taking less than 12 credit hours/semester); transfer student, where 0 = transfer, 1 = no transfer; and major, i.e., curriculum major of a student. The coding scheme for distinguishing quantitative versus qualitative majors by Blau et al. (2016) was applied. Quantitative majors consisted of finance, accounting, risk management and insurance, management information systems, actuarial science, economics, and statistics. Qualitative majors comprised business administration, marketing, human resource management, international business, entrepreneurship, legal studies, and real estate.

Open items. Three open items were asked: (1) "what do you believe has been the most valuable part of your core course experience?" (2) "what do you believe could have improved the value of your core course experience?" and (3) "please provide your input regarding your online course experiences at the business school."

2.3 Data Analyses

Prior to testing the research questions, the demographics and school-related variables for each sample were compared to see if they could be combined into an overall sample. Then qualitative versus quantitative majors were separated into two different data sets based on Blau et al. (2016). NVivo 12 (NVivo, 2020) was then used to group individual responses into larger common categories. By reading each individual's open response, NVivo (2020) allows for grouping common responses into a larger category (called node). Categories were created until all individual responses had been accounted for (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Some respondents did not answer an item while others gave multiple responses to an item. Thus the response sample size within each open item varies. Using this qualitative versus quantitative general major distinction, a z-test score was then calculated using Social Science Statistics (2021) comparing the two general majors to see if there was a significant difference for a category percentage given. This analysis was followed for each research question. Since no direction could be predicted a priori, a significance level of $p < .05$ (two-tailed) was used as the cutoff for statistical significance.

3. Results

3.1 Combining the Fall and Spring Samples

Table 1 presents the Fall 2021 and Spring 2022 nominal demographic and school background variables separately. Results indicated for both samples: males have a higher participation rate; White is the dominant race category; in state residents and full-time students make up most of each sample; and the breakdown by individual major generally showed similarity. Transfer students were more likely to enroll in the Fall than Spring, which is typical for prior years. At the bottom of the table, under Major, the total of Qualitative and Quantitative majors is reported. This general consistency of the results between these two samples allowed them to be combined, into an overall n = 360 (n = 86 + n = 274) for testing the research questions.

Table 1. Nominal Demographic and School Background Variables

	Fall, 2021	Spring 2022
Variable	(n = 86)	(n = 274)
Gender		
Male	n = 46 (54%)	n = 145 (53%)
Female	n = 40 (46%)	n = 129 (47%)
Race		
Hispanic	n = 6 (7%)	n = 15 (6%)
Asian	n = 12 (14%)	n = 39 (14%)
White	n = 51 (59%)	n = 169 (62%)

African American	n = 9 (11%)	n = 30 (11%)
Multiracial	n = 7 (8%)	n = 8 (3%)
Unknown	n = 1 (1%)	n = 13 (5%)
State Residency		
In State	n = 69 (80%)	n = 208 (76%)
Out of State	n = 17 (20%)	n = 66 (24%)
Full-time/Part-time Status		
Full-time (at least 12 credit hours)	n = 57 (66%)	n = 229 (84%)
Part-time (less than 12 credit hours)	n = 29 (34%)	n = 45 (16%)
Transfer Student		
Transfer	n = 44 (51%)	n = 87 (32%)
No Transfer	n = 42 (49%)	n = 187 (68%)
Major		
Accounting	n = 8 (9%)	n = 38 (14%)
Actuarial Science	n = 4 (5%)	n = 13 (5%)
Business Management	n = 14 (16%)	n = 31 (11%)
Economics	n = 2 (2%)	n = 6 (2%)
Entrepreneurship	n = 2 (2%)	n = 5 (2%)
Finance/Finance Planning	n = 14 (16%)	n = 46 (17%)
Human Resource Management	n = 3 (4%)	n = 10 (4%)
International Business	n = 1 (1%)	n = 12 (4%)
Legal Studies	n = 0 (0%)	n = 5 (2%)
Management Information Systems	n = 3 (4%)	n = 17 (6%)
Marketing	n = 13 (15%)	n = 39 (14%)
Real Estate	n = 2 (2%)	n = 3 (1%)
Risk Management and Insurance	n = 14 (16%)	n = 32 (12%)
Statistics/Data Analytics	n = 1 (1%)	n = 10 (4%)
Supply Chain Management	n = 5 (6%)	n = 7 (3%)
Qualitative Majors	n =35 (40%)	n = 105 (38%)
Quantitative Majors	n =51 (59%)	n = 169 (62%)

3.2 Testing the Research Questions

Tables 2 (Research Question 1), 3 (Research Question 2) and 4 (Research Question 3) below test each a research question. It is important to note that the sample sizes vary within each table because not all respondents gave an open item answer and some respondents gave multiple answers which needed to be separately coded.

