

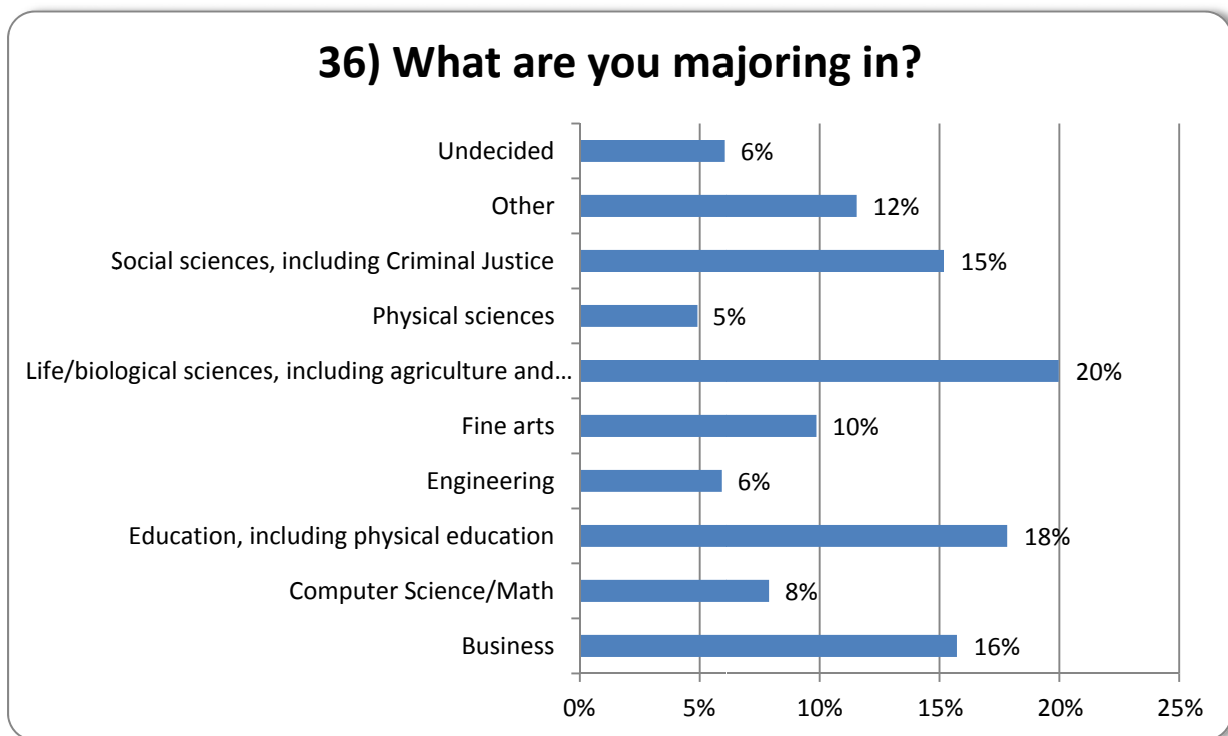
Southern Utah University

Spring, 2010 Student Information Technology Survey

Summary of Results

During the last two weeks of March 2010 (Spring Semester), an IT Survey, sponsored by the IT department, was administered via the Web. The purpose of the survey was to provide reliable information on student behaviors, preferences, and overall satisfaction with technology.

There are presently 8,434 active student computer accounts; of those 1,672 completed the survey for a 19.8% completion rate (920 completed the survey in 2007 for a 19.5% completion rate). All colleges and schools were represented; 16% were freshmen, 19% sophomores, 29% juniors, 32% seniors, and 5% graduates, and the majority of the students were under 30 years old (89%) and attended school full time (92%). Responses were evenly divided between female (51%) and male (49%). Sixty nine percent of the respondents had a cumulative grade point average (GPA) equal to or greater than B+.



Key Findings

The responses to the survey continue to reveal themes about undergraduates' IT experience, including student technology ownership, use and skill with IT, experience with IT in courses, and perceptions about how IT contributes to their academic experience. The survey also focused on internet-capable handheld devices, and survey responses told us a great deal about how students use these devices, both in and out of class. The following sections highlight findings that stand out as especially interesting or relevant for higher education administrators as they develop plans to support the IT requirements and desires of their students.

