

Part I: Questions/Opinion Scale & Responses

(See next page for responses.)

Questions were designed to give an overall picture of student access/use of certain technologies and applications and determine what scholastic effects the respondents saw from this access and use:

1. What grade level do you teach?
2. Select your age range.
3. My students complain of a lack of high-speed Internet-access options in their area.
4. My students use cloud-computing storage and word-processing applications (Dropbox, Google Docs, Windows SkyDrive).
5. I encourage my students to use cloud-computing storage and word-processing applications (Dropbox, Google Docs, Windows SkyDrive).
6. Students without a home computer (desktop or laptop) tend to earn lower grades than students with access to a home computer.
7. Post-secondary instructors (or instructors with transferring students): There is a discrepancy in computer skills (word processing, database research, search-engine use) between students from traditionally well-funded school districts and poorly funded school districts.
8. My students use social networking applications (Facebook, Twitter)...
9. The open computer labs at my school offer a viable alternative to students without a home computer.
10. Effective assistive technology is readily available to students who need special accommodations.

Response Summary

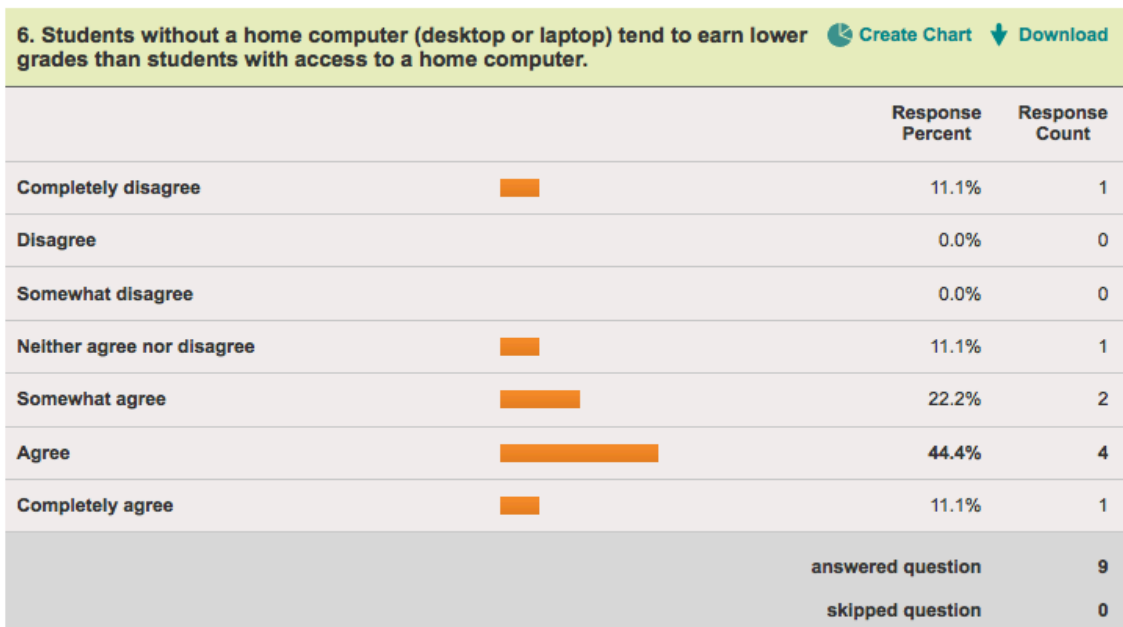
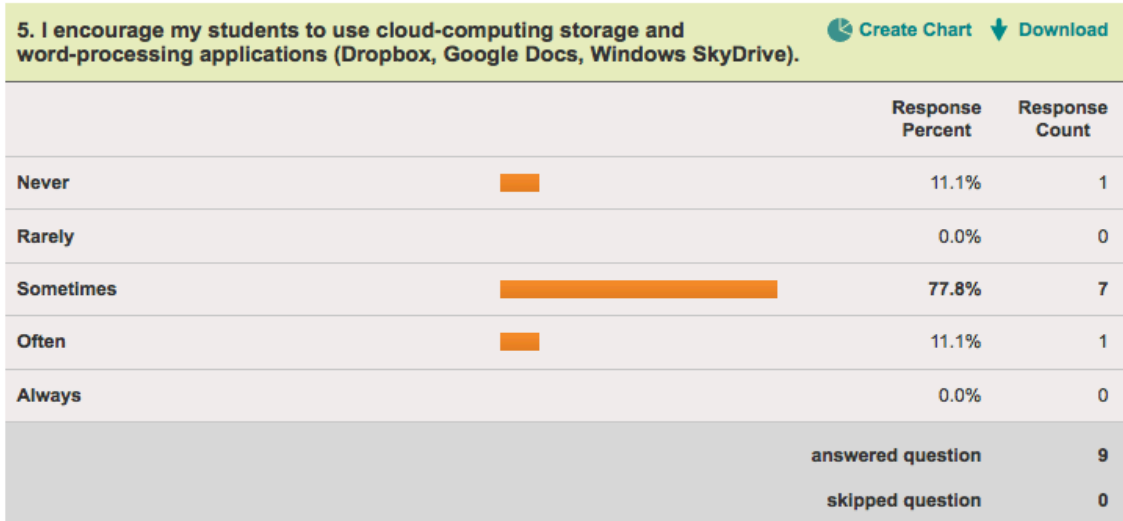
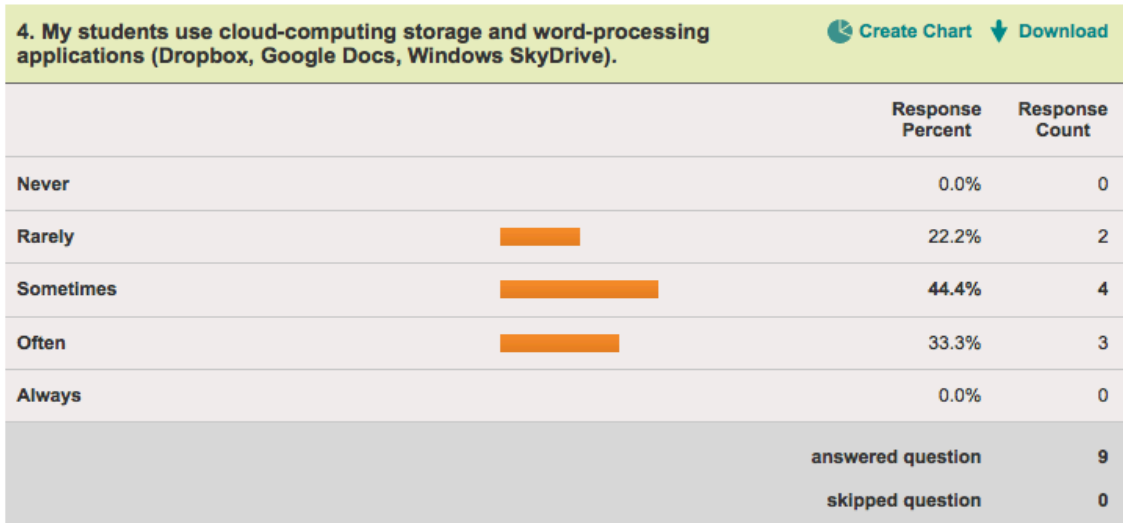
Total Started Survey: 9
Total Completed Survey: 9 (100%)