RQ1 – there will be difference(s) in the perceived most valuable core course experience of qualitative versus quantitative majors

Table 2. Most Valuable Part of Core Course Experience, Qualitative versus Quantitative Majors

Category	Qualitative Majors, n = 73	Quantitative Majors, n = 132
Professor-related interaction	n = 17 (20%)	n = 19 (14%)
Specific core courses mentioned	**n = 13 (15%)[a]**	**n = 36 (27%)[a]**
Broad/fundamental business education	n = 12 (14%)	n = 23 (17%)
Professional Development	n = 6 (7%)	n = 9 (7%)
Real world applications	n = 6 (7%)	n = 14 (11%)
Application to projects, tests, groups	n = 5 (6%)	n = 0
Strengthen communication skills – written and oral	n = 4 (5%)	n = 7 (5%)
Helping with major	n = 3 (4%)	n = 0
Guest Speakers	n = 3 (4%)	n = 1 (1%)
Peer Interactions	n = 3 (4%)	n = 4 (3%)
Internship class	n = 2 (2%)	n = 0
Professional Student Organizations	n = 2 (2%)	n = 3 (2%)
Group Projects	n = 2 (2%)	n = 5 (4%)
Courses helped to pick major	n = 2 (2%)	n = 2 (2%)
Opportunity to study abroad	n = 1 (1%)	n = 0
Increased rigor as transfer student	n = 1 (1%)	n = 0
Pass or fail option during Covid	n = 1 (1%)	n = 0
Honors program	n = 1 (1%)	n = 1 (1%)
More relaxed learning	n = 1 (1%)	n = 0
Learned problem solving skills	n = 1 (1%)	n = 1 (1%)
Scheduling – get out of way first	n = 0	n = 1 (1%)
In-person classes	n = 0	n = 3 (2%)
Gaining self-discipline	n = 0	n = 2 (2%)
Online course transition	n = 0	n = 1 (1%)
Networking connections	n = 0	n = 2 (2%)
	Total n = 86	total n = 134

[a]test for independent proportions, z = -2.04, p < .05 (two-tailed) https://www.socscistatistics.com/tests/ztest/default2.aspx

Inspection of Table 2 shows many similarities in Qualitative versus Quantitative major perceptions for their most valuable core experience, including: professor-related interaction, gaining a broad/fundamental business education, having professional development, and gaining real world applications. However, there was one significant difference in category percentages. Quantitative majors were more likely to mention a specific course as a valuable part of their core course experience versus qualitative majors. Further details revealed that Introduction to Risk Management (RMI 2101) was most often mentioned as the specific course by quantitative majors, followed by Business Communications (BA 2196) and the Global Policies capstone course (BA 4101).

RQ2 – there will be difference(s) in qualitative versus quantitative majors' perceptions of how to improve their core course experience

Table 3. How to Improve value of Core Course Experience, Qualitative versus Quantitative Majors

