CSU Student Technology Survey Executive Summary

Conducted for

The CSU Chancellor's Office

Prepared by:

The Social and Behavioral Research Institute
California State University, San Marcos
San Marcos, California 92096
760/750-3288

Study Team:

Richard T. Serpe, Ph.D.; Director
Allen J. Risley, M.A.; Assistant Director
Michael D. Large, Ph.D.; Study Director
Lori A. Ballwey, M.A.; Survey Study Director
Michael M. Harrod, B.A.; Research Assistant
Sandra M. Martinez, B.A.; Research Assistant

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Executive Summary

The 1998 CSU Student Technology Survey was commissioned by the CSU Technology Steering Committee during the Fall of 1998. The survey was designed to provide CSU system-wide data on students' attitudes, behavior and opinions regarding use of computer technology for academic purposes.

Three thousand one hundred seven (3,107) students from twenty campuses[1] were interviewed between October 26, 1998 and January 26, 1999 by student interviewers employed by the Social and Behavioral Research Institute at California State University San Marcos.

As a follow-up to the survey, four focus groups were held at locations around the state (CSU Fullerton, CSU Hayward, CSU Northridge, CSU Sacramento) with students representing each of the twenty campuses. The focus groups have allowed researchers to explore certain themes from the survey data in more depth, and gauge student reaction to some proposed configurations of the student Personal Information Resource Kit. A detail analysis from the focus groups is presented in the CSU Technology Focus Group Report.

The following points provide a summary of the survey project's design and findings.

Study Design

- Approximately one hundred and fifty (150) students from each of twenty CSU campuses were interviewed. A quota sampling method was used to ensure that the sample from each campus would represent the class level and racial diversity of each campus. Profiles of the student population[2] of each campus were used to set quotas by characteristics. Student class level (lower division, upper division, post-baccalaureate) and race/ethnicity were used to determine the quota amounts. For example, if 8% of the student population at a campus were lower division African American students, we interviewed 8 students in this category for each 100 students we interviewed at that campus. The result is a representative profile of students for each campus.

[1]Three CSU campuses were not included in the survey, because of the small size of their student bodies: Monterey Bay, Channel Islands and the Maritime Academy.

[2]Provided by CSU Analytic Studies.

- The Cooperation Rate for the survey was 86.4%. The cooperation rate represents the proportion of all cases that completed an interview (n=3,107), out of the total of all cases that either agreed or refused to complete an interview (n=3,597). This means that roughly nine out of ten students who were asked to participate in the survey agreed to do so. A total of 37,360 telephone calls were made in the course of completing these interviews.

- The margin of error for the CSU system-wide sample is +/- 1.75 percentage points. According to statistical theory, 95% of the time results from the entire student population would be within 1.75 percentage points of the results from this survey. Because of the smaller number of cases collected at each campus, single-campus estimates are less stable. The margin of error for each of the campus samples is +/- 8 percentage points.

- Cases were weighted according to campus size to provide estimates for the overall CSU student population. Data presented in the final project report will include both unweighted frequency counts and percentages and weighted percentages. Percentages reported in this executive summary reflect the weighted data.

Results

General Computer Use

- Computer use is a significant part of the CSU student experience. More than two thirds (68.8%) of students use computers every day, and more than 90% of the CSU students use computers at least weekly. About a third of the students (34.5%) who reported weekly computer use spend 11 or more hours per week using a computer. When students were asked the proportion of their computer use that was academically-related, the median response was 75%.

- More than 80% of students reported that they used a computer at their home. Two-thirds (63%) of students reported using computers on campus regularly, while about one-quarter (28.7%) use a computer at their place of employment.

- CSU students think of themselves as skilled in, and enjoy computer use. Almost all (about 99%) of the students said they possessed at least minimal computer skills, and three-quarters (74.8%) consider themselves to have good or excellent skills. More than 90% of students indicated that they enjoy using computers.

- Students also regard computers as being very important tools. About three-quarters (75.7%) of students rated computers as “very important” for completing course work and achieving

educational goals. Three-quarters (75.3%) of students also rated computers as "very important" for their future employment goals.

Use of Computers in Class

- Many students take classes that require technology use. Students were asked about instructionally-related technology use in the past two terms (semesters or quarters). More than half the students (54.9%) had a class in the last two terms that required regular use of a computer in the classroom. About 90% of the students have been required to use a computer regularly outside of class. More than half (58.6%) have been required to use e-mail as part of a class, use the Internet for class assignments (71.3%) or use a computer to access library resources (68.9%).

- About three-quarters (74.9%) of the CSU students rated their course-related computer experience as "very good" or "excellent." Very few students (1.9%) rated their course-related computer experiences as "poor."