Student Ownership and Use of Computers

During the last three years desktop ownership has been constant at 39%, while laptop ownership has increased from 42% to 81%. We also found that despite the current economic downturn, students are entering school with newer equipment, since nearly 4.8 of 10 (48%) freshmen owned a laptop that was one year old or less, and more than 24% of the respondents who own a laptop computer said that their laptop was one year old or less. Forty eight percent reported owning a laptop that is two years old or less of those that indicated ownership of a desktop, only 5% were less than one year old. This relatively up-to date profile of computer ownership should reassure IT departments concerned about supporting students with older equipment; however, many respondents still own older computers, including 14% desktop and 10% laptop who said their newest computer was four years old or older.

When we asked students about their IT activities for school, work, or recreation, we found the basic technologies common in coursework continued to be very widely used. The vast majority of the students use the university and university library website (97%), with a median frequency of use being weekly, and about 91% use presentation software and 84% use spreadsheets, with a median frequency of use being monthly. Text messaging is used by 94% of the students, and the frequency of use is daily. The percentage of students who reported they download music or videos was 80%.

Participation in content creation and sharing is also revealed in students' responses to questions about contributing content to Web 2.0 user-driven sites. The respondents that are using audio-creation software was 37% and 40% of the respondents are using video-creation software. The respondents that contribute to video websites was 51%, with 39% contributing to wikis, and 44% contributing to blogs.

Interactive communication Tools

Interactive communication tools such as instant messaging, text messaging, and social networking websites are shaping how college students connect to the world and each other. Instant messaging is being used by 64% of the respondents, with a median frequency use of weekly, while 94% of the respondents indicate using text messaging, with a median frequency of daily. Social networking sites are used by 91% of the respondents, and median frequency of use daily.

Technology Being Used the Semester of the Survey

Majorities of respondents said they use the university website 75%, a course or learning management system 81% and presentation software such as PowerPoint 71% and 54% said they use spreadsheets such as excel.

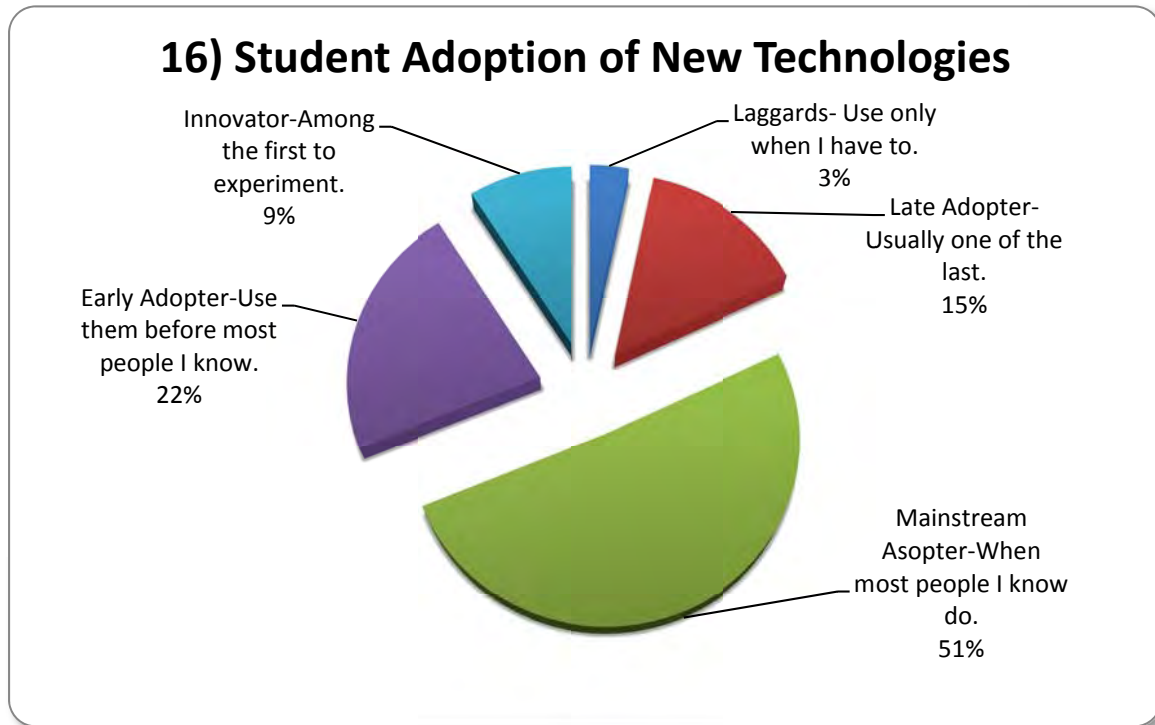
Despite the very high percentages of personal use of Social Network Sites, only 24% reported using them in a course during the semester of the survey. About a quarter (24%) of respondents said the use wikis, and 14% of the respondents used instant messaging, graphics software 20%, blogs 15%, and programming languages such as C++ and Java 11%.