Category	Qualitative Majors, n = 73	Quantitative Majors, n = 121
Fewer required core courses	n = 17 (21%)	n = 18 (14%)
Better professor instruction	**n = 12 (15%)[a]**	**n = 34 (26%)[a]**
Specific courses, too hard	n = 9 (11%)	n = 2 (2%)
More applied, real-life projects needed	n = 7 (9%)	n = 16 (12%)
Less group work, better monitoring	n = 7 (9%)	n = 5 (4%)
Need more progressive curriculum	n = 6 (7%)	n = 10 (8%)
Good as is, no improvement needed	n = 5 (6%)	n = 5 (4%)
Need better scheduling of courses	n = 4 (5%)	n = 2 (2%)
Covid interfere with in-person classes	n = 4 (5%)	n = 6 (5%)
No Leadership Development Program requirement	n = 2 (3%)	n = 1 (1%)
More career preparation	n = 2 (3%)	n = 4 (3%)
More Business School events	n = 2 (3%)	n = 0
Reduce class size	n = 1 (1%)	n = 1 (1%)
Better advising	n = 1 (1%)	n = 1 (1%)
Better integration between courses	n = 1 (1%)	n = 2 (2%)
Too much busy work, interfere with graduation preparation	n = 1 (1%)	n = 5 (4%)
Poor course structure	**n= 0[b]**	**n = 12 (9%)[b]**
More geared towards major	n= 0	n = 2 (2%)
More guest speakers	n= 0	n = 1 (1%)
Need co-op course	n= 0	n = 1 (1%)
No charge for proctored exams	n= 0	n = 1 (1%)
	Total n = 81	Total n = 129

[a] $z = -1.97$, $p < .05$ (two-tailed) https://www.socscistatistics.com/tests/ztest/default2.aspx

[b] $z = -2.82$, $p < .05$ (two-tailed) https://www.socscistatistics.com/tests/ztest/default2.aspx

Inspection of Table 3 again shows common percentages across many identified categories for Qualitative versus Quantitative major perceptions for how to improve the value of the core experience, including: fewer required core courses; more applied real-life projects needed, less group work, with better monitoring. There were two significant differences in category perception. Quantitative majors were more likely to complain about the need for better professor instruction and also about poor course structure versus Qualitative majors. Specific comments for better professor instruction included: professors not caring; too many class-long lectures; not much feedback; and the need for more engagement and discussion. For poor course structure, the Integrative Business Applications course (BA 3103) was most specifically mentioned, as being a poor simulation experience. In addition, although there was no difference in category percentage, a small percentage of both qualitative (5%) and quantitative (5%) majors specifically mentioned that Covid interfered with their in-person classes. This leads to the final research question.

RQ3 – there will be difference(s) in qualitative versus quantitative majors' perceptions of their online course experiences

Table 4. Please provide your input about your online course experiences

Category	Qualitative Majors, n = 73	Quantitative Majors, n = 133
Positive experience - as good as possible	n = 39 (41%)	n = 69 (43%)
Not as learning effective as in-person courses	**n = 14 (15%)[a]**	**n = 48 (30%)[a]**
Difficult transition to online from F2F	n = 7 (7%)	n = 3 (2%)
Professor must be adequately trained	n = 6 (6%)	n = 7 (4%)
Better able to manage other priorities	n = 4 (4%)	n = 3 (2%)
Group work harder online vs in-person	n = 3 (3%)	n = 2 (1%)
Too much professor variability in quality	n = 3 (3%)	n = 7 (4%)
Participation harder vs in-person	n = 3 (3%)	n = 1 (1%)
Professors - helpful & understanding	n = 3 (3%)	n = 7 (4%)
Math (STAT, FIN, MSOM) classes hardest for online	n = 2 (2%)	n = 0
Liked online scheduling flexibility	n = 2 (2%)	n = 6 (4%)
Online classes were adequate	n = 2 (2%)	n = 2 (1%)
Liked recorded online class lectures	n = 1 (1%)	n = 1 (1%)
Webcam on should not be required	n = 1 (1%)	n = 0
Student needs enough technology	n = 1 (1%)	n = 0
Pass vs fail option helped	n = 1 (1%)	n = 0
Offer more online options	n= 1 (1%)	n = 0
Not worth cost	n= 1 (1%)	n = 3 (2%)
Stressful invasive test proctoring	n= 1 (1%)	n = 1 (1%)
Cheating bigger problem with online vs F2F	n= 0	n = 2 (1%)
	Total n = 95	Total n = 162

[a]z= -2.69, p < .01 (two-tailed) https://www.socscistatistics.com/tests/ztest/default2.aspx

Inspection of Table 4 shows the highest common percentage category s across both Qualitative versus Quantitative majors was that their online course experience was positive. Where more specific positive comments were given, after noting the sudden adaptation due to Covid-19, Qualitative majors mentioned: a mostly seamless transition, education quality was not affected; professors being prepared to teach virtually and adapting their course materials for an online environment; being able to rewatch online lectures; greater convenience due to commuting for online classes and helping to prepare for remote work after graduation. Specific positive comments from Quantitative majors, again after noting the sudden adaptation, included: an easy transition; course delivery and quality being equal or better than in-person; liking the Zoom technology; professors being very helpful; really enjoying online learning; and greater convenience due to commuting.

