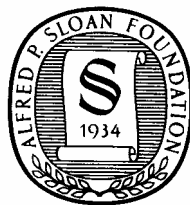


# Online Learning as a Strategic Asset

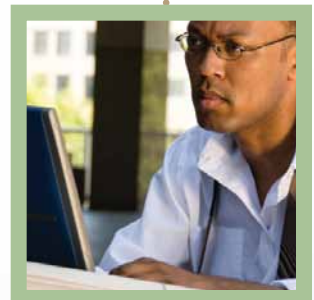
*Volume II: The Paradox of Faculty Voices:  
Views and Experiences with Online Learning*

AUGUST 2009

ASSOCIATION OF  
PUBLIC AND  
LAND-GRANT  
UNIVERSITIES



**BABSON Survey  
Research Group**





# Online Learning as a Strategic Asset

*Volume II: The Paradox of Faculty Voices:  
Views and Experiences with Online Learning*

RESULTS OF A NATIONAL FACULTY SURVEY, PART OF THE ONLINE EDUCATION  
BENCHMARKING STUDY CONDUCTED BY THE A•P•L•U•SLOAN NATIONAL  
COMMISSION ON ONLINE LEARNING

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**AUGUST 2009**



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# Acknowledgements

Any major undertaking regarding online learning must first acknowledge the vision and leadership of the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation under the guidance of President Emeritus Ralph Gomory, Program Director Frank Mayadas and current President Paul Joskow. Over the past dozen or more years, the Sloan Foundation has spurred the development, growth, and expansion of online learning across the nation. The Foundation's sustained commitment has created a vibrant community of practice among online faculty and administrators through the Sloan Consortium.

The Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (A•P•L•U), formerly the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC) and the members of the A•P•L•U-Sloan National Commission on Online Learning are deeply grateful for the support of the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation over the past two-and-a-half years in our efforts to engage public university leaders in a deeper consideration and appreciation of online learning as a strategic asset. We are hopeful that the Commission's work, through its surveys of university presidents and chancellors across a broad spectrum of higher education institutions and through the Benchmarking Study summarized in the two volumes of this report, will help to ensure that the Foundation's contributions to online learning will be felt for many years to come.

This report was written by Jeff Seaman, Co-Director of the Babson Survey Research Group and Survey Director of the Sloan Consortium. Jeff also designed, implemented, and conducted the analysis of the Faculty Survey. He also was responsible for all of the surveys of presidents and chancellors commissioned by the A•P•L•U-Sloan National Commission on Online Learning. The Commission is truly indebted to Jeff for all of his contributions to its work.

In addition, we want to thank Janet Poley and Gary Miller for their advice and counsel at several strategic points during the project. This report is the better for the input of a number of reviewers of earlier drafts. We thank Elaine Allen, Bruce Chaloux, Sally McCarthy, Muriel Oaks, Mark L. Parker, Anthony Picciano, Keith H. Pickus, Bob Samors, Pete Smith, Sam Smith and James Spaniolo for their valuable comments and suggestions. The work of multiple campus administrators was instrumental in administering a comprehensive faculty survey at nearly 70 higher education institutions. Finally, we wish to offer our sincere appreciation to the more than 10,000 faculty members who took the time to respond to the survey and were so generous in providing us with their thoughts, experiences, and opinions.

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A•P•L•U-Sloan National  
Commission on Online Learning

## **BRUCE MAGID, CO-CHAIR**

A•P•L•U-Sloan National  
Commission on Online Learning

# Background

In April 2007, the A•P•L•U-Sloan National Commission on Online Learning was created through a generous grant from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. The purpose of the Commission was to engage the presidents, chancellors, and other institutional leaders in a unique, comprehensive discussion of the challenges and opportunities—and the costs and benefits—of online learning, with a particular focus on how these new approaches relate to the overarching strategic goals and missions of their institutions.

The Commission's early work identified a gap or “disconnect” between presidents' and chancellors' recognition of online learning as strategically important to their institutions and online being included in the campus strategic plan. In addition, through a comprehensive set of national discussions with higher education leaders, the Commission also identified a need among campus leaders for more and better information about the structural, organizational, financial, and cultural elements that are fundamental to successful strategic online learning initiatives.

Accordingly, the A•P•L•U-Sloan National Commission on Online Learning Benchmarking Study was designed to illuminate how public institutions develop and implement the key organizational strategies, processes, and procedures that contribute to successful and robust online learning initiatives. The study was designed to contain two distinct but interrelated components: 1) a series of in-depth interviews with key senior campus leaders, as well as administrators and professional staff most directly involved in the development of online content and administration of online programs; and 2) a cross-institutional survey of faculty experiences with and attitudes toward online learning.

The key observations and findings from the Benchmarking Study are contained in two volumes: *Online Learning as a Strategic Asset: Volume I: A Resource for Campus Leaders* and this volume, *The Paradox of Faculty Voices: Views and Experiences with Online Learning*. This second volume is a detailed analysis of the Faculty Survey portion of the Benchmarking Study. It examines the contours of the faculty who design and deliver online content, as well as their attitudes toward many of the fundamental aspects of online learning, including time and effort, institutional support and incentives, and perceptions of the quality of learning outcomes.

While this volume will provide the reader with useful insights into the faculty component of online learning, it captures only a portion of the information collected through the Benchmarking Study. Therefore, we urge readers to also invest the time to read *A Resource for Campus Leaders* to gain a full understanding of the administrative and cultural issues that surround online learning on every campus, combined with the faculty perspective on these important issues.



# Executive Summary

Recognizing that faculty represent a critical constituency in building quality online learning programs, the A•P•L•U-Sloan National Commission included a comprehensive survey of faculty experiences, attitudes, and beliefs toward online learning as a component of its Online Learning Benchmarking Study. This survey was conducted in fall 2008 and winter 2009. The findings contained in this volume are based on responses from more than 10,700 faculty from 69 colleges and universities across the country. Participation varied somewhat for a few institutions, but in most cases the survey was targeted to all faculty members—full-time and part time, irrespective of their level of knowledge and/or experience with online learning.

There are a number of divisions apparent among the Faculty Survey responses. First, faculty are not uniform in their opinions toward online learning. Faculty with experience developing or teaching online courses have a much more positive view towards online instruction than those without such experience. Faculty with no online experience remain relatively negative about online learning outcomes.

Faculty with online development or teaching experience are not restricted to a particular class of faculty (such as part-time, non-tenure track, or those just beginning their teaching careers), but are well represented among all types of faculty. While there are some differences in participation rates, the overall conclusion is that full- and part-time faculty, those at every stage of their career, and those on the tenure track, as well as those outside of the tenure track, are all involved in online instruction.

It is also clear that, in addition to differences of opinion between different groups of faculty members, there are a number of paradoxes apparent among the faculty views. Driving faculty concerns is the pervasive belief that teaching or developing an online course requires more time and effort than for a comparable face-to-face offering. Faculty rate this issue as the most important barrier to teaching and developing online programs. Faculty also report that they have serious reservations about the quality of online learning outcomes, and they believe that their institutions are below average in providing support and incentives.

Approximately one-third of all faculty have taught an online course, with around one-quarter currently teaching online. When asked why they teach online, faculty consistently provide student-centered reasons. The survey results show that, even with their reservations about online learning, a majority of faculty members have recommended online courses to students, a rate that jumps to well over 80 percent among faculty with experience developing or teaching an online course.

The views of the faculty suggest that significant challenges must be resolved before online learning is universally accepted across the academy. However, the paradoxes evidenced by the survey results also suggest considerable opportunity for campus leaders to engage the faculty in constructive dialogue about the quality, support, and overall role of online at their respective institutions.

# Summary of Findings

## Who teaches online?

As the companion volume to this document, *A Resource for Campus Leaders*, notes, academic administrators believe that there remains a critical gap between institutional online learning aspirations and levels of faculty engagement. Previously, little quantitative data was available to measure faculty engagement, but there has been much speculation about what types of faculty teach online courses—namely that it is overwhelmingly adjunct faculty, that older faculty are not involved, and, in general, that those teaching online may have a very different set of characteristics from those teaching face-to-face. The survey responses show these assumptions to be unfounded:

- Nearly one-quarter of all faculty responding (23.6 percent) were teaching at least one online course at the time of the survey.
- Over one-third (34.4 percent) of faculty have taught online.
- The most experienced faculty, those with more than 20 years of teaching experience, are teaching online at rates equivalent to those with less teaching experience.

## Who develops online courses?

The lack of detailed quantitative information is equally apparent when we turn our attention to faculty who are developing online courses. Do the faculty who have developed an online course (either by converting an existing face-to-face course or by developing one from scratch) have the same characteristics as faculty who have taught online?

- Slightly less than one-tenth (9.3 percent) of all faculty members report that they are *currently* working on developing an online course.
- The percentage of faculty who have *developed* an online course (at 33.5 percent) is virtually the same as the percentage of faculty who have *taught* an online course.
- There is overlap of more than 80 percent between faculty who have taught online and those who have developed an online course.

## Are there gender differences in faculty online participation?

Academic leaders have expressed concern that female faculty may be paid less, have more constraints on their time, and do not rise up the ranks at the same rate as male faculty. If there is a relatively large over-representation of females among part-time faculty (which is the group most likely to teach and develop online courses) does this result in more females than males developing and teaching online courses?

- Females are more likely than males to both develop and teach online courses.
- The over-representation of females among those who have developed or taught online courses is a function of their larger representation among those groups of faculty (such as part-time) that have the greatest rates of online participation.

## What is the relative effort to develop or to teach an online course as measured against a comparable face-to-face course?

The series of annual Sloan surveys on online learning (Allen and Seaman, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008) have shown that chief academic officers consistently believe that it takes more faculty time and effort both to develop an online course and to teach one. The Faculty Survey results show that there is broad consensus among faculty that this is true.

- Nearly 64 percent of faculty said it takes “somewhat more” or “a lot more” effort to *teach* online compared to a face-to-face course.
- The results for online course *development* are even more striking: Over 85 percent of the faculty with online course development experience said it takes “somewhat more” or “a lot more” effort.

## Online course quality: Learning outcomes and course recommendations

What about the quality of online courses? Do faculty believe they match that of face-to-face instruction? The Sloan surveys (Allen and Seaman, 2004, 2006) have shown that chief academic officers believe that online learning outcomes have improved somewhat over time, but still lag those of face-to-face instruction. The Faculty Survey results suggest that faculty share the concerns about the quality of online learning. Yet, even with these concerns, the preponderance of faculty have recommended an online course to students.

- Over 80 percent of faculty with no online teaching or development experience believe that the learning outcomes for online are “inferior” or “somewhat inferior” to those for face-to-face instruction.

- Among faculty with online teaching or development experience a majority believe that the learning outcomes are as good as or better than face-to-face instruction.
- Fully 56 percent of all faculty (those with online experience and those with none) have recommended an online course to at least one student or advisee.
- Over 80 percent of faculty with online teaching or development experience have recommended an online course.

## What motivates faculty to teach online?

Faculty are in agreement that online instruction takes a lot more time and effort and remain concerned about online learning outcomes. So why teach online at all?

- A large majority of survey participants cite student needs as a primary motivator for teaching online, most commonly citing “meet student needs for flexible access” or the “best way to reach particular students” as the reason they choose to teach online courses.
- Faculty with more than 20 years of teaching experience are less likely to cite additional income or pedagogical advantages as motivations than are faculty with less teaching experience.
- The newest faculty (five or less years of experience) are more likely to cite personal and professional growth as a motivation.

## What barriers do faculty see in teaching online?

What barriers have faculty found to have the most impact on their online teaching efforts? Are they internally focused on institutional support issues, externally focused on acceptance of online degrees, or are they related to the unique nature of the online course itself?

- Faculty consistently rate the additional effort to develop and teach online courses as the greatest barrier to engaging in online learning.
- Concerns about the acceptance of online education by potential employers are rare.

## How good are campus support structures (in the eyes of the faculty)?

Faculty believe that it takes more time and effort to develop and to teach online courses. How well do they think their institutions are doing in providing the support services that may be needed to address this additional effort?

- The average faculty ranking for seven of eight support dimensions measured (all except for technological infrastructure) is “below average.”

- Faculty give the lowest ranking to their institution's incentives for developing and for delivering online courses.
- Faculty at institutions where support services rank highest do not see any reduction in perceived effort for online course teaching or development.

# Introduction

Recognizing that faculty represent a critical constituency in building quality online learning programs, the A•P•L•U-Sloan National Commission on Online Learning commissioned the Babson Survey Research Group to conduct a comprehensive survey of faculty experiences, attitudes, and beliefs towards online learning as a component of the Commission's Benchmarking Study. This survey was administered during fall 2008 and winter 2009 and was typically directed to all faculty members at the participating institution—full-time and part time, and irrespective of their level of knowledge and/or experience with online learning.

The questionnaire design was based on that used in the Sloan annual survey of chief academic officers, also conducted by the Babson Survey Research Group, (Allen and Seaman, 2008). Topics faculty were asked to address included:

- Their current and past teaching experience: How long have they been teaching, what is their current teaching load, how many (if any) online courses have they taught and/or developed?
- Their view of the quality of online instruction: How do they rate the learning outcomes for online courses relative to those for face-to-face instruction, and have they recommended online courses to a student or advisee?
- How does the level of effort to teach and/or develop an online course compare to that for a comparable face-to-face course?
- What motivates a faculty member to teach online?
- What barriers do faculty see in teaching online?
- How do they rate their campus support structures for online development and teaching?

To encourage frank responses, participating faculty members were promised full anonymity for their responses. Faculty were also informed that they could skip any question, including those describing their status; a small percentage of respondents (under 10 percent) choose to omit detailed information about their status while still completing the remainder of the survey.