Only 6.0% were using podcasts, 10% were using video-creation software, and 10% were using audio-creation software in courses during the semester of the survey. These findings suggest that students are learning and using these technologies, but not necessarily for formal academic reasons.

How Students View Their Own Technology Adoption and IT Skills

Respondents were given a set of statements about technology adoption and asked to choose the one that best describes them. The five categories were:

innovators, early adopters, mainstream adopters, late adopters, and laggards. About half (51%) of all respondents identified themselves as mainstream adopters. However, there is a gender gap, since 42% of males claimed they are early adopters or innovators, whereas only 21% of females did so.



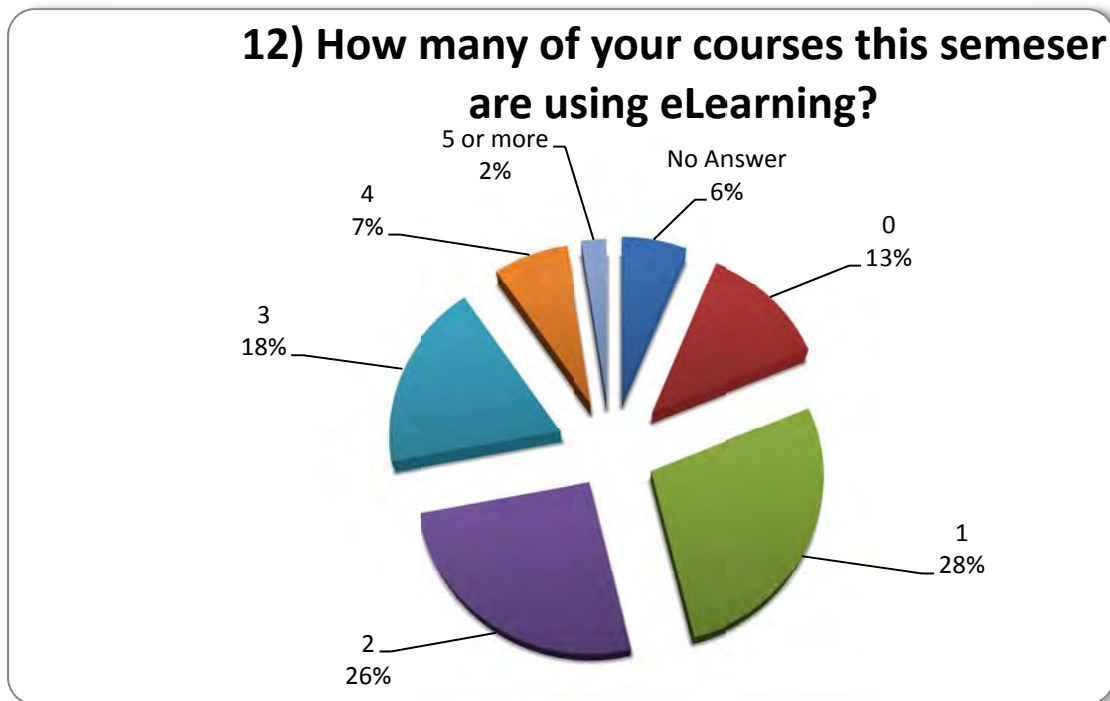
The respondents indicated they have confidence in their skills with presentation software (89%), spreadsheets (80%), and Library Website (92%), generally rating themselves between fairly skilled and very skilled. Respondents assessed themselves lower on their use of graphics software (45%) and on computer maintenance (49%) activities such as software updates and security.