Campus Computing Services

- Campus computing services are heavily used, and students are generally satisfied with the aspects of the computing services about which they were asked. About half of the students (45.8%) use computing services on campus almost every day or weekly. More than half the students asked gave ratings of either "good" or "excellent" when asked about: availability of computers in on-campus labs (54.1%), the convenience of the hours that computer labs are open on campus (64.2%), and the quality of consulting assistance or the help desk at on-campus labs (46.8%).

Computer Applications

- Students were asked how often they use a variety of types of computer software applications. Use of software applications is rank-ordered according to the proportion using applications "frequently": word processing (84.3%), Internet browsers (61.8%), e-mail (61.7%), spreadsheets (21.1%), presentation graphics (14%), databases (11.8%).

- The majority of the students felt they had good computer skills. When asked about their skill in using personal computers, about three quarters (75.3%) of the students said they had "good" or

"excellent" skills compared to other students. Similarly, about three quarters (76.9%) of the students said that compared to other students they had "good" or "excellent" skills in using the Internet.

Computer Access

- Almost all the CSU students have computer access. About 85% of the students own an operational computer. Of those who don't own an operational computer, two thirds (66.9%) indicated that they had access to a computer for their class assignments outside the university.

- The typical system that CSU students use is an IBM-compatible machine (74.5%). It is also usually a desktop computer (84.5%). Four-fifths (81.5%) of the students have a modem for their computer, and nearly two-thirds (59.7%) of those with modems use them to connect to campus resources and the Internet.

- One-third (36.1%) of the students indicated they were "somewhat" or "very likely" to buy a computer in the next year. Most (80.3%) of these people indicated they were more likely to buy an IBM-compatible system. Two-thirds (65%) indicated that they were more likely to get a desktop system rather than a laptop.

- Students were read a description of a CSU system-sponsored computer lease/purchase plan. They were then asked if they would purchase a university-sponsored desktop computer as described for less than $1000. More than three quarters (77.8%) of the students said they would be interested in buying such a computer, more than half (51.7%) expressed interest in a lease plan.

Access to Technology Resources

- Students were asked about the importance of four types of technology resources: a software suite, local dial-in access to campus and the Internet, a 24-hour telephone help desk, and web-based computer training programs. Students were asked whether they felt each of these resources were important for them personally, and for the entire student body. Generally, CSU students regard access to these resources as quite important.

- *Software Suite* - More than half the students (52.5%) think having a CSU-standard software suite available for their own computer is "very important," and most students (80.7%) think it is either "somewhat" or "very important." Almost two thirds of the students (62.6%) said it was

"very important" for the entire student body to have this type of software. Nearly all (95.3%) of the students said a software suite was either "somewhat" or "very important" to the entire student body.

- *Local Dial-in Campus and Internet Access* - The majority of students (60.7%) said that dial-in access to campus electronic resources and the Internet was "very important," and most (90.1%) said it was either "somewhat" or "very important." Two thirds of the students (68%) regard dial-in access as "very important" for the entire student body, and nearly all (97.2%) of the students thought it was either "somewhat" or "very important."

- *24-hour Help Desk* - About half of the students (50.9%) think that a 24-hour help desk to provide answers to questions about software, hardware, and access to network resources would be "very important" to them personally, and most (82.8%) students think it is either "somewhat" or "very important." Almost two thirds of the CSU students (63.6%) view the 24-hour help desk as "very important" for the general student body, and nearly all (95.1%) regard it as either "somewhat" or "very important."

- *Web-based Computer Training Programs* - Nearly half of students (43.7%) view web-based computer training as "very important" to them personally, with another one-third (35.14%) of the students seeing it as "somewhat important" to them. As with the other resources, web-based computer training was considered more important for the general student body than it was for the individual respondent. Over half of the students (61.7%) believe that web-based training is "very important" for the general student body, while nearly all (96%) believe that it is either "somewhat" or "very important."

Payment for Technology Resources

- Students were asked: "If these services and resources were available as a package, how much would you be willing to pay, per month?" About 15% of the students indicated they were willing to pay $20 per month or more, and half (47.3%) of the students said they would pay $15 per month or more. Nearly three-quarters (71.2%) said that they would be willing to pay $10 or more per month.

- Very little relationship was found between the amount students were willing to pay for computing services and resources and their financial status. Students who received financial aid were, on the average willing to pay slightly higher amounts for these resources, as were students who reported receiving financial support from family members. These differences, however, were very small.

- Students were also asked: "Would you be willing to pay a student technology fee to address a portion of the costs of these services and resources?" Almost two thirds of the students (65.2%) indicated that they would be willing to pay a student technology fee to help make these resources available. Students receiving financial aid were more supportive of a student technology fee than those not receiving financial aid.

Focus Group Summary

- The findings from the four focus groups by in large confirm the results of the telephone survey.

- Support of the student computing initiatives was greater among those students who have access to fewer computing resources and among those students who currently have lower levels of technical expertise.