## Who responded?

A total of 69 institutions participated in the Faculty Survey (a complete list of the participating institutions is provided in Appendix A). The survey instrument was distributed to approximately 50,000 individuals across the spectrum of teaching positions—tenure/non-tenure track; full- and part-time; those who have taught online and those who have not. (Full details on the survey administration are provided in Appendix B.) The overall survey response rate was 22.3 percent with 11,391 surveys submitted by faculty, of which a total of 10,720 contained sufficient responses to be included in the analysis.

The composition of the study sample is not representative of the entire higher education universe, as it includes only public institutions, has more southern institutions, and does not reflect the entire range of U.S. institutions of higher education. The sample campuses do include institutions with a range of missions, from research and doctoral-granting to master's and associate degrees, and from land-grants to Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Hispanic Serving Institutions. All together, the campuses represented in the Faculty Survey account for the higher education of almost one million students nationwide.

It should be noted that the institutions surveyed are a good match for the types of institutions (i.e., the larger public institutions) that the annual Sloan surveys have consistently shown to be in the lead for online learning. Public institutions began their online programs about two years sooner, on average, than private institutions and have retained this early-mover advantage. They have consistently led the way in online enrollments for every survey year. Each public institution with online offerings teaches, on average, close to 1,400 online students—a far greater number than at private for-profit and private nonprofit institutions. Among all institutions with online offerings, the average online enrollment at a public institution is nearly three times the online enrollment at a for-profit institution (Allen and Seaman, 2008).

Survey respondents were overwhelmingly full-time and reflected an even mix of males and females, as well as a mix of tenure status and time teaching. (See Figures 1 and 2)



**FIGURE 1: CHARACTERISTICS OF FACULTY SURVEY RESPONDENTS**

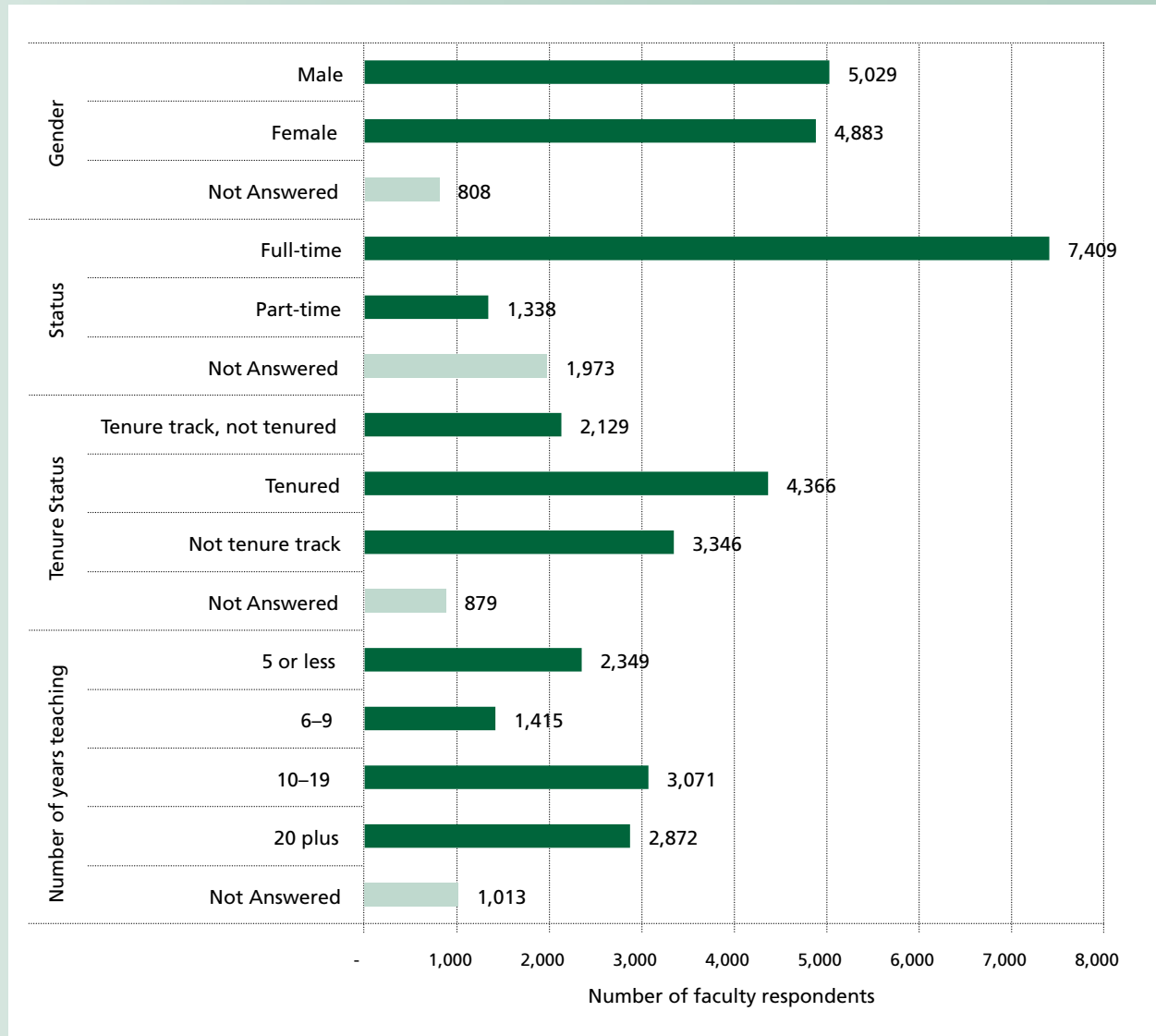


FIGURE 2: **FACULTY STATUS BY TENURE STATUS AND NUMBER OF YEARS TEACHING**

	TENURE STATUS			NUMBER OF YEARS TEACHING			
	Tenure track, not tenured	Tenured	Not tenure track	5 or less	6 to 9	10 to 19	20 plus
Full-time	98.9%	98.2%	59.2%	75.3%	85.4%	88.8%	87.7%
Part-time	1.1%	1.8%	40.8%	24.7%	14.6%	11.2%	12.3%

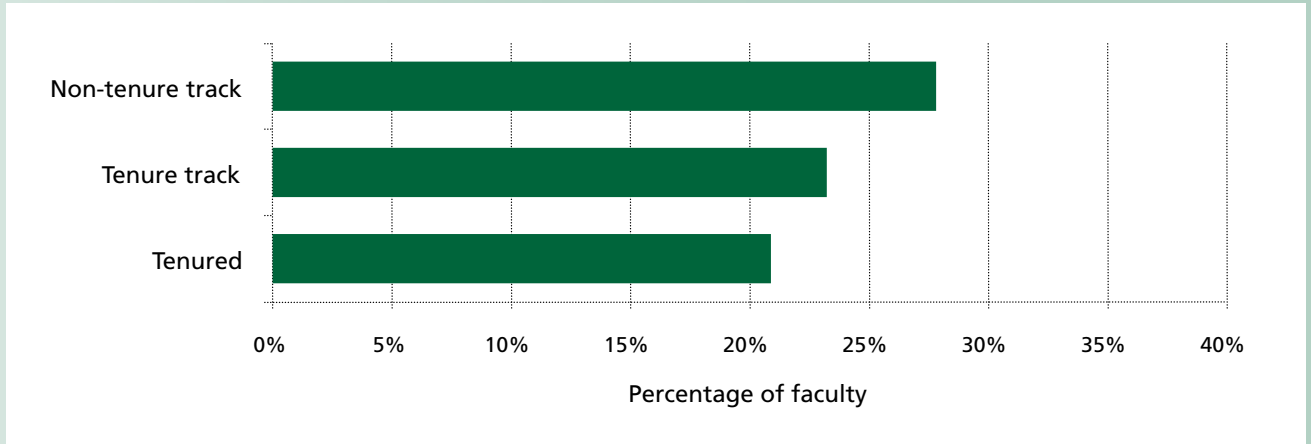
## Who teaches online?

As the companion volume to this document, *A Resource for Campus Leaders*, notes, academic administrators believe that there remains a critical gap between institutional online learning aspirations and levels of faculty engagement. Previously, little quantitative data was available to measure faculty engagement. However, there has been much speculation about what types of faculty teach online courses, namely that it is overwhelmingly adjunct faculty who teach online, that older faculty are not involved, and, in general, that those teaching online may have a very different set of characteristics from those teaching face-to-face. The survey responses provide a comprehensive cross-institutional examination of these assumptions.

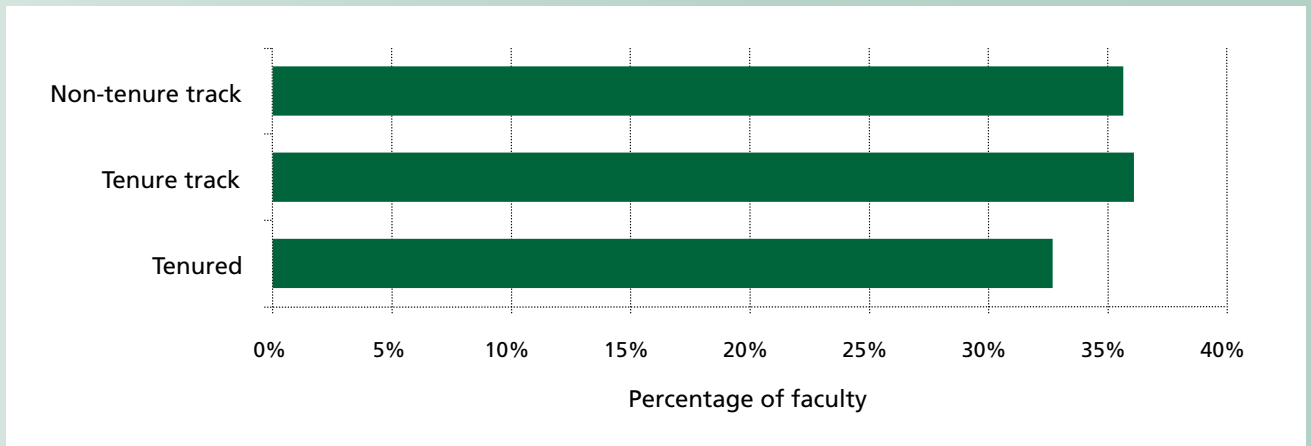
The first finding from the Faculty Survey is that online teaching is a relatively common event; nearly one-quarter of all faculty responding (23.6 percent) were teaching at least one online course at the time of the survey. In addition, over one-third (34.4 percent) of faculty have taught or currently teach online. Teaching online is no longer a niche activity for only a few selected faculty at a particular institution. (See Figures 3 and 4)

Are online courses more likely to be taught by faculty who are outside of the tenure track system, perhaps by adjuncts hired to cover specific courses? While the results show that faculty outside the tenure track system are more likely to be teaching an online course for the current term, this difference is not large (27.6 percent of non-tenure-track faculty are currently teaching online compared to 21.1 percent for tenured). (See Figure 3) The difference narrows further when we examine the percentage of faculty who have ever taught an online course (35.7 percent non-tenure track compared to 32.6 percent for tenure track). Faculty who are tenure track but do not yet have tenure scored the highest percentage: 36.1 percent have at some time taught an online course. (See Figure 4) Overall, tenure track faculty teach online courses with lower frequency than their non-tenure track compatriots, as evidenced by the lower rates of currently teaching, but they are just as likely to have taught online at some point in their career.

**FIGURE 3: PERCENTAGE OF FACULTY CURRENTLY TEACHING AT LEAST ONE ONLINE COURSE BY TENURE STATUS**



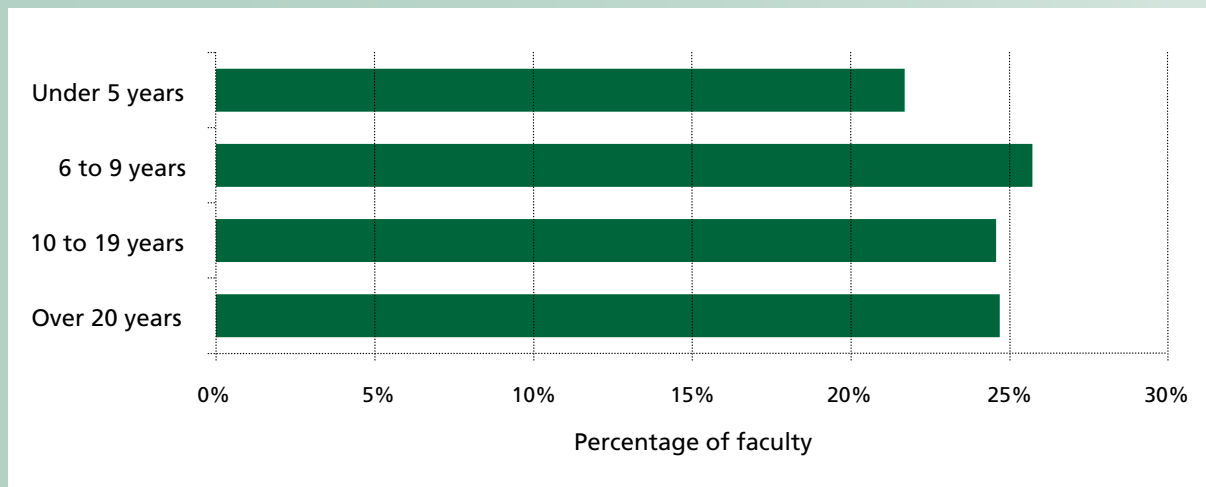
**FIGURE 4: PERCENTAGE OF FACULTY WHO HAVE EVER TAUGHT AT LEAST ONE ONLINE COURSE BY TENURE STATUS**



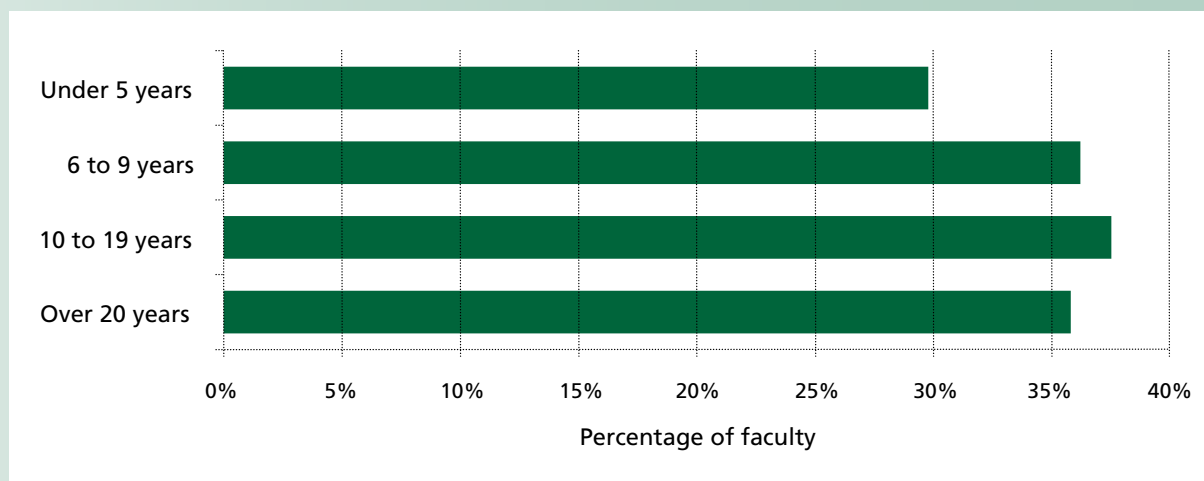
An additional speculation about online teaching faculty is that the senior faculty will be the least likely to be involved, while the youngest faculty, with their better understanding and acceptance of technology, will be the most willing to embrace this form of instruction. The survey responses show little evidence for this belief.