The respondents were asked three survey questions about how they view their own information literacy skills and found that respondents considered themselves quite Internet-savvy users. Seven out of 10 (71%) said they were very confident in their ability to search the Internet effectively and efficiently. Almost half (49%) rated themselves as very skilled, and (22%) rated themselves as experts. Although students' assessments of their ability to evaluate the reliability and credibility of

online sources of information (expert 11%, very skilled 34%) and their understanding the ethical and legal issues surrounding the access to and use of digital information were lower (expert 8%, very skilled 30%), overall ratings are still high. Students whose technology adoption responses categorize them as innovators ranked their technology and information literacy skills higher than other students.

Course or Learning Management Systems

In the spring semester, 96% of the respondents reported they have taken a course that used a course or learning management system. Of these students, 86% used a LMS during the semester of the survey.



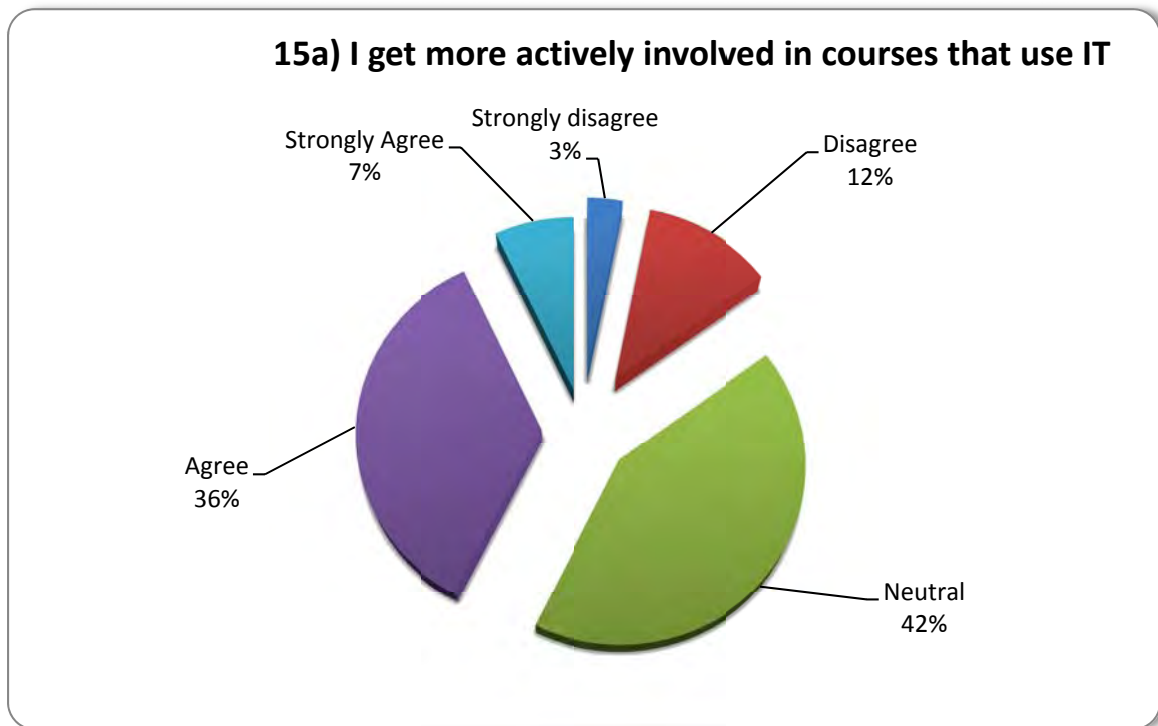
Most of the respondents who had used a Learning Management System said their overall experience with them was either positive (53%) or very positive (14%), and neutral (23%). Fifty percent of the respondents said that they disagree (33%) or strongly disagree (17%) with the statement “I skip classes when materials from course lectures are available online.” with (23%) being neutral.

Student Perceptions of IT in Courses

Fewer than half (42%) of the respondents reported that most or almost all of their instructors use IT effectively in their courses. Just under one-half (49%) said most or almost all instructors have adequate IT skills for carrying out course instruction, and 41% of the students said that most or almost all of their instructors provide them with adequate training for the IT in their courses.