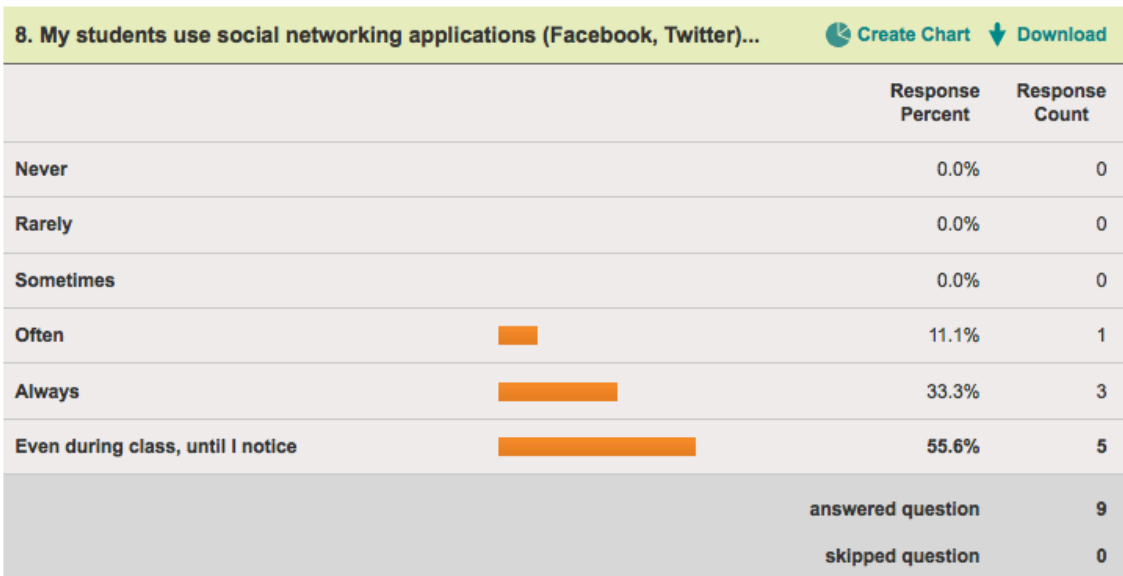
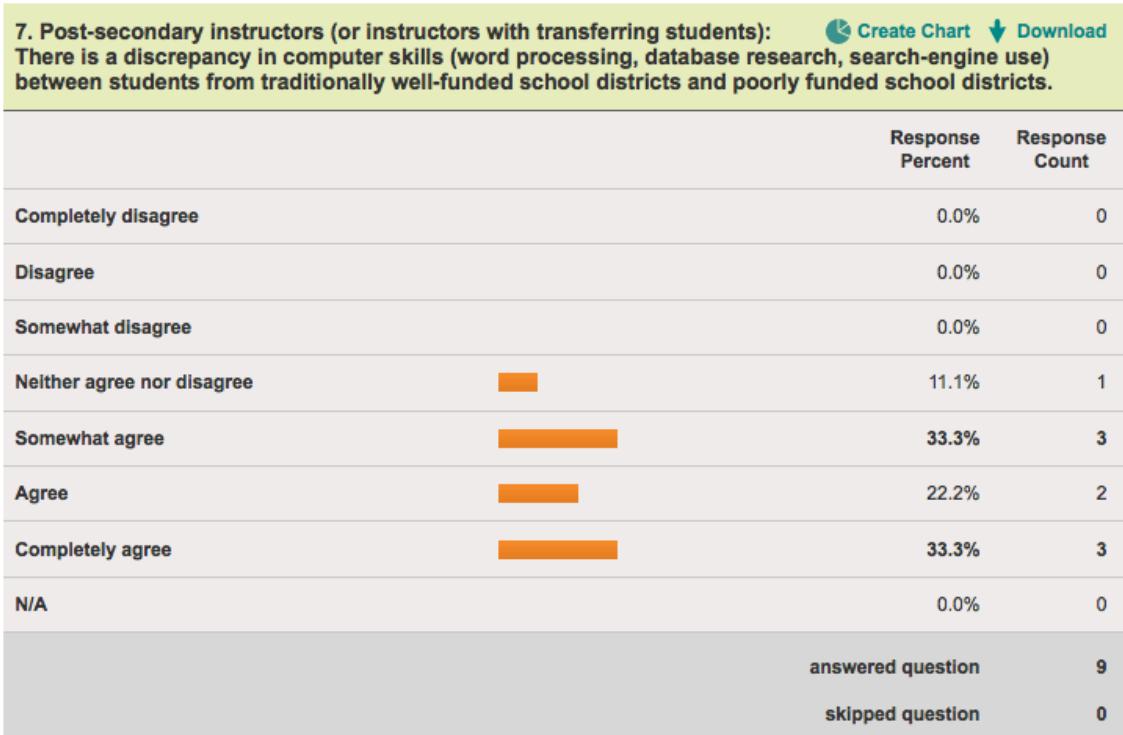
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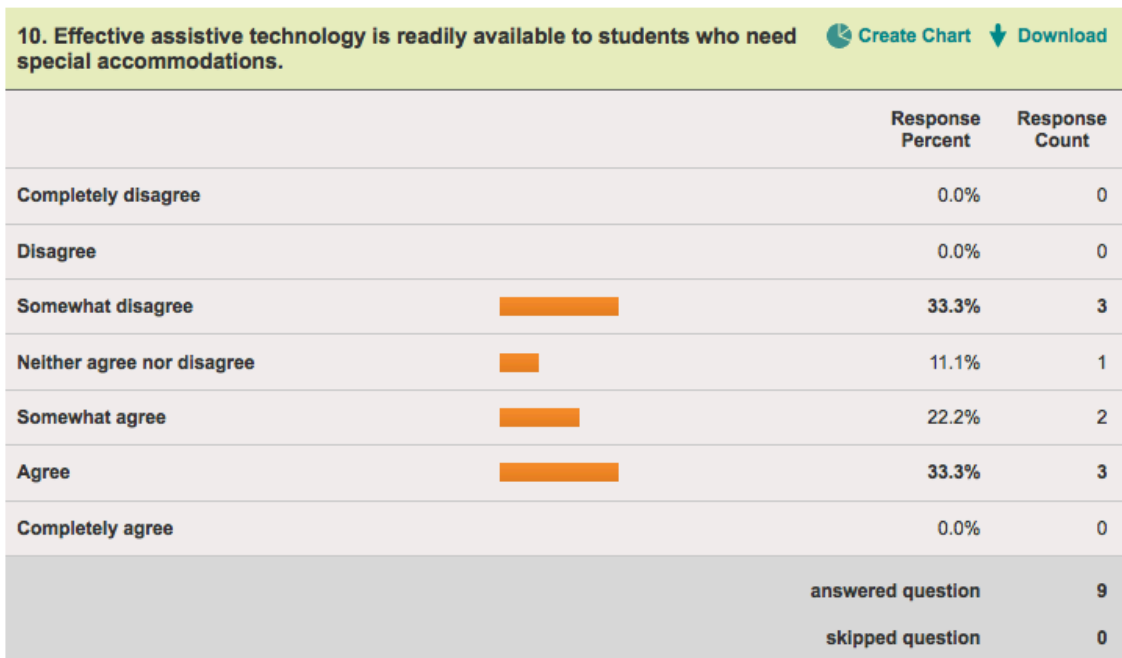
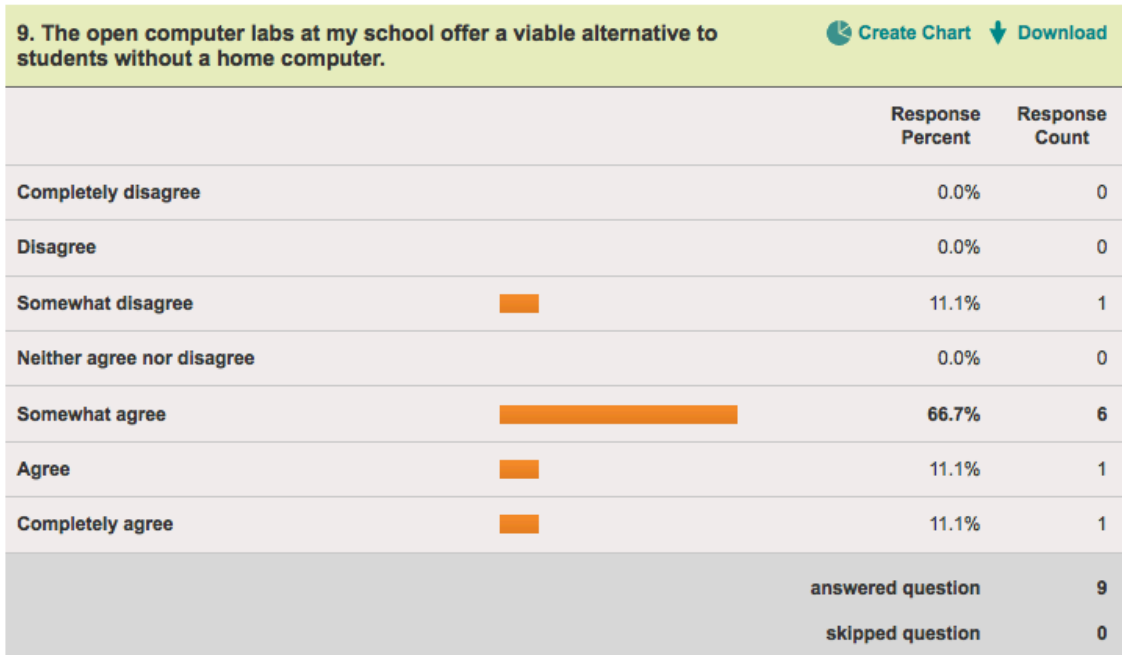
1. What grade level do you teach?			Create Chart	Download
		Response Percent	Response Count	
Elementary education (5-13)		0.0%	0	
Secondary education (14-18)		0.0%	0	
Post-secondary education (18+)		100.0%	9	
			answered question	9
			skipped question	0