With the single exception of the least experienced faculty (teaching for five years or less) who are *less* likely to be teaching online, faculty at all levels of experience are about equally likely to teach online. Even the most experienced faculty, those with more than 20 years of teaching experience, are currently teaching online and have ever (past or present) taught online, at rates equivalent to faculty with less teaching experience. (See Figures 5 and 6) The lower rates for the least experienced faculty may be due to two factors: Many have only been in their position for a year or two and have not had the opportunity to teach online; and many institutions actively discourage their newest faculty from pursuits that might distract them from making progress towards establishing their reputation and building a body of work for tenure and promotion.

**FIGURE 5: PERCENTAGE OF FACULTY CURRENTLY TEACHING AT LEAST ONE ONLINE COURSE BY TIME TEACHING**



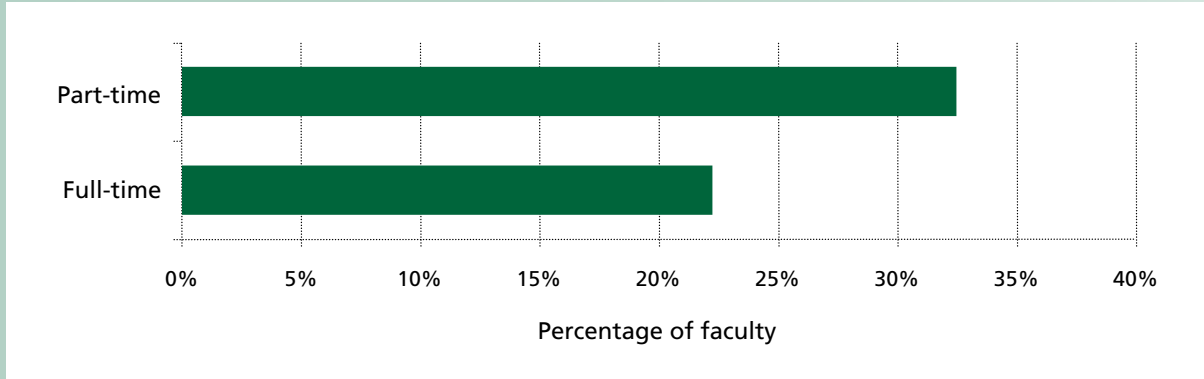
**FIGURE 6: PERCENTAGE OF FACULTY WHO HAVE EVER TAUGHT AT LEAST ONE ONLINE COURSE BY TIME TEACHING**



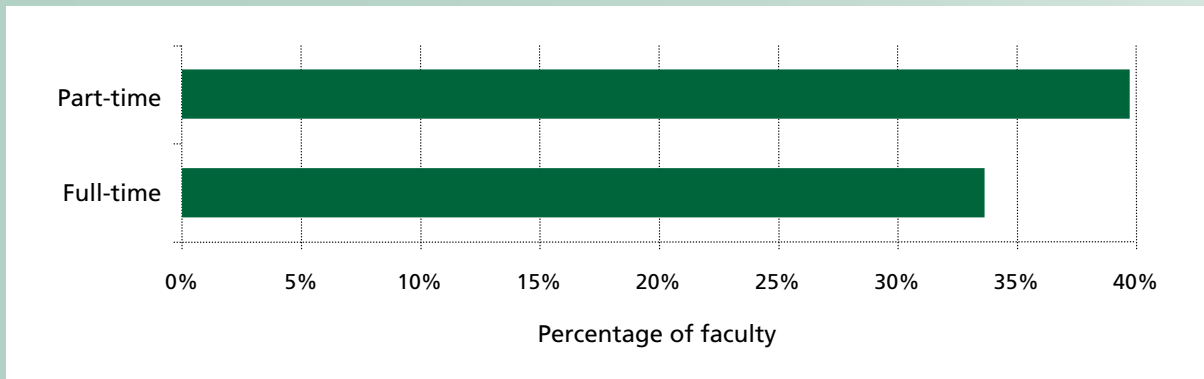
Different institutions have differing mixes of faculty—those that they consider core (typically full-time and tenure track) and those who are non-core. The first online courses at an institution might be taught by non-core faculty if the institution began its online offerings in a non-core academic area (for example, continuing education or a non-degree enrichment program) and then expanded these offerings into core academic offerings once the delivery methods and infrastructure were proven.

Is there a preponderance of part-time faculty teaching online courses? Faculty responses show that part-time faculty are more likely to engage in online learning than their full-time counterparts, with 32.4 percent of part-time faculty currently teaching online compared to 22.2 percent of full-timers. (See Figure 7) This is a sizable difference, far greater than the differences observed by tenure track or length of teaching experience. However, the difference is much smaller when the focus shifts to those faculty who have *ever* taught online (39.7 percent for part-time compared to 33.6 percent for full-time). (See Figure 8) Once again, the higher rate for those currently teaching versus those who have taught implies that all types of faculty teach online in roughly similar proportions, but that specific faculty (part-time and non-tenure track) do so with greater frequency.

**FIGURE 7: PERCENTAGE OF FACULTY CURRENTLY TEACHING AT LEAST ONE ONLINE COURSE BY STATUS**



**FIGURE 8: PERCENTAGE OF FACULTY WHO HAVE EVER TAUGHT AT LEAST ONE ONLINE COURSE BY STATUS**



## Who has developed an online course?

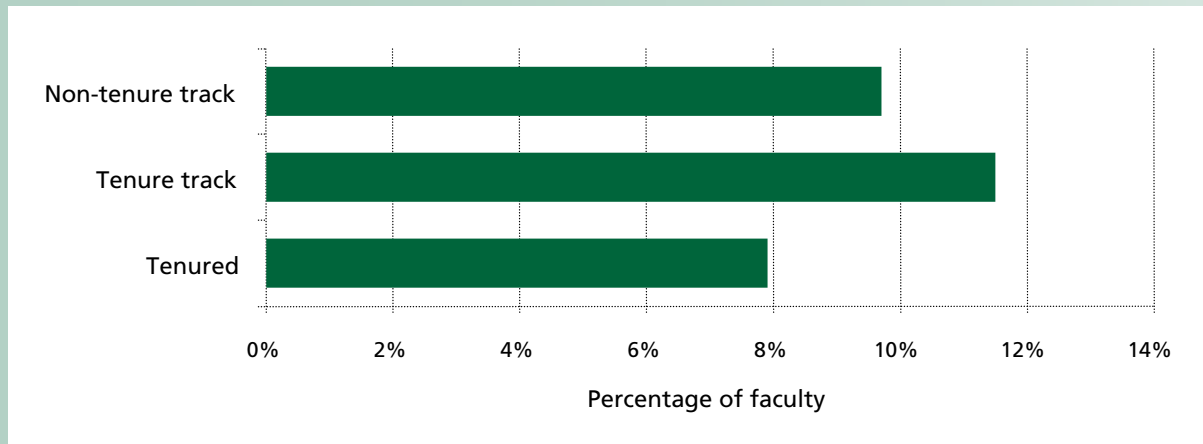
Do the faculty who have developed an online course (either by converting an existing face-to-face course or by developing one from scratch) have the same characteristics as faculty who have taught online? What percentage of faculty who have taught online have also developed an online course? The results show that the characteristics of faculty who have developed an online course are very similar to those who have taught online.

The number of faculty currently developing a course (either face-to-face or online) can be expected to be much lower than the number who are currently teaching. Courses are typically taught for a number of years (often with annual enhancements) before being replaced. In fact, slightly less than one-tenth (9.3 percent) of all faculty members reported that they are currently developing an online course. The percentage of faculty who have *ever developed* an online course (past or present) is much higher, and at 33.5 percent, is virtually the same as the percentage of faculty who have *ever taught* an online course.

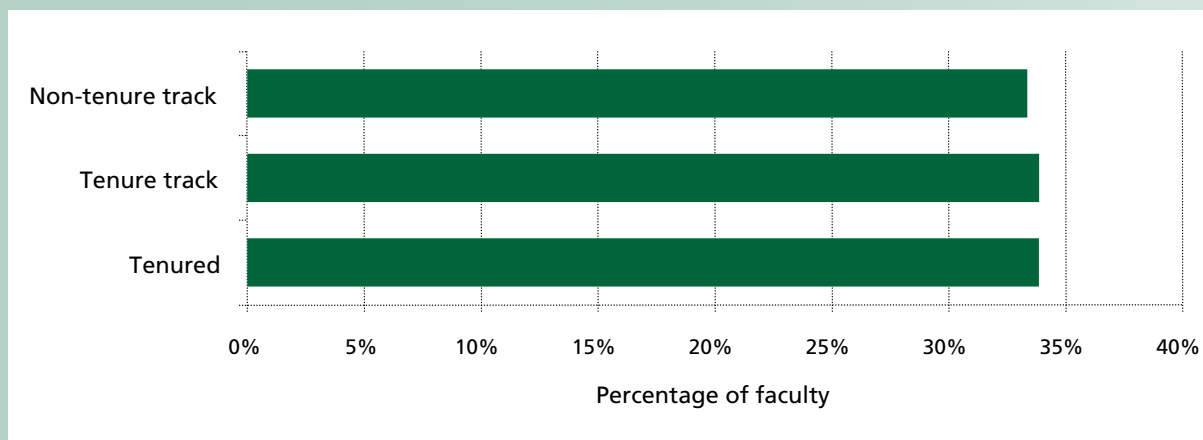
It is important to keep in mind, however, that not every faculty member developing an online course is working alone; many institutions use a team approach for course development, so several faculty members can be involved in developing a single online course. This team approach may be more prevalent for the development of online courses than for face-to-face courses, as institutions seek to bring faculty new to online learning “up to speed” by pairing them with other, experienced faculty.

As noted above, non-tenure track faculty are the most likely to be currently *teaching* online, but the size of the difference diminishes when looking at online teaching over time. The pattern for online course *development* shows a slightly different pattern: Faculty who are on the tenure track but are not yet tenured lead in developing online courses, followed by faculty outside of the tenure track system, and finally by those who already have tenure. (See Figure 9) It appears that institutions place greater reliance on their core faculty (tenured/tenure track) for online *development* efforts than they do for online *teaching*. The percentage of the faculty who have ever (past or present) developed an online course is virtually the same for faculty of all tenure statuses—about one faculty member in three has some online course development experience. (See Figure 10)

**FIGURE 9: PERCENTAGE OF FACULTY CURRENTLY DEVELOPING AT LEAST ONE ONLINE COURSE BY TENURE STATUS**



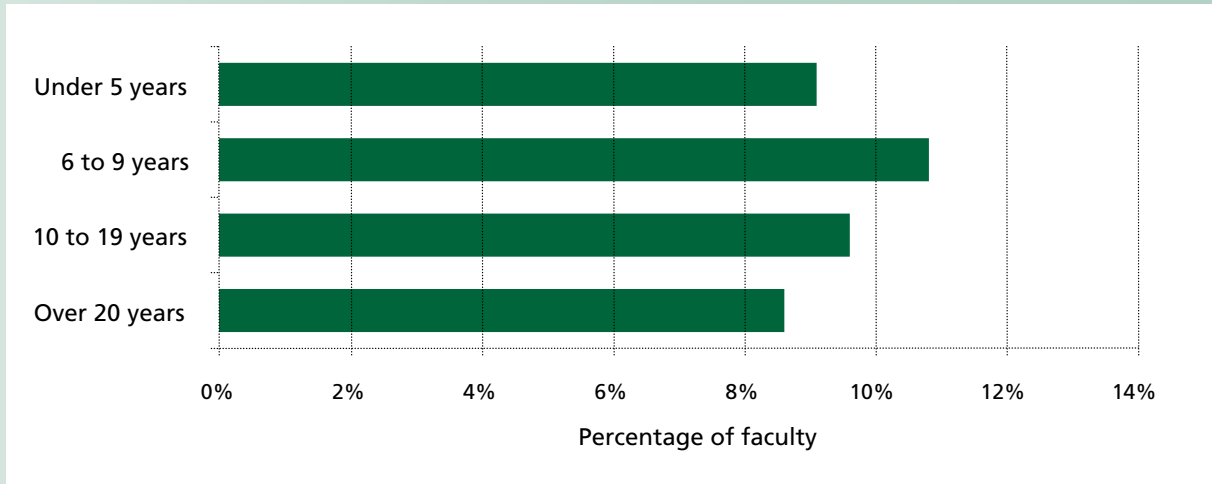
**FIGURE 10: PERCENTAGE OF FACULTY WHO HAVE EVER DEVELOPED AT LEAST ONE ONLINE COURSE BY TENURE STATUS**