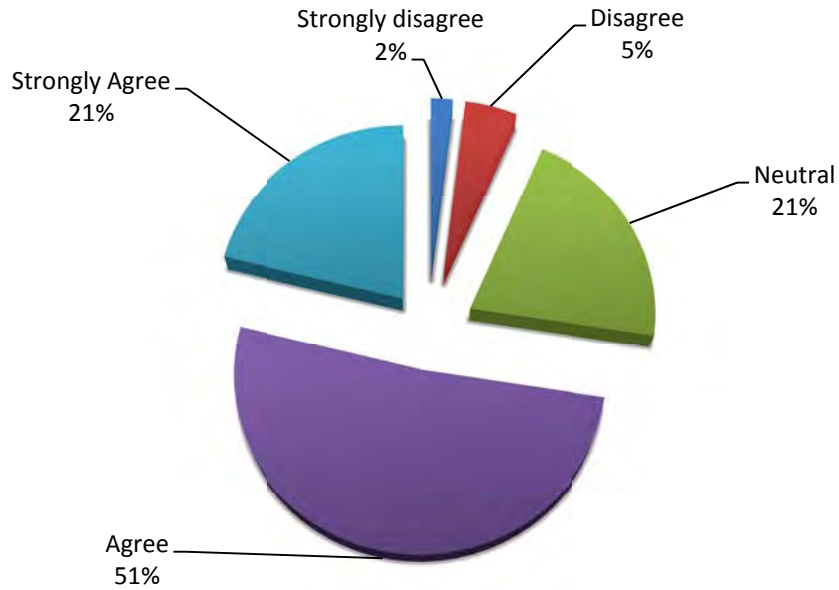
Because IT is integrated with many of the student engagement activities that influence university success, the students were asked “four outcome statements” about the impact of IT in courses and asked students whether they agreed or disagreed with them:

- “ I get more actively involved in courses that use IT.”



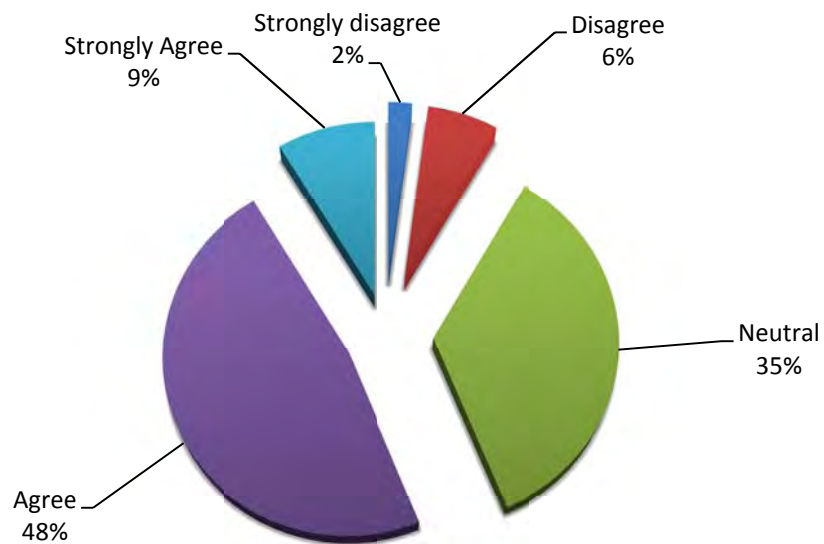
- “IT makes doing my course activities more convenient.”

