



A Case Study of Student Preferences for Delivery Method of a Sophomore-Level Course

Jose Lopez, Professor of Agribusiness, East Texas A&M University

Jose.Lopez@etamu.edu



INTRODUCTION

□ Student preferences for delivery method of a sophomore-level hybrid course (AGRI 2317) were analyzed. Students were required to meet in-person Tuesdays and Thursdays for 8 weeks and to attend online for the remaining 8 weeks. During the first half, the instructor lectured on Tuesdays, and had students do exercises and team activities on Thursdays. Students also took 5 quizzes and 2 exams in person. During the second half of the course, delivered online, students took another 4 quizzes and 3 exams online, including one final comprehensive exam. Regardless of online or in-person, students had access to video recordings for lectures, exercise solutions, and review questions. A survey was conducted on the first day to assess prior expectations and understanding of course delivery methods. A second survey was conducted using Qualtrics XM Platform™ at the end to assess whether students' preferences changed and to determine which half of the course the students liked the most, was easier, did better, and why. The study summarizes the opinion of a sample of students mostly from the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (CASNR) at East Texas A&M University in Commerce, Texas, USA.

OBJECTIVES

□ The objective of the study was to assess the students' preferences for delivery method of a sophomore-level hybrid course. The study examined whether student classification, residency, employment, previous online experiences, class schedule, and other demographic variables played a role in their preference for in-person, hybrid, or online.

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

□ An in-person survey was administered on the first day to evaluate students' initial expectations and their understanding of course delivery methods. An online survey, conducted at the end using the Qualtrics XM Platform™, aimed to identify any changes in student preferences and to determine which half of the course they preferred, found easier, performed better in, and the reasons behind their responses.

□ The in-person survey was conducted on the first day of class. However, five students did not attend on the first day and took the survey on the second day of classes. A total of 27 students took the beginning-of-semester survey.

□ The online survey was conducted at the end of the semester. A course website announcement inviting students to take the survey displayed from 4/22/2025 to 5/04/2025. An email inviting students to take the survey was sent out to all 29 students enrolled in the course on 04/22/2025, and a targeted follow-up email was sent on 5/5/2025. A total of 21 students took the end-of-semester-survey. Figure 1 reports the response distribution.

□ Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation coefficients between preference (in-person, hybrid 51%-49%, hybrid in-person attendance optional, and online) and other variables (Table 1), and t-test paired two sample for means were used to analyze the results.



Figure 1. Response Distributions.

Table 1. Pearson Correlation Coefficients.

Transfer	0.0519
Classification	-0.5558*
Campus	-0.1079
City	-0.2199
Dependents	-0.1853
Part-time job	0.3142
Past online here	-0.0824
Past online else	-0.1587
Another online	-0.2199
Age	-0.1271
Sex	-0.4576*
Race	0.1823
Living	0.0898

Note: Statistical significance at the 5% probability level is denoted by an asterisk (*), sample size = 20, $r_{critical} = 0.423$.

RESULTS

□ A total of 29 students enrolled in the course, 27 took the survey at the beginning of the semester and 21 took the survey at end of the semester (Figure 1), resulting in 20 students taking both.

□ Of the 20 students who took both surveys:

- 65% started as freshman while 35% were transfer students;
- 20% were freshman, 40% sophomore, 30% junior, and 10% senior;
- 70% lived on campus and 30% did not; 80% lived in Commerce, Texas; and 20% did not; and
- the average commuting time of the students who did not live on campus or in Commerce was about 60 minutes or 49 miles.

□ Of 20 students who took both surveys:

- 60% indicated they liked the first half the most while 40% indicated the second half;
- Although 53% indicated the first half was easier (while 47% indicated the second half):
 - Students averaged 71.67% on the two in-person exams (and 81.43% on the two online exams) and average grade in two in-person exams was statistically different from average grade in two online exams ($p-value < 0.0003$, t-test paired two sample for means).
 - Students averaged 73.11% in the five in-person quizzes (and 72.38% on the four online quizzes) and average grade in five in-person quizzes was not statistically different from average grade in four online quizzes ($p-value = 0.8613$, t-test paired two sample for means).
- At the beginning, 50% indicated the course will be delivered in person (and 50% hybrid); while at the end, 20% indicated they prefer in person (70% hybrid, and 10% online).

		Responses				
		In-Person	Hybrid (51%-49%)	Hybrid (Optional)	Online	Overall
Transfer	Yes	2	6	4	1	13
	No	2	1	3	0	7
Classification	Fr	0	2	1	1	4
	Sp	0	3	5	0	8
	Jr	2	2	1	0	6
	Sr	2	0	0	0	2
Live on campus	Yes	3	6	4	1	14
	No	1	1	3	0	6
Live in city	Yes	4	6	5	1	16
	No	0	1	2	0	4
Dependents	Yes	2	3	1	1	7
	No	2	3	6	0	11
Part-time job	Yes	2	3	5	1	11
	No	2	4	2	0	8
Past online here	Yes	4	4	7	0	15
	No	0	3	0	1	4
Past online elsewhere	Yes	4	4	5	1	14
	No	0	3	2	0	5
Another online	Yes	4	5	5	1	15
	No	0	2	2	0	4
Another in person	Yes	4	7	7	1	19
	No	0	0	0	0	0
Age	Under 20	2	3	6	0	11
	20-30	2	4	1	1	8
	Over 30	0	0	0	0	0
Sex	Male	2	2	0	0	4
	Female	2	5	6	1	14
Live alone	Alone	3	2	0	0	5
	Not alone	1	5	6	1	13

CONCLUSION

The results indicated negative linear correlation between preference for delivery method and classification (freshman and sophomores seem to prefer hybrid and online while juniors and seniors seem to prefer in person), and preference for delivery method and sex (male seem to prefer in-person while female seem to prefer hybrid and online) (Table 1). This study identified characteristics of students who prefer to attend in person versus hybrid or online. The study serves as a venue for discussing trends in online teaching as well as sharing experiences.