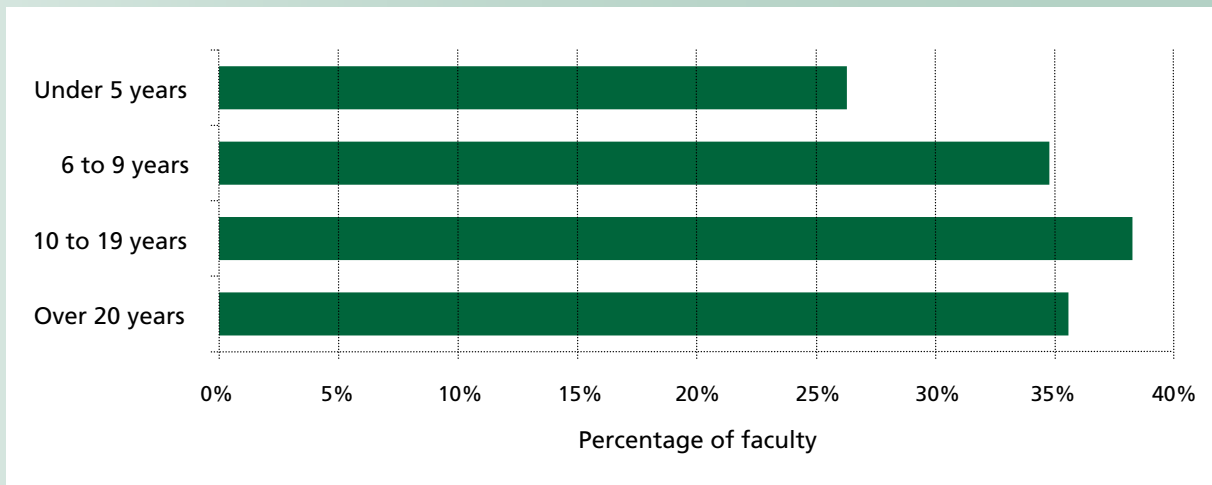
Are faculty with more teaching experience called on more often to take advantage of their rich experience to develop online courses, or have they reached a point in their careers where course development is no longer a priority? Senior faculty are the least likely (by a small margin) to be currently developing an online course, while faculty in the middle of their careers (6 to 19 years teaching experience) are both the most likely to be currently developing an online course and to have ever developed one. (See Figures 11 and 12)



**FIGURE 11: PERCENTAGE OF FACULTY CURRENTLY DEVELOPING AT LEAST ONE ONLINE COURSE BY TIME TEACHING**

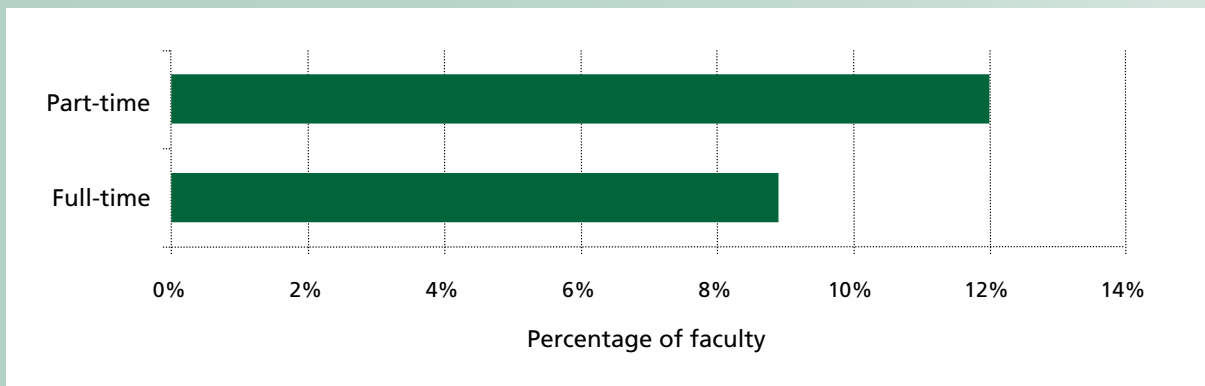


**FIGURE 12: PERCENTAGE OF FACULTY WHO HAVE EVER DEVELOPED AT LEAST ONE ONLINE COURSE BY TIME TEACHING**

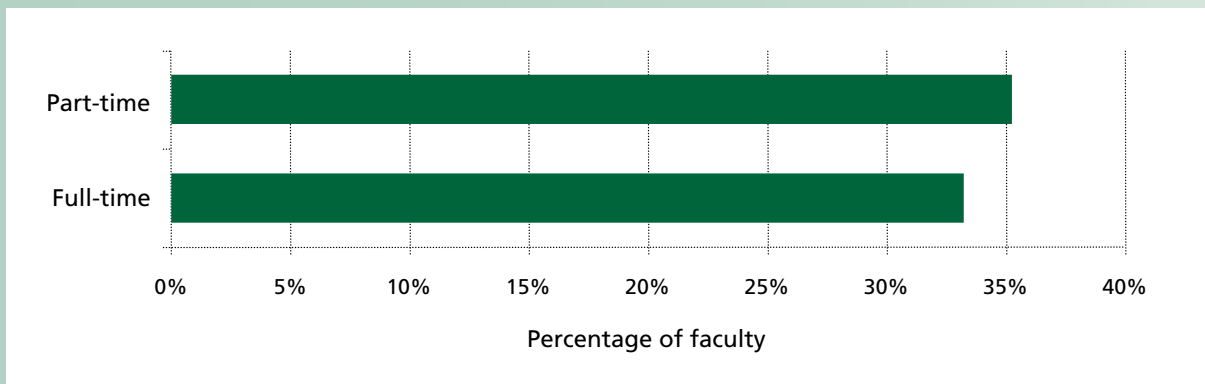


As noted earlier, part-time faculty are much more likely to be currently teaching at least one online course than are full-time faculty. The survey responses show that part-time faculty are also more likely than full-time faculty to be *currently developing* an online course (12.0 percent of part-time faculty are currently developing an online course, compared to 8.9 percent of full-time faculty). (See Figure 13) That gap narrows when the question is whether faculty have *ever developed* (past and present) an online course (35.2 percent for part-time versus 33.2 percent for full-time). (See Figure 14)

**FIGURE 13: PERCENTAGE OF FACULTY CURRENTLY DEVELOPING AT LEAST ONE ONLINE COURSE BY STATUS**



**FIGURE 14: PERCENTAGE OF FACULTY WHO HAVE EVER DEVELOPED AT LEAST ONE ONLINE COURSE BY STATUS**

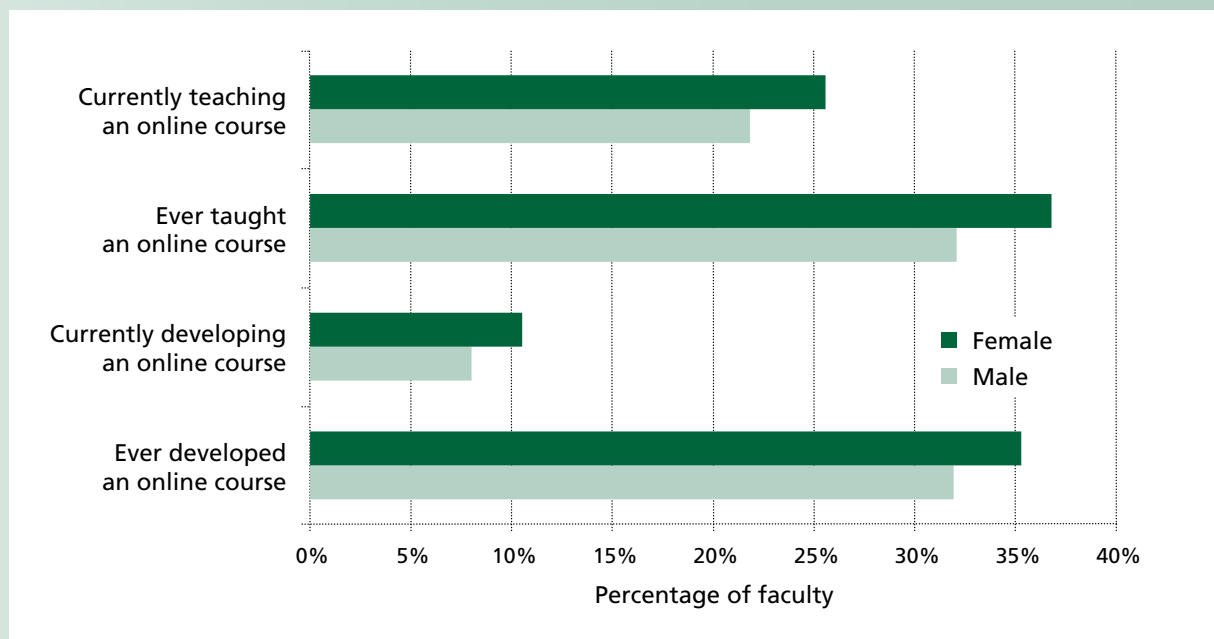


The patterns for faculty who have *ever developed* an online course are very similar to the patterns for those who have *ever taught* an online course. Are these the same faculty members—engaged in both teaching online and developing online—or are the campuses drawing from different faculty? Some 36.7 percent of faculty members have online teaching and/or online development experience. Of this group, just over 30 percent have both taught an online course and developed an online course, 3 percent have taught but not developed an online course, and, 3 percent have developed a course but not taught one. Put another way, over 80 percent of faculty involved in online teaching and/or development are involved in *both* the development and the teaching aspects.

### Are there gender differences in faculty online participation?

The gender distribution of faculty responding to the survey is close to a 50-50 mix of males and females (50.7 percent male, 49.3 percent female). Is this same 50-50 ratio present among faculty doing online teaching or online development? Examination of online teaching and course development by gender show that females have a consistently higher rate of involvement than males. (See Figure 15) This difference is present both among faculty currently engaged in these activities, as well as among those who have ever taught or developed an online course.

FIGURE 15: **FACULTY GENDER DIFFERENCES IN TEACHING AND DEVELOPING ONLINE COURSES**



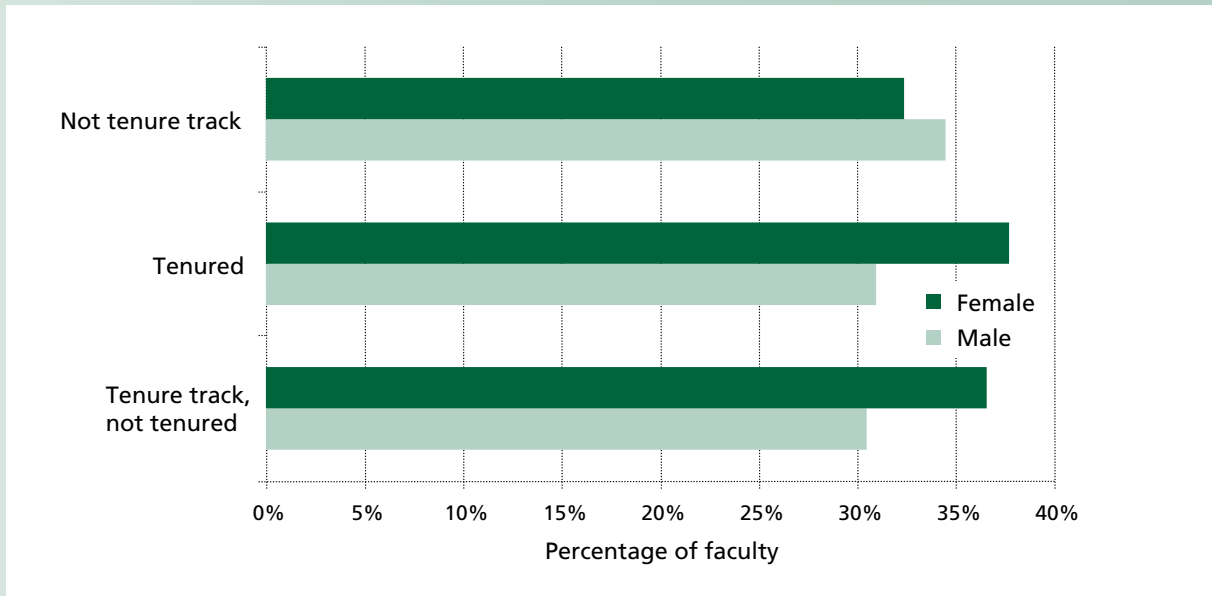
What causes higher female online participation rates? The distribution of faculty by gender among the survey respondents displays a relatively large over-representation of females among part-time faculty, those that are not tenure track, and those just beginning their career (five year of teaching or less). (See Figure 16) Is the female over-representation among the part-time and non-tenured faculty, shown in Figure 15 to have the greatest likelihood of teaching and developing online courses, sufficient to account for the observed gender differences?