However, these positive results were somewhat offset by also finding a higher percentage of Quantitative (versus Qualitative) majors who felt that their online course experience was not as learning effective as an in-person course. Specific negative comments from Quantitative majors included (versus in-person classes): having to teach myself; feeling less engaged; less learning; less student contribution to online discussion; more difficult to focus/more distractions; harder to pay attention; lack of class camaraderie; not liking Zoom; too much lecture and not enough interaction; not being able to absorb information as well; and harder to retain knowledge. Although not as numerous, specific negative comments from Qualitative majors included (versus in-person classes): professors were not as accessible; more difficult to learn; being extroverted, and not liking format; and lower engagement. Related to this, a small percentage of both Qualitative (7%) and Quantitative (2%) majors noted that they had a difficult transition to online classes from face-to-face (F2F) due to the pandemic.

4. Discussion

This study took a qualitative look at graduating seniors' perceptions of their core courses and online course experience in the business school. Prior work on business core courses has used a quantitative research design to investigate business student perceptions of their required core courses (Blau, 2019; Blau et al., 2020). To better understand differences in business student curricula perceptions, this study distinguished between quantitative versus qualitative majors (Blau et al., 2016). Looking at the two open item core course questions, as noted earlier, there was much more agreement across created comparison categories versus not. In some cases, the acknowledged most valuable categories of the core course experience for both qualitative and quantitative majors, e.g. , real world applications, professional development (Table 2), were also mentioned by both types of majors as a need for further improvement, i.e.., more applied, real-world projects, more career preparation (Table 3). In terms of differences, for the "most valuable part of the core course experience item," quantitative majors were more likely to cite specific courses as being helpful versus qualitative majors. Specific course examples given were RMI 2101 (Introduction to Risk Management and BA 2196 (Business Communication). Offering these two core courses may not be typical in a business school's core curriculum. The larger size of the present study business school undergraduate population (N = 4,500 in Fall 2022), helped to allow for such offerings.

For the "how to improve the core course experience item," quantitative majors did voice more collective concern with the quality of professor instruction and poor course structure, versus the qualitative majors. These results suggest that vigilant attention be given to quantitative core courses, e.g., instructor training, as well as ensuring a more standardized structure across multiple sections in a core course, such as common syllabi, texts, exams/quizzes, etc. Greater standardized core course structure can also help to strengthen the quality of professor instruction. The business school has created a video lecture vault, where professors explain various topics in depth, to help students learn asynchronously, and allow for reviewing foundational concepts. Making sure students know about this resource is important. In addition, the University has a Center for the Advancement of Teaching (CAT) which offers workshops and resource tools to faculty to help them design and teach their courses more effectively. However, attendance at a CAT workshop is generally voluntary. One option to consider, especially for non-tenure track faculty (full-time and adjunct), would be to require CAT workshop attendance if student teaching evaluations fall below a certain level. In their model of student satisfaction factors, Howell and Buck (2012) noted the importance of faculty subject matter competency, which included depth of knowledge, ability to explain concepts, and course organization. Particularly with quantitative courses, where more mathematical and statistical problem solving as well as usage and application of technical terminology is required, teaching ability to help students learn and retain problem solving capabilities is important. Many business schools increasingly require peer evaluations as part of contract renewal or the tenure process, where a colleague comes to class to rate instructor teaching competency, as well as offering constructive feedback (Liston, Borko & Whitcomb, 2008). As such, peer evaluations represent another resource to be used, especially with lower student teaching evaluations.

