

An Exploratory Investigation into the Effectiveness of the Undergraduate Online Financial Accounting Course

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This paper investigates the effectiveness of the online financial accounting course and also includes a survey of financial accounting faculty current teaching practices and attitudes toward delivery of financial accounting via online means. Building on research questions posed by Bryant, Kahle, and Schafer (2005) regarding the issue of interaction between educational medium and student learning, this research attempts to measure the effectiveness of financial accounting in an entirely online environment versus a traditional classroom financial accounting course.

Students enrolled in managerial accounting courses at selected Illinois community colleges and universities were grouped based upon whether their financial accounting course had been taken in a traditional classroom or online. Performance on an assessment instrument administered to the two groups of students was compared. Results indicate that there was no significant difference between the scores of the two groups. However, at this point in time in Illinois there is not a large enough group of students who have taken financial accounting online to provide generalizable results.

Accounting faculty teaching financial accounting from the United States and Canada were randomly selected to receive a survey regarding current teaching practices and attitudes toward online delivery of accounting courses. Results indicate that overwhelmingly financial accounting is taught in the traditional manner. As a group, faculty teaching financial accounting in the classroom largely believe there is not a substitute for the face-to-face interaction occurring in the classroom.

As institutional administration continues to emphasize the use of online courses, it is incumbent on faculty to study the effectiveness of these courses as compared to traditional classroom delivery. Most especially, those institutions offering financial accounting sections in online only format and also traditional classroom sections have the opportunity to empirically assess the effectiveness of online education in financial accounting.