FIGURE 16: **GENDER OF FACULTY RESPONDENTS**

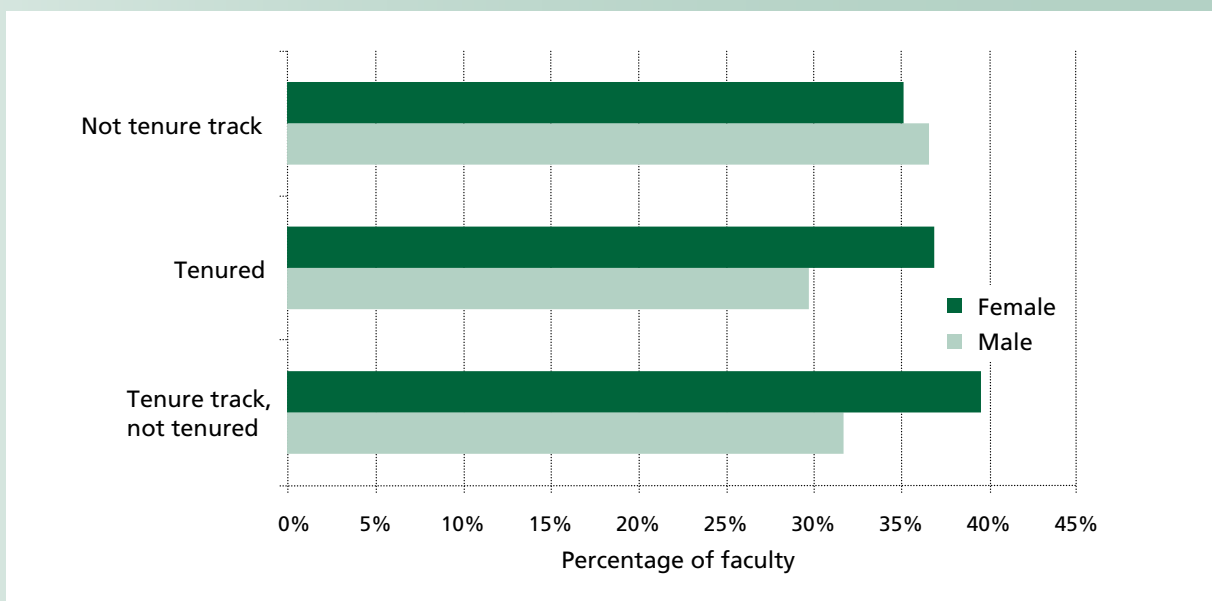
	TENURE STATUS			STATUS		NUMBER OF YEARS TEACHING			
	Tenure track, not tenured	Tenured	Not tenure track	Full-time	Part-time	5 or less	6 to 9	10 to 19	20 plus
Female	53.9%	39.7%	59.3%	51.0%	58.5%	57.7%	53.0%	51.6%	38.0%
Male	46.1%	60.3%	40.7%	49.0%	41.5%	42.3%	47.0%	48.4%	62.0%

Online participation by tenure status does vary by gender. Among faculty outside of the tenure track (the group with the highest online participation rate), females are *less* likely to engage in online teaching or course development. However, among faculty groups with the lowest online participation rates (faculty with tenure or those on the tenure track who have not yet been tenured), female faculty are *more* likely than male faculty to both teach and to develop online courses. (See Figures 17 and 18)

**FIGURE 17: PERCENTAGE OF FACULTY WHO HAVE EVER DEVELOPED AN ONLINE COURSE BY GENDER AND TENURE STATUS**

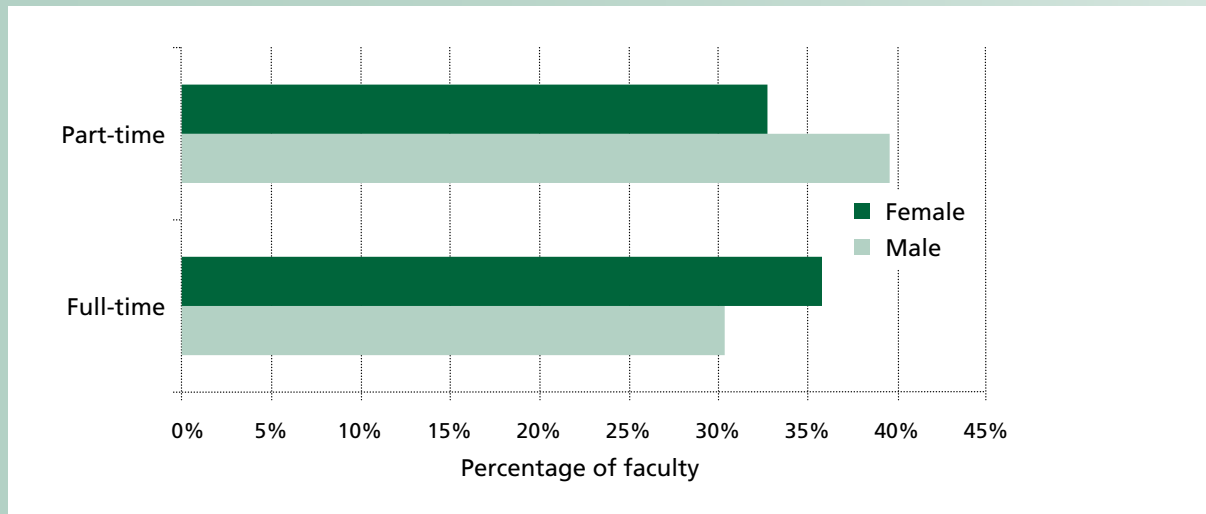


**FIGURE 18: PERCENTAGE OF FACULTY WHO HAVE EVER TAUGHT AN ONLINE COURSE BY GENDER AND TENURE STATUS**

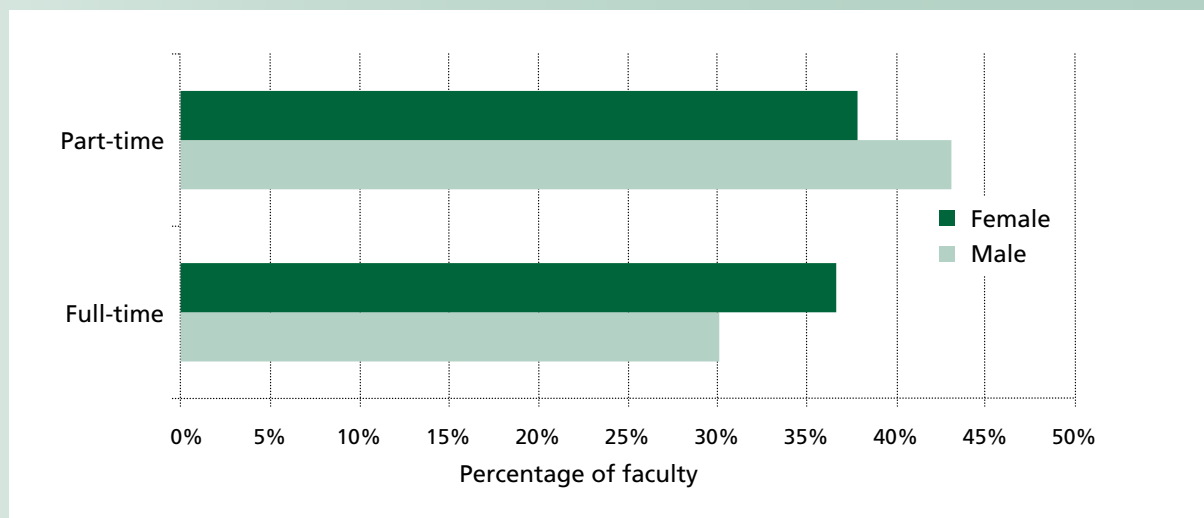


Similarly, when we examine the percentages of each gender that have ever taught or ever developed online courses by full- or part-time status, we see that among the full-time faculty (which have the lower online participation rates), the females are more likely than the males to be involved. (See Figures 19 and 20) These patterns are virtually identical for online teaching and for online course development.

**FIGURE 19: PERCENTAGE OF FACULTY WHO HAVE EVER DEVELOPED AN ONLINE COURSE BY GENDER AND STATUS**



**FIGURE 20: PERCENTAGE OF FACULTY WHO HAVE EVER TAUGHT AN ONLINE COURSE BY GENDER AND STATUS**



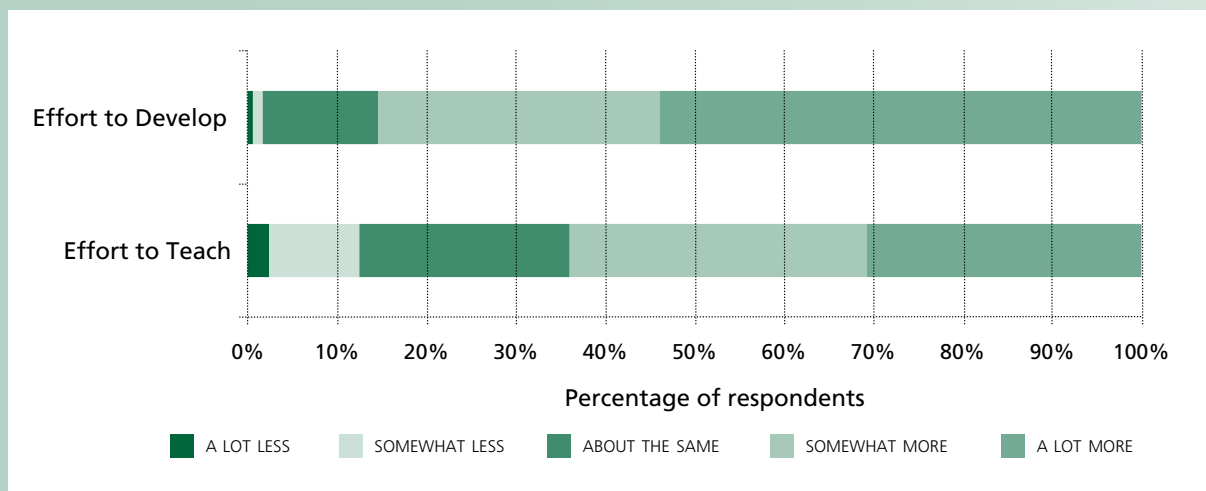
Higher female online participation rates could have a number of different causes. One potential cause is the larger proportion of females among those faculty groups with the greatest rates on online participation (part-time and non-tenure track). Another possible explanation would be very different gender-specific participation rates among each of these faculty sub-groups. However, while there are gender differences in participation rates across the different faculty subgroups, these differences are small (and in the direction that would tend to lower overall female participation). Therefore, the higher female online participation rates are best explained by their larger representation among those groups of faculty (such as part-time) that have the greatest rates of online participation.

In reviewing these gender-based differences, note that because of the desire to provide full anonymity, responding faculty members were not asked their department or discipline. Discipline may be an important variable to better understand possible gender differences in online participation. Different disciplines have different ratios of male and female faculty members. They also provide online offerings at different rates. Both of these factors could play a role in the gender-specific online participation rates.

## What is the relative effort to develop or to teach an online course as measured against a comparable face-to-face course?

The series of annual Sloan surveys on online learning have shown that chief academic officers consistently report that it takes more faculty time and effort both to develop an online course and to teach one (Allen and Seaman, 2004, 2005). The survey results show that faculty with experience teaching and/or developing online courses broadly agree. This belief appears to flavor many of the other faculty opinions about online learning, especially their view of potential barriers to and institutional incentives for online teaching and development, as discussed below.

FIGURE 21: EFFORT TO DEVELOP AND TEACH AN ONLINE COURSE COMPARED TO FACE-TO-FACE

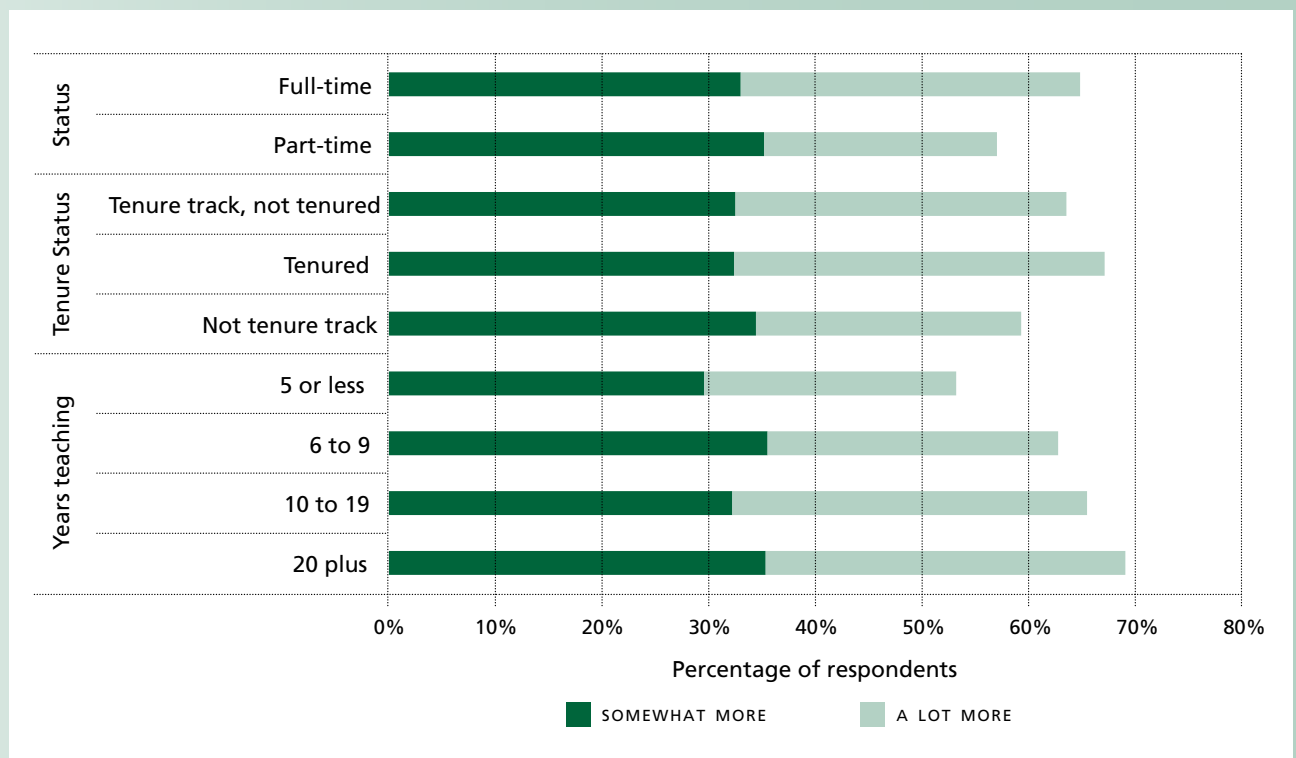


Faculty members overwhelmingly believe that it takes more effort to develop and teach an online course than a comparable face-to-face course. (See Figure 21) Nearly 64 percent of faculty said it takes “somewhat more” or “a lot more” effort to *teach* an online course compared to a face-to-face course. The results for online course development are even more striking, where more than 85 percent of all faculty with online course *development* experience said it takes “somewhat more” or “a lot more” effort. Less than 2 percent of faculty thought that online course development took less effort than developing a face-to-face course, while 12 percent thought that teaching online took less effort than teaching face-to-face.