When examining their online course experiences, the largest category for both qualitative and quantitative majors was expressing a positive experience in their online courses, which is encouraging, and a tribute to the instructional support staff during the pandemic. However, quantitative majors also had a higher percentage of poor online (versus face-to-face) experiences than qualitative majors. Although the business school required faculty teaching online to complete an online teaching certificate before Fall, 2020, students may have taken online courses before faculty met this requirement. Certainly, in the Spring of 2020 when the pandemic began, some professors were forced to transition to online classes with limited or even no online training. In addition, this online course experience open item was not restricted to asking only about core courses, so perceptions of online courses in one's major could also be included. As noted above, quantitative courses often require greater problem solving and an online format can make this more challenging for students. For example, collaborative activities, where teams of students problem solve together, can be more difficult for an instructor to manage and give ongoing feedback in an online class (Kebritchi, Lipschuetz & Santiague, 2017). There is often more technical skill required from the instructor to manage an online versus in-person course, e.g., use of Zoom or other technology such as polling, and managing break out groups; so that proper training and ongoing instructional support is critical (Kebritchi et al., 2017). Of course, Covid-19 increased the need for many Instructors to transition from face-to-face to online teaching Pokhrel and Chherti (2021), while keeping their synchronous (e.g., Zoom time) component the same. However, if/when less time is spent in-person with an online class, the asynchronous materials an Instructor prepares to help students learn the material outside of class must be kept relevant and up-to-date (Kebritchi et al., 2017).

4.1 Study Limitations and Future Research

Although this study used a unique qualitative research design (Streefkerk, 2022) to study the impact of core courses and online courses for graduating business students, there are research limitations to acknowledge. The open items used were very limited for applying statistical analyses, i.e., testing for different percentages in created general qualitative versus quantitative major categories. Only three open items were used. For example, instead of asking for only general input about online course experiences, more specific items probing for what specifically students liked versus disliked about their online courses could have provided additional useful feedback to the Business School Curriculum Committee. This online course liking versus disliking item could have been further broken down into separate items for core courses versus major courses. Another general data limitation is not being able to know more specifics for general comments, such as: (1) why were math-related classes noted to be the hardest from qualitative majors; while for both types of majors (1) why was group work harder online versus in person; and (2) how did online classes help students manage other priorities? To follow up on these initial differences, smaller focus groups could be used to collect additional information. There was a disappointing response rate to both the Fall and Spring surveys, and some respondents did not fill in the open items. The timing of the exit surveys, Fall, 2021 and Spring 2022 coincided with these graduating seniors dealing with Covid-19 and the upheaval caused by the University and Business School abruptly transitioning from face-to-face to all online in the middle of the Spring 2020. In the Fall, 2020 the University and Business School tried to re-start face-to-face instruction with re-opening the campus, but again the pandemic forced a shutdown after only several weeks. Such disruption to the students undoubtedly contributed to the lower response rate. The survey did not allow for distinguishing traditional/on-campus versus online students. Traditional students may have been more inclined to not like or not feel that the quality of an online course was equivalent to an in-person course. Blau, Drennan, Karnik and Kapanjie (2017) found a positive relationship between the number of online/hybrid courses taken by business students and perceived favorability of online (versus face-to-face) courses. Additional research investigating online course student perceptions, comparing traditional/on campus students taking an occasional online course versus completely online course students, should be studied. Comparing these two groups on their levels of online course satisfaction/dissatisfaction could help better engage and assist faculty with developing stronger online courses. More study about student motivation for taking online versus on-campus courses would be useful. For example, are students choosing the convenience of an online course over preferred method of learning (Means & Neisler, 2021)?

4.2 Conclusion

Ongoing curricula assessment is perhaps even more important given the expected continued impact of Covid-19 variants on higher education (Katella, 2022). Business student satisfaction with their academics is an important component of student retention, and many universities and colleges, as well as business schools are currently struggling with student retention issues (Swani et al., 2022). In his projected future framework of business education given the Covid-19 pandemic, Krishnamurthy (2020) argues for the ongoing transformation of business schools, including newer, more sustainable models for online learning, as well as transforming business models by seeking new income streams and reducing the costs of achieving learning goals. On-going assessment of business student perceptions of required core courses and online learning experiences, using both quantitative and qualitative research, fits within Krishnamurthy's (2020) framework.

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