15c) IT makes doing my course activities more convenient

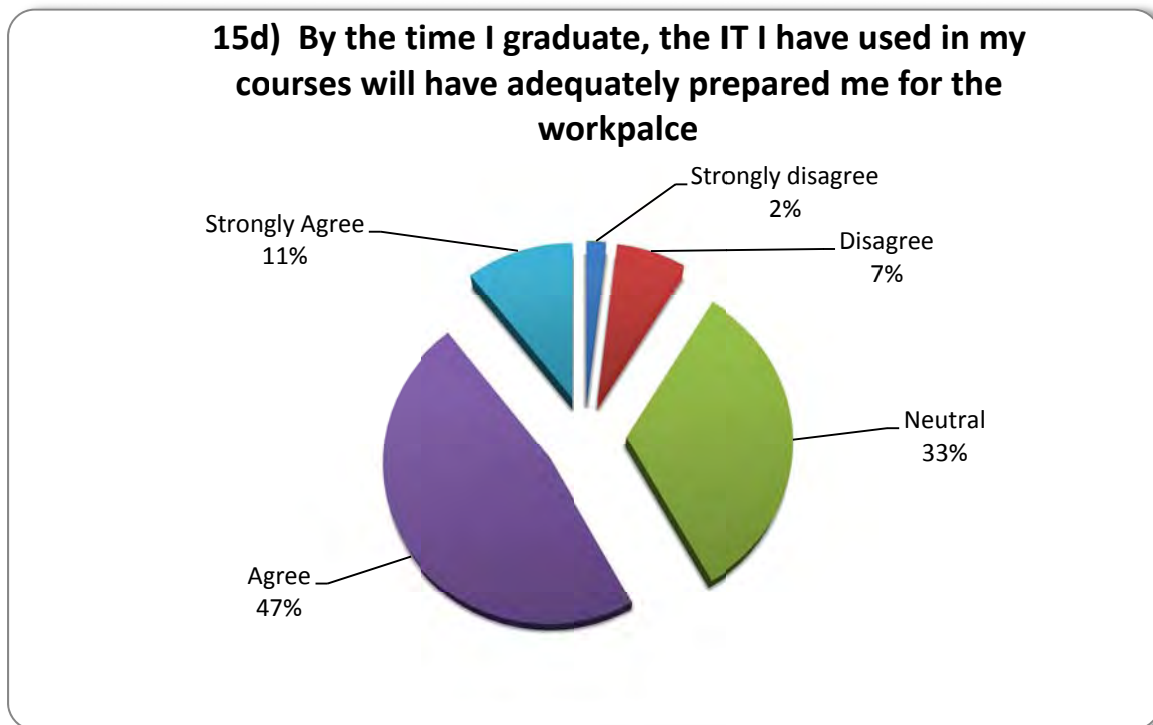


- “The use of IT in my courses improves my learning. “

15b) The use of IT in my courses improves my learning



- “By the time I graduate, the IT I have used in my courses will have adequately prepared me for the workplace.”



The respondents were most positive about Information Technology’s impact on convenience. Those who agreed (72%) far outnumbered the combined disagree and neutral responses (26%). When asked if the use of IT in courses improves their learning, (57%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed. Another 35% of respondents were neutral about whether the use of IT in classes improves there leaning, and (8%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. Fifty eight percent of the respondents agreed that upon graduation the IT used in their courses will have adequately prepared them for the workplace.

The survey shows that 60% of respondents prefer moderate IT in their courses with 3% preferring exclusive IT, 18% extensively IT, 16% limited IT, and 3% preferring no IT.

We asked the students if they agree or disagree with the statement “My institution’s IT services are always available when I need them for my coursework.” About 61% of the students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, and 29% said they were neutral, and 10% disagreed or strongly disagreed that their institution’s IT services are always available when needed for coursework.

The Mobile Revolution

About half of the respondents (49%) indicated they own an Internet-capable handheld device, and another 10% said they plan to purchase one in the next 12 months. There is a very high ownership of at least a basic cell phone implied in the current study finding that 9 out of 10 student respondents (94%) were engaged in text messaging, with a median use of daily. Note that ownership of an Internet-capable handheld device does not ensure that the internet function will be used, since 40% of respondents who own them said that they never use that feature.

Those respondents that own an Internet-capable device usage ranges from as little as 15 minutes per/week to as much as 10 hours per/week accessing the internet. The most frequently accessed activities from the handheld device are news, weather and sports sites (26%), social networking sites (22%) and e-mail sites (26%).

To better understand the issues that delineated these users, the students were asked regardless of whether they owned an Internet-capable handheld device, to select up to three reasons that kept them from using Internet, or using it more often, from a handheld device.

The reason selected most often was that plenty of other ways are available to access the Internet (62%). Expense was also a factor: Cost of the data service was selected by 50% of the respondents, and cost of the device was chosen by 54%. Another 18% of student respondents indicated that a reason they don’t access the Internet, or use it more often, from the handheld device is that they find no compelling reason to access the Internet.

Mobile Devices in the Academic Environment

Instructors will probably not be surprised to learn that almost a third of respondents (31%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “While in class, I regularly use my cell phone or handheld Internet device for non-course activities. When asked if they use their handheld devices for course-related activities, only 14% agreed or strongly agreed.