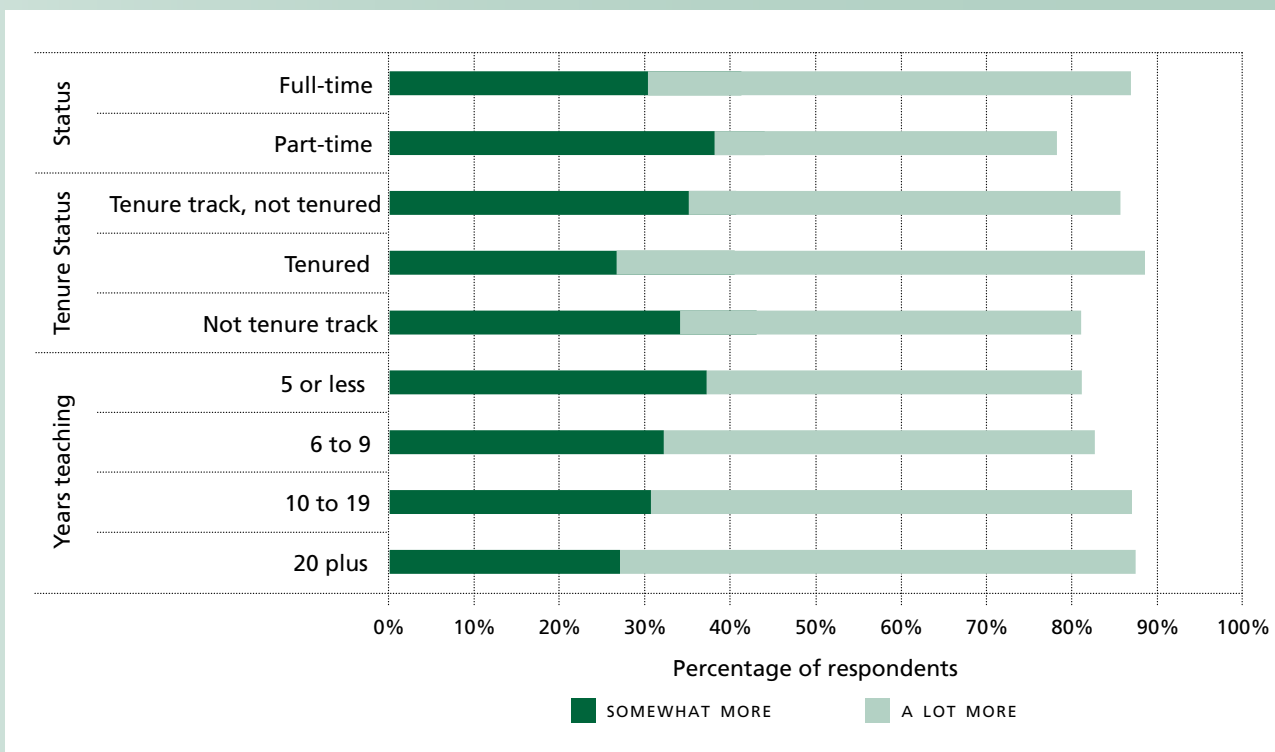
There are some variations in the strength of these beliefs among different types of faculty, but in every classification, a majority believe that it takes more effort to teach an online course. (See Figure 22) Faculty with tenure, with the longest time teaching, and with full-time positions hold the strongest belief that it takes more effort to teach an online course. Conversely, faculty just beginning their careers, part-time faculty, and those not on tenure track are less strong in their opinion. But in every category, the percentage who report it takes more effort to teach an online course exceeds 50 percent.

**FIGURE 22: RELATIVE EFFORT TO TEACH AN ONLINE COURSE COMPARED TO FACE-TO-FACE**



According to the survey responses, it takes even more additional effort to develop an online course than to teach one. More than three quarters of faculty believe it takes more effort to *develop* an online course than to teach one. (See Figure 23) As with the responses on teaching, the full-time, tenured faculty believe the effort is greater than do the younger, part-time faculty.

FIGURE 23: **RELATIVE EFFORT TO DEVELOP AN ONLINE COURSE COMPARED TO FACE-TO-FACE**



## Online course quality: Learning outcomes and course recommendations

What about the quality of online courses? Do faculty believe they match that of face-to-face instruction? The Sloan surveys of chief academic officers have shown continued suspicion that the learning outcomes for online courses lag those for face-to-face instruction (Allen and Seaman, 2004, 2006). The current study includes two measures of the faculty perception of the quality of online instruction.

The first question is identical to that asked of chief academic officers in the annual Sloan surveys:

*There has been considerable discussion of the relative merits of online versus other delivery methods. What is your opinion? In your judgment, learning outcomes in online education are currently:*

- *Inferior to face-to-face*
- *Somewhat inferior to face-to-face*
- *The same as face-to-face*
- *Somewhat superior to face-to-face*
- *Superior to face-to-face*

The question is an important indicator of faculty beliefs, but note that it leaves it up to the faculty respondent to define for themselves what learning outcomes they are considering. The results of this question were tabulated separately for faculty with some experience with online courses (having either taught or developed an online course) and those with no such experience.

A second question addressed specific faculty actions. Each respondent was asked when he or she had last (if ever) “recommended an online course to a student or advisee.” Note that this is a measure of action, not attitude. The question did not ask if they *would* recommend an online course, but only when they *had done so*. Positive responses thus do not include faculty with a positive view of online education but who have not had the opportunity to be in a position to recommend it to a student. (This distinction might apply most to faculty just beginning their careers, as they have had fewer opportunities to provide course recommendations.)

The Faculty Survey results demonstrate broad agreement with the view of chief academic officers that the learning outcomes for online courses do not match those for face-to-face instruction. (See Figure 24) This opinion is especially strong among faculty with no online teaching or development experience. Over 80 percent of that group believe that the learning outcomes for online are “inferior” or “somewhat inferior” to those for face-to-face instruction. Among faculty with online teaching or development experience, a majority believe that the learning outcomes are as good as or better than face-to-face instruction.

**FIGURE 24: LEARNING OUTCOMES – ALL FACULTY**

	HAVE YOU TAUGHT AN ONLINE COURSE?		HAVE YOU DEVELOPED AN ONLINE COURSE?		TOTAL SAMPLE
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Total
Inferior to face-to-face	16.7%	40.8%	16.8%	40.3%	32.3%
Somewhat inferior to face-to-face	31.3%	41.3%	31.1%	41.1%	37.7%
The same as face-to-face	37.2%	15.2%	37.2%	15.6%	23.0%
Somewhat superior to face-to-face	12.4%	2.2%	12.2%	2.5%	5.8%
Superior to face-to-face	2.4%	0.5%	2.6%	0.4%	1.2%

While this measure shows a great deal of concern about the quality of online learning outcomes, the responses for online course recommendations are much more positive. Fully 56 percent of all faculty (those with online experience and those with none) have recommended an online course to at least one student or advisee. (See Figure 25)

**FIGURE 25: HAVE YOU RECOMMENDED AN ONLINE COURSE TO A STUDENT OR ADVISEE?**

	CURRENTLY TEACHING AN ONLINE COURSE?		HAVE YOU TAUGHT AN ONLINE COURSE?		HAVE YOU DEVELOPED AN ONLINE COURSE?		TOTAL SAMPLE
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Total
Yes	86.4%	46.7%	83.2%	41.6%	83.5%	42.3%	56.0%
No	13.6%	53.3%	16.8%	58.4%	16.5%	57.7%	44.0%

There is a strong relationship between faculty opinion on the learning outcomes for online instruction and recommending an online course to a student. (See Figure 26) An overwhelming majority (nearly 80 percent) of faculty who view online learning outcomes as “the same” as face-to-face have recommended an online course to their students. This jumps to nearly 90 percent for faculty who view online as “somewhat superior.” A majority (57 percent) of faculty who consider the learning outcomes for online to be “somewhat inferior” have also recommended online to students, and nearly a third of those who consider the learning outcomes for online to be “inferior” have recommended an online course to students. (See Figure 26)

Why are so many faculty recommending online courses to students if they feel, in general, that the learning outcomes are inferior compared to those for face-to-face instruction? Do they think that the courses are “good enough”—they may not have the same learning outcomes as a comparable face-to-face course, but they still serve the student? Or, perhaps, do they believe that the access advantages of online, allowing a student to take the course “anytime, anywhere,” trump concerns about learning outcomes? These important questions might provide the foundation for further inquiry.

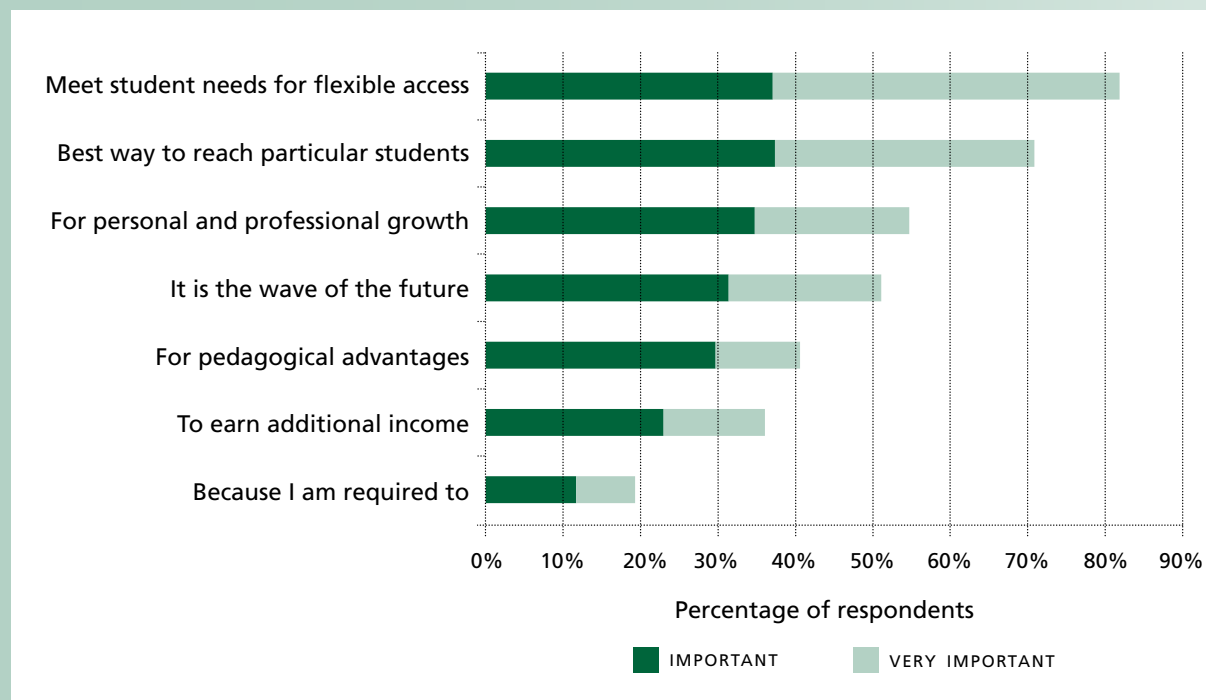
**FIGURE 26: FACULTY OPINION OF ONLINE LEARNING OUTCOMES VS. RECOMMENDATIONS TO TAKE AN ONLINE COURSE**

LEARNING OUTCOMES IN ONLINE EDUCATION ARE CURRENTLY:	HAVE YOU RECOMMENDED AN ONLINE COURSE TO A STUDENT OR ADVISEE		TOTAL
	Yes	No	
Inferior to face-to-face	32.5%	67.5%	100%
Somewhat inferior to face-to-face	57.7%	42.3%	100%
The same as face-to-face	78.9%	21.1%	100%
Somewhat superior to face-to-face	89.7%	10.3%	100%
Superior to face-to-face	80.7%	19.3%	100%

## What motivates faculty to teach online?

Faculty are in substantial agreement that online instruction takes a lot more time and effort, and that the learning outcomes may be inferior to those for face-to-face instruction. So why teach online at all? According to the Faculty Survey, the primary motivations are student-centered. (See Figure 27) Faculty cited “meet student needs for flexible access” and the “best way to reach particular students” as the most common reason why they choose to teach online courses. Personal and professional growth reasons were also cited, but earning extra income or being required to teach online were not primary motivators.

