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### To Be Or Not To Be: That Isn't the Questions! An Empirical Look at On-Line Vs. Traditional Brick and Mortar Courses at the University Level

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Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Association of Collegiate Marketing Educators (2008)

TO BE OR NOT TO BE: THAT ISN'T THE QUESTION! AN EMPIRICAL LOOK AT ON-LINE VS. TRADITIONAL  
BRICK AND MORTAR COURSES AT THE UNIVERSITY LEVEL

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics (U.S. Department of Education 2007) reports that a 2001 study found that 55% of all 2-year and 4- year institutions offered college-level, credit-granting distance education courses at either the undergraduate or graduate level. In sum, on-line degrees and programs are already a part of the educational culture. With that in mind, the focus of the study reported in this manuscript was the empirical investigation of student perceptions of on-line courses at the college/university level. The researchers sought to provide information related to the following broad research question: *"What perceptions do students hold regarding on-line courses as part of the university curriculum?"*

The survey research format was used in the study and all data were collected from students enrolled in a variety of university business courses. The items included in each section of the questionnaire were derived from the relevant literatures and focused, in part, on the areas of on-line vs. traditional course formats (Karthia 2006; Sitzmann et. al. 2006); the impact of online courses on group projects (Williams and Duray 2006); quality of instruction and student preferences regarding on-line course offerings (Bressler and Bressler 2007).

Participants were volunteer university students enrolled in a variety of business courses at a large state university located in the Midwestern United States. A total of 801 students participated in the study. Of those participants, approximately 25% had completed at least one on-line university course.

Data analyses revealed that for the most part, students did not hold polarized opinions regarding the on-line courses they had completed. Mean responses indicated relatively neutral overall attitudes toward the on-line course experiences but more than 30% of the sampled students held negative perceptions of on-line courses.

Students who had completed one or more on-line courses at the university level more strongly agreed that on-line course enrollments were due to time or location limitations that prevented students from enrolling in traditional brick and mortar courses. Students who had not completed one or more on-line courses more strongly agreed that on-line courses make it easier for students to cheat on exams. The analyses also showed marginally significant differences between the two groups regarding their perceptions of whether or not the number of on-line Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Association of Collegiate Marketing Educators (2008) 299 courses a student could complete should be

limited and the degree of career preparation provided by on-line courses. ANOVA procedures also revealed marginal gender differences regarding the difficulty of on-line courses, the learning opportunity provided by on-line courses, and on-line courses as a good educational choice. Analyses revealed further gender differences in the level learning and job opportunities provided by on-line courses.

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