2. Select your age range:			Create Chart	Download
		Response Percent	Response Count	
20-29		22.2%	2	
30-39		22.2%	2	
40-49		44.4%	4	
50-59		0.0%	0	
60-69		11.1%	1	
70-79		0.0%	0	
			answered question	9
			skipped question	0

3. My students complain of a lack of high-speed Internet-access options in their area.			Create Chart	Download
		Response Percent	Response Count	
Never		22.2%	2	
Rarely		22.2%	2	
Sometimes		33.3%	3	
Often		22.2%	2	
Always		11.1%	1	
			answered question	9
			skipped question	0







Part I: Summary of Results

Age of students and respondents:

I included Question 1 because I had to launch this survey via Facebook since most of my colleagues were on Spring Break, and I knew that my other teacher friends would reply and skew my results. (I culled the answers from teachers of younger students, but saved them for future reference.) Each respondent to this survey teaches post-secondary-age (adult) students at the Owens Campus of DTCC/UD. Most respondents (44%) were aged 40-49, which is about the median age of my colleagues. There was also one respondent aged 60-69 and two each in the 20-29 and 30-39 age range.

Internet access needs of students:

I was actually surprised to see that four of my colleagues reported no or hardly any complaints from students about Internet access, since I hear this from students often. It appears that the selection of students I hear this from isn't necessarily reflective of the school as a whole.

Cloud-computing storage and word-processing applications:

I chose these questions because I was interested to see how many respondents' students used these applications on their own, and how many respondents were actively encouraging their students to use them. Respondents' answers fell in the middle on both questions: 44% had students who used these applications regularly, and all respondents had at least some students who were using them somewhat, if rarely. Thirty-three percent had students who use them often. With regard to encouraging students to use these programs, 77% said that they encouraged their students to use these options sometimes, which is encouraging.

Digital/tech access and its effect on grades and student skills:

About 75% of respondents agreed that students without access to a home computer tend to earn lower grades than students with access to one; only one respondent completely disagreed with this statement. In the same vein, eight out of the nine total respondents agreed that there is a definite discrepancy between the computer skills of students from the better-funded schools in our area and their less well-equipped counterparts. However, eight out of nine respondents agreed, at least partially, that the school computer labs offer a viable alternative to a home computer.

I included the question about social networking to confirm my own experiences in the classroom: Over half of the respondents said that their students are using social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter constantly – until they're caught! Honestly, I included that last response almost as a joke, but more than half of the teachers responding said that student social networking is a definite distraction in the classroom. (I didn't need a survey to tell me that, but it was good to see that I'm not alone!)

Assistive technology:

I found my colleagues' responses to Question 10 interesting: One-third disagreed that effective assistive technology is available to students who need it (although they "somewhat disagreed." Over half the respondents agreed that DTCC/UD provides effective technology that aids students with special needs.