FIGURE 27: MOTIVATIONS FOR TEACHING ONLINE

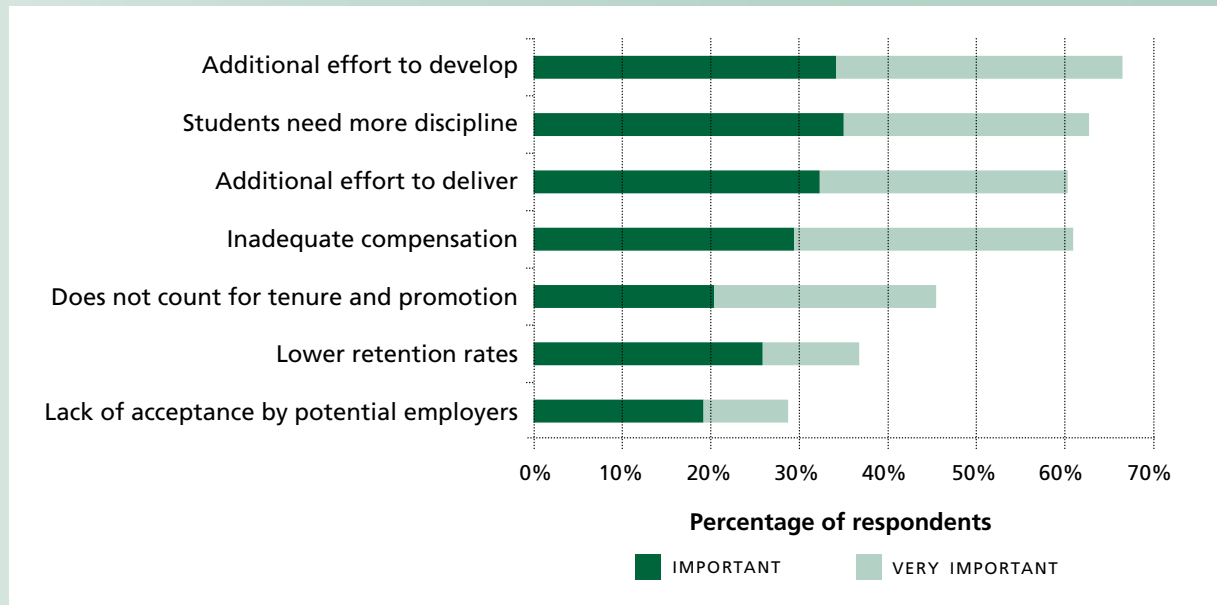


The student-centered reasons (flexible access and best way to reach students) were the top-ranked for all classifications of faculty—full-time and part-time; tenured, tenure track and non-tenure track; and faculty with every level of teaching experience. There is less agreement about the other motivations, however. Faculty with more than 20 years of teaching experience are less likely than more junior faculty to cite additional income or pedagogical advantages as motivations. The newest faculty (5 years of experience or less) are more likely to cite personal and professional growth as motivations.

## What barriers do faculty see to teaching online?

About one-third of all faculty have taught an online course, with about one-quarter teaching online currently. What barriers have these faculty found to have the most impact on their online teaching efforts? Are they internally focused on institutional support issues, externally focused on acceptance of online degrees, or are they related to the unique nature of the online course itself? The Faculty Survey responses consistently rate the additional effort to develop and teach the courses as the most important barrier. (See Figure 28) This extra effort is also reflected in dissatisfaction with the lack of additional compensation to reward or acknowledge the level of extra effort required. Concerns about the acceptance of online education are very rare, even among faculty with a negative perception of online.

FIGURE 28: **BARRIERS TO TEACHING ONLINE**



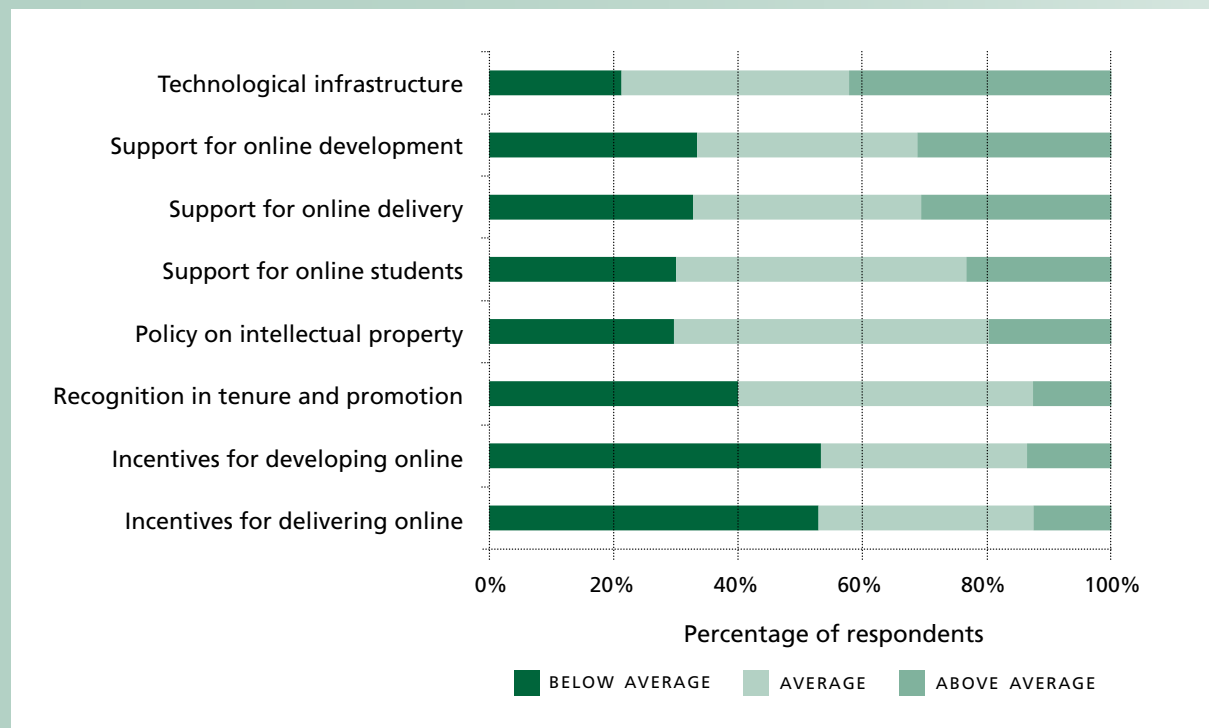
The rankings of the various potential barriers are very consistent across all types of faculty, with only a few apparent differences. Virtually all faculty rank the additional effort required, inadequate compensation, and students needing more discipline roughly equally at the top of their list. Lower retention rates and lack of acceptance by potential employers are consistently ranked at the bottom. There are some differences, however. “Does not count for tenure and promotion” is a larger concern for faculty just beginning their careers than for those who have been teaching for some time. Some 50.2 percent of respondents with five years of experience or less say this issue

is “important” or “very important.” That figure drops to 38.7 percent for those with 20 plus years teaching experience. Similarly, the relationship of online instruction to tenure and promotion is an issue for 54.8 percent of faculty on tenure track who do not have tenure; only 37 percent of faculty with tenure cite the problem. It is important to note that the above discussion of barriers is specific to the barriers that faculty see for *online* teaching and development. Barriers that may apply to teaching in general are not addressed.

## How good are campus support structures (in the eyes of the faculty)?

Faculty believe that it takes more time and effort to develop and to teach online courses. How well do they think that their institutions are doing in providing the support services to address this additional effort? Much early discussion of support structures focused on the unique technological requirements of online courses, both for faculty and for their institutions. This is the one area in which faculty believe their institutions are doing a good job. (See Figure 29) More faculty rank the technical infrastructure as “above average” at their institution than any other form of support. Other support areas do not fare so well.

FIGURE 29: FACULTY RANKING OF INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT



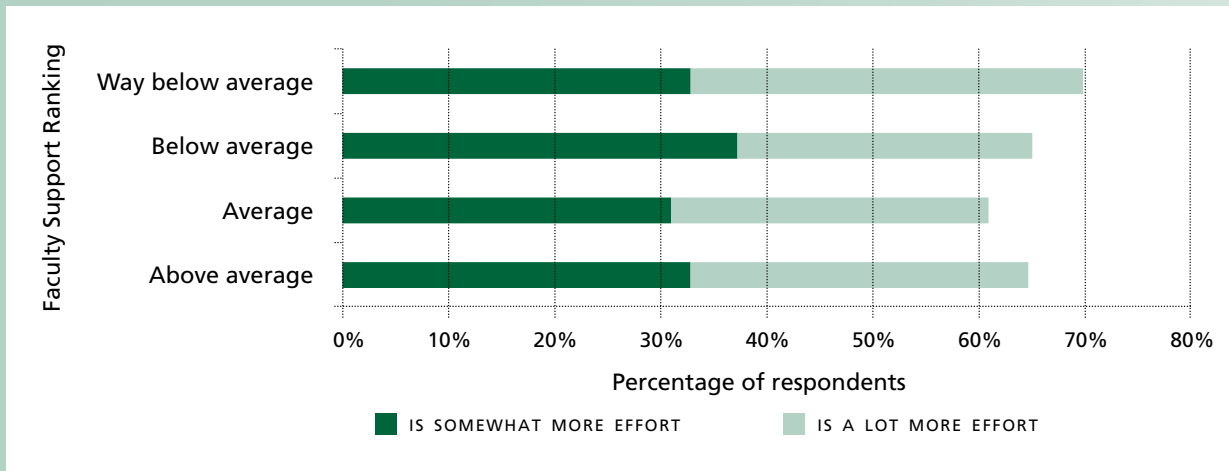


Faculty rank their institutions lowest in providing incentives for developing and for delivering online courses. Only 13.7 percent of faculty said their institution's incentives for developing online courses were above average, and 12.8 percent reported the delivery incentives were above average. Recognition in tenure and promotion receives a very low rating as well. The average ranking for seven of the eight dimensions (all except for technological infrastructure) is "below average." Faculty clearly believe that there is room for improvement for campus support structures. While most faculty give low ratings for their campus support structures, there are some differences among faculty and between institutions. The question arose: Is there a relationship between satisfaction with support infrastructure and perception of the extra effort to teach/develop online courses?

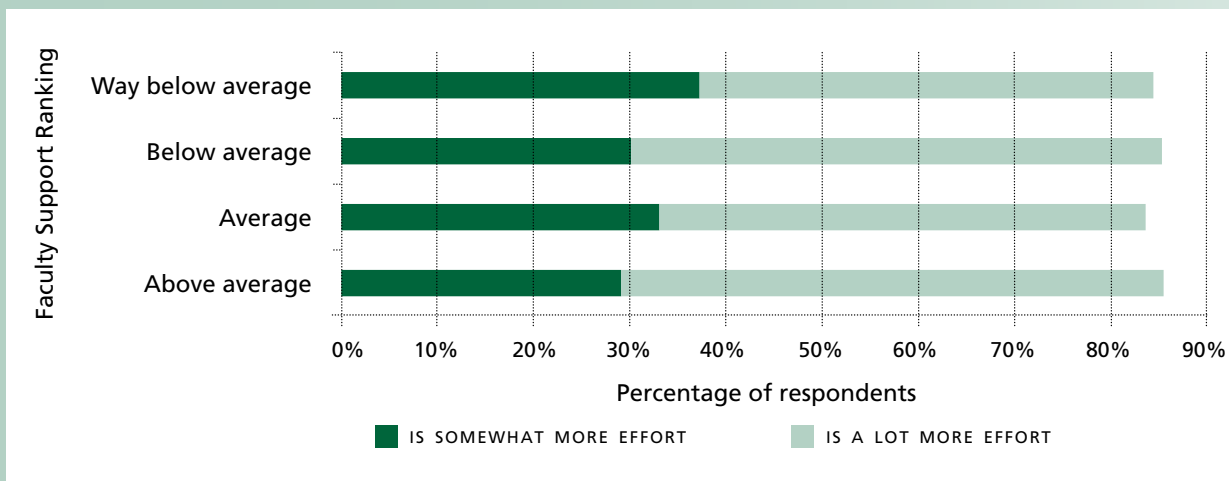
To test this question, faculty ratings for support infrastructure items (support for development, support for teaching, and support for online students) were aggregated for each campus. Each campus was then classified as "above average," "average," "below average," or "way below average" for their perceived level of support. (Note: No campus had a rating that would correspond to a classification of "way above average.") Then, the faculty perceptions of the relative level of effort to teach and to develop an online course were examined separately for each of these groups of campuses.

The conclusion is that the perceived ranking of campus support does not have an appreciable impact on faculty perceptions of the additional effort that online teaching and development require. (See Figures 30 and 31) The percentage of faculty who feel that it takes "somewhat more" or "a lot more" effort is consistent for campuses with all different rankings of support structures. It appears that faculty believe that good support may affect such areas as the technological aspects of online instruction delivery or benefit the online student—but does not have a serious impact on the faculty level of effort. This is an area that clearly warrants further investigation.

**FIGURE 30: RELATIVE LEVEL OF EFFORT TO TEACH AN ONLINE COURSE BY FACULTY RANKING OF CAMPUS SUPPORT**



**FIGURE 31: RELATIVE LEVEL OF EFFORT TO DEVELOP AN ONLINE COURSE BY FACULTY RANKING OF CAMPUS SUPPORT**



# Conclusions

There are a number of paradoxes among the faculty survey responses. On the one hand, faculty say it takes a lot more time and effort to teach or develop an online course, they have serious reservations about the quality of the learning outcomes, and they believe that their institutions are below average in providing support and incentives. Yet, approximately one-third of all faculty have taught an online course, and around one-quarter are currently teaching online. When asked why they teach online, faculty consistently provide student-centered reasons. Perhaps more telling is that, even with their reservations about online, a majority of faculty members have recommended online courses to students. This percentage jumps to well over 80 percent among faculty with any experience teaching or developing an online course.

Over 36 percent of all responding faculty have some experience either teaching online or developing an online course (or both). Online instruction is no longer relegated to a small subset of specialized faculty members. Faculty involvement spans the entire range of faculty: full-time and part-time faculty, those at every stage of their career, and those with tenure, as well as those outside the tenure-track ranks. Institutional policy therefore needs to recognize that online instruction, with all of its unique needs, is now a faculty-wide issue.