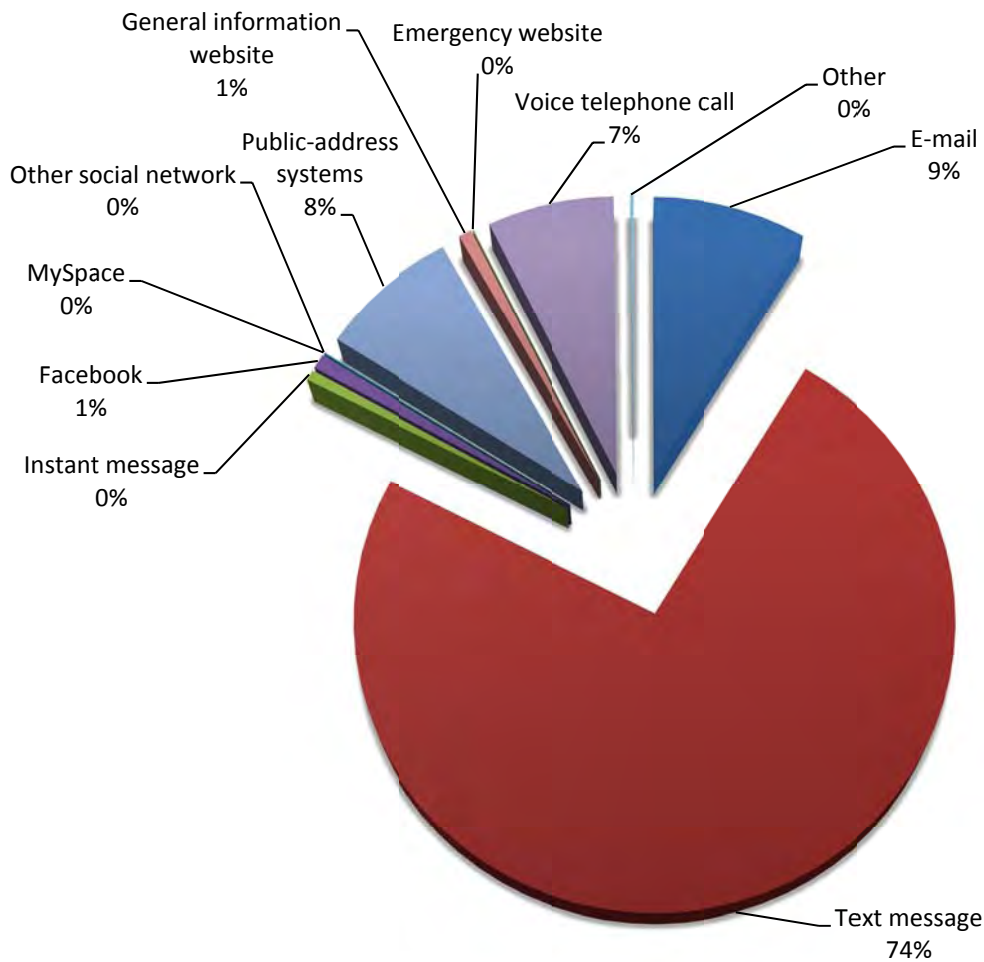
When the question was asked students if instructors should have the authority to forbid the use of cell phones and handheld devices during class time, 48% agreed or strongly agreed that they should.

Students were asked to select three institutional IT services they would most likely use, if available, from an Internet-capable handheld device, respondents who currently use a handheld device and use the Internet from it selected as their top three e-mail system (35%), student administrative services (43%), (official grades, registration, etc.), and course or e-learning management system (52%).

Emergency Notification

Respondents were asked about “How should the institution first notify you of a campus emergency?” The results were overwhelming in favor of text messaging, with over 75% choosing that option. Even though the students favor text messaging, until the cell phone carriers are willing to cooperate and stop throttling delivery processes, text messaging will be less than favorable as a notification solution. SUU might want to work with a third party and have the messages sent directly via SMS, and the messages would probably get delivered.

18) How should your institution first notify you of a campus emergency?



mySUU Portal

MySuu portal is widely accepted by the respondents meeting the information needs of the student body. The portal provides individualized access for students personal information when registering, checking grades, and verifying financial aid, 97% of the respondents use this feature of MySUU. The advantage of the portal is that it "knows" the individual using it, and it changes with the individual; it is an individual's personal assistant or proactive agent, ready to act on his or

her behalf. The following graph shows how those that responded to the survey use the Portal.