Part II: Discussion & Reflection

After reading "Understanding the Digital Divide," I was prompted to reconsider my approach to providing equitable access to technology in my classes. I certainly would have said, before reading this article, that I was doing everything in my power to ensure that all my students had equitable access to technology and its applications. However, the article discusses special considerations for students' economic background, ethnicity, disability status, sexual orientation, and gender, and talks about the necessity for teachers' attention to each of these areas. I admit that I haven't necessarily planned how each of these sub-groups might interact with classroom technology, especially with regard to gender differences. By not considering all these aspects of "equitable access," I may have done my students a disservice.

However, like most other instructors, I have certainly needed to plan for and pay close attention to equity issues in my classroom before, especially issues involved with income status. Like many of my fellow respondents, I have seen in the past that students from lower-income families (especially if the student is the head of the household) inevitably have less access to the technological tools that are necessary in a modern college education, and have to work harder and plan better to earn commensurate grades.

My students who are most challenged by their lack of tech skills are either older or from one of the less well-funded school districts in this area. These less well-funded school districts tend to have higher populations of non-white and ESL students. As was noted in "Understanding the Digital Divide," older students and non-white (especially non-white female) students are often overlooked or even discouraged from making use of the technology that more affluent, white, male students find more available.

Also, these lower-income students are on scholarships, using financial aid, living off small student loan refunds, or dealing with grueling work schedules while they are in school; therefore, they don't usually have the money to spend on expensive laptops or smartphones, and most of them don't have the time or gas money to make special trips to the school to use the open computer labs.

I have at least one student per semester who has a complete home-computer meltdown. This is a typical example from this semester: One of my students, who is slightly older than the average college student (mid-20s) recently dropped her

ancient laptop on the pavement outside the school, where it promptly exploded. This student is African-American and attended K-12 in school district that is, comparatively, not as technologically well equipped as many other schools in our area. She has two part-time jobs, one of which is the graveyard shift at a prison infirmary, and her car breaks down often, either stranding her at school or work or leaving her unable to drive to class. During the short gap in her education between high school and college, this student spent very little time using computers, and considering the leaps in Web 2.0 applications that have been made in the intervening years, she is very far behind in her computer skills. What little word-processing and Internet experience she did have in high school left her woefully unprepared for the type of skills she would need to complete classwork, homework, and larger projects online.

I have considered several solutions for students in situations such as these. One is possibly loaning out an old laptop of my own, a 2006 Macbook Pro, to specific students in need. However, I would have to get this old laptop of mine fixed first, since it's currently not functional, so this isn't an instant solution. Another option, and one which I employ regularly, is to refer students to the computer lab for additional tutoring in computer and tech skills. The IT department at DTCC offers great assistance for students with mastering these skills, but often students are shy and won't seek help on their own. I have to follow up on each recommendation to make sure that students are actually getting the help they need.

Also, like my colleagues who responded to the survey, while I think that the open computer lab is a *viable* option for students without a home computer, I don't completely agree that this is the *best* option for them. Overall, I would like to see the college bookstore at DTCC/UD offer a laptop rental system for students. In each class this semester, I have done an informal poll among my students to see if there would be interest in such a service, and the response was overwhelming: *All* of my students agreed that this would be the best way to close the gap in tech access at our campus.

Until reading the material for this week and working on the assignments, I actually wasn't aware how many assistive technology options were available for my students. Since I work at such a large school, when I have a student who needs special accommodations, I basically fill out a form, send the student to the Learning Center, and everything works out on its own. (I'm embarrassed to say it that way, but that's how it works.) I'm glad to learn about easily available options like text-to-speech that I can suggest to students in the classroom, since there must certainly be students with sometimes-stigmatized learning disabilities, such as dyslexia, who may have been reluctant to seek help via referral.

In conclusion, while many of the responses to this survey from my colleagues were expected, there were several that I found thought provoking. As I said above, the application and concept of "equitable access" among our students is more involved than I would have thought prior to completing this assignment. I hope that I am now better prepared to ensure that students at our campus receive it.