

Utilization of a Telepresence Evaluation Tool for the Implementation of a Distant Education Program

Authors : Theresa Bacon-Baguley, Martina Reinhold

Abstract : Introduction: Evaluation and analysis are the cornerstones of any successful program in higher education. When developing a program at a distant campus, it is essential that the process of evaluation and analysis be orchestrated in a timely manner with tools that can identify both the positive and negative components of distant education. We describe the utilization of a newly developed tool used to evaluate and analyze the successful expansion to a distant campus using Telepresence Technology. Like interactive television, Telepresence allows live interactive delivery but utilizes broadband cable. The tool developed is adaptable to any distant campus as the framework for the tool was derived from a systematic review of the literature. Methodology: Because Telepresence is a relatively new delivery system, the evaluation tool was developed based on a systematic review of literature in the area of distant education and ITV. The literature review identified four potential areas of concern: 1) technology, 2) confidence in the system, 3) faculty delivery of the content and, 4) resources at each site. Each of the four areas included multiple sub-components. Benchmark values were determined to be 80% or greater positive responses to each of the four areas and the individual sub-components. The tool was administered each semester during the didactic phase of the curriculum. Results: Data obtained identified site-specific issues (i.e., technology access, student engagement, laboratory access, and resources), as well as issues common at both sites (i.e., projection screen size). More specifically, students at the parent location did not have adequate access to printers or laboratory space, and students at the distant campus did not have adequate access to library resources. The evaluation tool identified that both sites requested larger screens for visualization of the faculty. The deficiencies were addressed by replacing printers, including additional orientation for students on library resources and increasing the screen size of the Telepresence system. When analyzed over time, the issues identified in the tool as deficiencies were resolved. Conclusions: Utilizing the tool allowed adjustments of the Telepresence delivery system in a timely manner resulting in successful implementation of an entire curriculum at a distant campus.

Keywords : physician assistant, telepresence technology, distant education, assessment

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