

Retention of Online Students – Annotated Bibliography

Hannah Higgins

Bachelor of Applied Science in Organizational Leadership, Laredo College

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Dr. Marissa Guerrero

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Key Terms for Research

1. Retention online students
2. Success rates online
3. Digital higher education
4. Leadership online education
5. Online educational leadership
6. Educational leadership AND online learning
7. Online leadership
8. Course design student success
9. Online student success

Beaudoin, M. F. (2015). Distance Education Leadership in the Context of Digital Change.

Quarterly Review of Distance Education, 16(2), 33–44.

In this paper, author Michael Beaudoin discusses the challenges faced by leadership in online learning. Among the obstacles mentioned is “technological transience,” which is when the technology changes as soon as users have gained some proficiency, and they continually have to learn the technology before they can learn the course material.

Additional challenges mentioned are lack of instructor engagement in the online environment and the constantly changing landscape of online education that can be a deterrent to adopting new online programs. Beaudoin goes on to list some of the characteristics necessary for leaders to keep progressing in the online arena, such as a transformative or situational leadership style, resilience, and commitment to assist the new leaders coming into the field. This article applies to the topic of online student retention because it highlights the type of leadership that is most effective and issues

facing the field of online learning, providing a transition into why students drop and the article from Sorensen & Donovan below.

Glazier, R. A., & Harris, H. S. (2020). How teaching with rapport can improve online student success and retention: Data from two empirical studies. *Quarterly Review of Distance Education, 21*(4), 1–17.

In this piece, authors R. Glazier and H. Skurat Harris write about a study they conducted. The resulting data indicated that when instructors connect with their students and facilitate a sense of community within their online courses, it positively affects student retention and student success rates. In other words, students who connect with their instructor and peers in the course are more likely to do better. This article aligns with the topic of online student retention because it provides suggestions for improving student retention and success. It provides a solution that faculty can apply and correlates with why students drop, as mentioned in Sorensen and Donovan's article below.

Simplicio, J. S. C. (2019). Strategies to improve online student academic success and increase university persistence rates. *Education, 139*(3), 173.

In this paper, author Joseph Simplicio offers strategies that institutions can use to combat the high drop rates of online students. The first idea suggested is to help students evaluate whether they are ready for online learning. By assisting them in assessing their learning style and academic history, their level of access to the necessary technology for online study, and the amount of time they can dedicate to their coursework, they will be more likely to succeed. The next suggestion is ensuring

that the faculty selected to teach online are committed to dedicating the time and effort needed. Faculty must be available to their students through the set means of communication and respond within a reasonable timeframe. The third technique is to assign a group project as one of the first assignments of the course to establish a community within the course and promote student engagement. Other strategies provided are for the instructors to be available during set times, to provide individual meetings as requested for their students, and to make sure students are aware of the resources available to them as online students. This article will be instrumental as a source of additional methods for reducing the drop rates for online classes and aligns with the article by Yang et al. below.

Sorensen, C. & Donovan, J. (2017). An examination of factors that impact the retention of online students at a for-profit university. *Online Learning*, 21(3), 206-221.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.24059/olj.v21i3.935>

This article is about a study that was conducted to find out why students drop from their online courses. The means for data collection were observing online classes where the students dropped, interviews, and surveys. There were many reasons for dropping that were common among the students in the study, such as lack of support, lack of time-management or organizational skills, and poor academic performance. This paper applies to the research topic of online student retention because it provides an opportunity to understand the students' perspectives on why they drop. It is a continuation of the conversation started in the article by Michael Beaudoin that was presented earlier.

Wang, W., He, L., Guo, L., & Wu, Y. J. (2019). Effects of social-interactive engagement on the dropout ratio in online learning: Insights from MOOC. *Behaviour & Information Technology*, 38(6), 621–636. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0144929X.2018.1549595>

The paper by Wang et al. shares a study they conducted to evaluate student retention in online classes. Their findings indicated that the drop rate is lower for students in courses with shorter duration, that social interaction within the course also lowered the drop rate, and that it is less likely that students in more challenging courses will drop. This paper will be crucial in finding solutions for online student retention, and it echoes the message presented by Glazier and Harris above.

Yang, D., Baldwin, S., & Snelson, C. (2017). Persistence factors revealed: Students' reflections on completing a fully online program. *Distance Education*, 38(1), 23–36. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01587919.2017.1299561>

This article discusses a study the authors conducted to learn more about what circumstances are necessary for students to succeed in online classes. Their findings were that there are factors on the individual level and at the program level that assist students in completing and passing their online classes. For the program level, students are more successful if they study a major that meets their needs. Further, students will be more likely to succeed if they are content with their courses, learning outcomes, and the program. Then, the study indicated that on the personal level, students need to feel like they are achieving something of value and that their program and courses are assisting them in accomplishing their career goals. They also need to recognize the benefits of learning something new. Another interesting factor that contributes to

student success in online classes is whether the student is interested in technology or works in the technology field in some capacity. Finally, the study indicated that students were more likely to stay in their classes if they felt supported by the program's staff. This article ties into the topic of online student retention because it provides additional insight into how institutions can set students up for success from the beginning and works together with the papers from Wang et al. and Glazier and Harris.