Driving faculty concerns is the pervasive view that teaching or developing an online course requires more time and effort than for a comparable face-to-face offering. Faculty rated this issue as the most important barrier to teaching and developing online courses. But it is not clear from these results exactly what aspects of online instruction lead to the perception that it takes more time and effort. The annual Sloan surveys of online learning have demonstrated double-digit growth rates for online enrollment, with an estimated four million online students as of fall 2007 (Allen and Seaman 2008). This has translated into much wider faculty participation in online teaching and/or development. Concerns about additional faculty time and effort can no longer be dismissed as due to the newness of the technologies and techniques. Online instruction is now well established on most campuses, with mature support structures in place.

Faculty insist that online courses intrinsically require more time and effort than face-to-face courses, no matter whether their institution's support structures are very good or very bad. Satisfaction with support infrastructure does not translate into any lower perception of the time and effort required. If institutions are going to be able to meet the continued student demand for online courses and programs, they will need to involve a larger portion of the faculty. To ensure increased faculty involvement in this mode of teaching and learning, they will need to find ways

to address the time and effort issue and make it as easy—and as rewarding—as possible for faculty to engage in online learning.

Finally, the results of the Faculty Survey captured in this report, as well as the Institutional Interviews as reported in *A Resource for Campus Leaders*, indicate several key areas where better alignment between campus leaders' and administrators' perceptions and faculty expectations could contribute to successful strategic online learning initiatives at higher education institutions. These areas include, among others,

- Identifying strategies to acknowledge and recognize the additional time and effort faculty invest in online
- Developing messages and communications mechanisms that effectively incorporate online learning into the fabric and missions of the institution
- Applying effective measures of learning outcomes for online courses.

We strongly encourage readers of this volume to take the time to read *A Resource for Campus Leaders* in order to fully understand the areas of convergence and divergence regarding online learning, and use that knowledge to stimulate these conversations at their own institutions.

# Additional Research

The results of this report suggest a number of areas for additional investigation.

**REPLICATE THE RESULTS.** While the current sample is large and includes a broad spectrum of faculty, it is not a nationally representative sample of all U.S. higher education institutions. Do faculty at private nonprofit institutions hold the same views as their compatriots at public institutions? Do faculty at for-profit institutions see an entirely different set of motivations and barriers?

**LEVEL OF EFFORT.** Both faculty in this study and senior academic administrators in the annual Sloan surveys see online teaching, and especially online course development, as requiring more time and effort on the part of faculty than face-to-face instruction. What specific aspects of teaching and developing online courses are responsible for this belief? The current study suggests that even faculty who are satisfied with their institution's support services don't believe these services reduce the need for additional effort on their own part. Does this mean that the support services have not yet evolved to address this issue, or is the time and effort requirement beyond what can be addressed by traditional campus support structures? Have any faculty so mastered online teaching and development that they have managed to reduce the need for additional time and effort? If so, are there any lessons that could be applied to the academy at large?

**ONLINE COURSE RECOMMENDATIONS.** Sizable numbers of faculty, even those with negative views of online education, have recommended online courses to students. Why? What specific aspects of online instruction do faculty see as having sufficient value to recommend to students?

**INCENTIVES.** Faculty responses indicate that they develop and teach online courses in spite of their institution's incentives (or lack thereof), not because of them. Faculty also report that "to earn additional income" is not a strong motivator for developing or teaching online. What would faculty consider the proper incentive? Is better support for faculty online course development and teaching efforts in and of itself an effective incentive? Since faculty consistently report they develop and teach online courses for very student-centered reasons, should institutions be thinking about an entirely new class of incentives for faculty, centered on improvement for students?

**LEARNING OUTCOMES.** The current results show that faculty perceive that the learning outcomes for online instruction lag behind those for face-to-face instruction. Do faculty believe that these differences in learning outcomes are inevitable, or will future evolution of online courses begin to close this gap? Are some disciplines better suited for online learning than others, and

can the online learning outcomes for courses in these fields be equal to (or maybe even better than) those of face-to-face classes?

Also, the survey responses on “learning outcomes” are based on faculty perceptions as opposed to outcomes-based assessments. It is necessary to apply comparative outcome-based assessments for online and “traditional” courses in order to move the discussion forward. Online learning outcome measures have to be included as a component of the larger discussion of overall learning outcomes in higher education. Are the perceptions about an inferior learning environment for online learning false and do such perceptions need to be countered with data? Or are they accurate, and online learning needs to improve its pedagogy?

**CAMPUS SUPPORT STRUCTURES.** Faculty perceive that their campus support structures for online teaching are not very good. With the single exception of support for technology, faculty view all aspects of support as lacking, especially in regard to the incentives provided by their institution. Is it possible to identify what the faculty want or need? Is there a difference in the level of support required for online teaching and/or online development for different types of faculty? Do part-time faculty have different needs than full-time?

**DETAILED FACULTY VIEWS.** The current analysis relies on a series of structured questions responded to by over 10,000 faculty members. Not included in the present analysis are in excess of 21,000 free-text responses provided by these same faculty members. These responses are currently being analyzed, concentrating on faculty views of online learning outcomes. Further study of this body of data may provide additional insight into the various topics mentioned above.

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<http://www.aplu.org/NetCommunity/Document.Doc?id=443>

# Appendix A

## Faculty Survey: Participating Institutions

Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College  
Albany State University  
Armstrong Atlantic State University  
Atlanta Metropolitan College  
Auburn University  
Augusta State University  
Bainbridge College  
Boise State University  
Bowling Green State University  
California State University: Fullerton  
Central Michigan University  
Clayton State University  
College of Coastal Georgia  
Columbus State University  
CSU - Fresno  
Dalton State College  
Darton College  
East Georgia College  
Fort Valley State University  
Gainesville State College  
George Mason University  
Georgia College & State University  
Georgia Gwinnett College  
Georgia Highlands College  
Georgia Institute of Technology  
Georgia Perimeter College  
Georgia Southern University  
Georgia Southwestern State University  
Georgia State University  
Gordon College  
Idaho State University  
Kennesaw State University  
Kent State University  
Macon State College  
Medical College of Georgia  
Michigan Technological University  
Middle Georgia College  
Middle Tennessee State University  
Montana State University  
North Georgia College & State University  
Northern Illinois University  
Oakland University  
Penn State University  
Portland State University  
Purdue University  
Savannah State University  
South Dakota State University  
South Georgia College  
Southern Polytechnic State University  
Tennessee State University  
University of Central Florida  
University of Georgia  
University of Maine  
University of Memphis  
University of Michigan  
University of Michigan - Dearborn  
University of Michigan - Flint  
University of Montana  
University of North Carolina - Charlotte  
University of North Carolina - Greensboro  
University of North Texas  
University of South Dakota  
University of Southern Mississippi  
University of Texas - Arlington  
University of West Georgia  
Valdosta State University  
Waycross College  
Wichita State University  
Wright State University



# Appendix B

## Faculty Survey: Methodology

The Faculty Survey results described in this report are based on a survey and methodology designed to support the overall work of the A•P•L•U-Sloan National Commission on Online Learning Benchmarking Study. The impact of this approach is seen most clearly in the selection of the sample. Institutions that were recruited to participate in the Benchmarking Study were requested both (1) to engage in the series of interviews described in the companion volume to this report, *Online Learning as a Strategic Asset: A Resource for Campus Leaders*, and (2) to support the survey of their faculty members.

The sample for the Faculty Survey comprises 69 different institutions (listed below). There is not a complete overlap between these institutions and those participating in the interview portion of the study, however. Several institutions were not able to obtain the necessary approvals to participate in time to be included, or they chose not to participate for other reasons. An additional reason that the count of participants differs between the two reports is that the University System of Georgia participated in the interview portion of the study as a system, but each individual campus participated in the Faculty Survey and is counted separately.

The reader should be aware that the institutions included in this report, while national in scope and including a wide variety of institutional sizes and types, do not comprise a truly representative sample of U.S. higher education. In addition to the inclusion of only public institutions, the sample has an over-representation of institutions in the south and does not include many of the largest public institutions.

### *Survey administration:*

Each participating institution was provided with a Faculty Survey Information Fact Sheet, along with other information describing the Benchmarking Study. The majority of institutions chose to have the Online Commission *administer* the survey. These institutions provided the Commission with the email addresses of their faculty and provided the final wording for the survey invitation and reminder messages. In all cases, these messages were sent using a “From:” email address of the appropriate campus contact, also provided by the institution. A smaller group of institutions chose to have the Online Commission *host* the survey, but they processed the invitations and reminders themselves. In this case, the Commission provided those institutions with a specific URL to access their copy of the survey, which was used as a link within the survey invitation message.

A few institutions chose to administer the survey *locally*, either using their own campus survey software or using a paper-based survey form. These institutions then provided a database of the completed surveys to the Commission, and this database was merged into the master set of all survey responses.

In all cases, the goal was to send the survey invitation to all faculty at the institution—full-time and part-time, irrespective of their level of knowledge and/or experience with online learning. While this was achieved at the vast majority of the participating institutions, it was not possible for every institution. In a few cases, institutional policy prevented this, while in others, no adequate email list of part-time faculty was available.

Special attention was paid to the wording of the invitation and reminder messages to make sure that *all* faculty knew that their opinion was being solicited, and that this was not a survey directed at only those with online experience.

### *Questionnaire:*

The questionnaire is derived from that used in the most recent Sloan survey of online learning (Allen and Seaman, 2008). Additional questions were added to determine each faculty respondent's current teaching load, as well as their past and current experience with online instruction. Virtually all the campuses used the same version of the questionnaire. The only exceptions occurred where an institution added a campus-specific question for their own use, and a few instances where faculty union or IRB approval was only possible if a particular question or questions were omitted.

### *Anonymity:*

Faculty respondents were promised full anonymity for their responses. They were promised that no individual-level responses would be released to the public. Faculty were also informed that they could skip any question, including those describing their status. A small percentage of respondents (under 10 percent) chose to omit detailed information about their status, while still completing the remainder of the survey.

### *Response rate:*

The survey instrument was distributed to approximately 50,000 individuals across the spectrum of teaching positions—tenure/non-tenure track; full- and part-time; those who have taught online and those who have not. The overall survey response rate was 22.3 percent, with 11,391 surveys submitted by faculty. Of that number, a total of 10,720 contained sufficient responses to be included in the analysis. The exact number of faculty members that saw the invitation is

not known, as not every campus was able to track the number of invitations that were undelivered. One campus also posted the survey invitation to a general faculty message system, and was unable to record how many faculty saw the specific invitation. If we assume that the rate of undeliverable invitations was the same for all campuses (those where it was recorded and those where it was not), then the best estimate of the overall response rate would be approximately 24 to 25 percent.

Individual response rates varied by campus. The lowest response rate for any campus was 5.1 percent, while the highest was 57 percent.

### *Statistical significance:*

All of the results presented in this report are statistically significant at the .01 level or better.

# Appendix C

## Faculty Survey: Information Fact Sheet

### *Why survey faculty?*

Both the annual Sloan survey reports on online education and the initial interviews for the NASULGC/Sloan Benchmarking project have identified faculty issues as critical for successful online programs. The over five years of data from the national Sloan survey of online learning have shown that faculty acceptance of online education has consistently been seen as a critical barrier to its wide-spread adoption. Institutions at all stages of online adoption have listed faculty attitudes as a critical component of any online learning strategy for their institution.

### *What faculty do we wish to survey?*

We need to understand the experience, opinions, and attitudes of all faculty members, not just those who are teaching online. Ideally, the survey should go to all faculty at the institution, both full-time and part-time. It is understood, however, that this might not be possible for all institutions, but the closer we can get to this, the better.

### *How will the survey be administered?*

There are a number of options for institutions to administer the survey; each institution can select the mechanism that will work best for them. These include:

- Administered online by NASULGC: Institutions can provide the email addresses for the faculty members to the NASULGC/Sloan benchmarking project. These will then be used to send invitations and reminder messages to the faculty members, including links to an online version of the survey. All email addresses will be destroyed once the survey data collection process is complete.
- Online administration by the institution. NASULGC/Sloan can provide your institution with the survey to be implemented on your own survey tool and administered locally. The institution would then provide the database of the collected information to the NASULGC/Sloan project once data collection was complete.
- Paper-based by the institution. NASULGC/Sloan can provide Microsoft Word or Adobe PDF files of the survey for physical printing and distribution on campus. The resulting survey can either be tallied on campus and the database provided to NASULGC/Sloan, or the completed surveys can be sent to NASULGC/Sloan where we will tabulate the results.

## What is the role of the institution in the Faculty Survey process?

The participating institution has several responsibilities:

- To identify the faculty to be surveyed.
- To publicize the survey to faculty members and endorse their participation.
- To determine which survey approach (conducted locally or by NASULGC/Sloan) they wish to use.
- To determine what approvals (if any) are required (e.g., IRB review) to administer the survey to their faculty members, and to facilitate this approval process.

## How long is the Faculty Survey?

Most faculty members will be able to complete the survey in about 5 minutes; some will take a bit longer, but not over 10 minutes.

## Are there privacy concerns in administering the survey?

The survey data collection process has been designed to provide the maximum protection for the privacy of individual respondents:

- The Faculty Survey instrument builds on the Sloan survey instrument that has been used in collecting the data for the annual Sloan reports on online education. The data collected are subject to the same privacy protections as have been applied to the Sloan survey.
- No individual-level data are ever reported, and no comments are ever quoted in a report without the respondent's specific permission.
- All personally identifying information is stripped from the database as part of the initial data processing in the construction of the analysis files. Only the senior survey researcher ever has access to the raw data, all other researchers work with sanitized data only.
- All open-ended comments are "sanitized"—removing personally identifiable information—before they are shared with other researchers.

## The survey will include a privacy statement:

*"This study has been funded and supported by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation and is conducted by researchers at Babson College, NASULGC and the Sloan Consortium. All responses will be held in strictest confidence and at no time will respondents be identified by name. Only aggregated data are reported, no individual responses are released. No individual responses or contact information are shared with any other organization. There are no known risks associated with participation, only the researchers will have access to the data."*



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