

# Chapter VII

## Exploring Student Motivations for IP Teleconferencing in Distance Education

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter explores the various motivations students have for engaging in both origination site and distant site teleconferenced sections of an information systems course, enabled by Internet protocol (IP)-based teleconferencing. While in the past many distance learning courses have been asynchronous Web-based offerings, technology and cost advantages now available through IP teleconferencing provide for synchronous course offerings that can serve several physical locations at the same time while retaining the converged media advantages of Internet delivery. To better understand how this new capability can be incorporated into future curricula, it is important to understand student motivations for participating in IP teleconferencing as part of a lecture section for a class delivered across geographically dispersed collegiate campuses. Theoretical perspectives of student motivations for engaging in distance education are examined, and the results of three specific studies of student motivations for IP teleconferencing and multimedia-enhanced instruction are examined and discussed.*

### OVERVIEW

Distance education (DE) is a popular delivery modality in view of the cost effectiveness and operational efficiencies it brings to course delivery (Allen, Mabry, Mattrey, Bourhis, Titsworth, & Burrell, 2004). This is one reason that prompts

administrators to learn more about the economic efficiency of various DE alternatives, such as teleconferencing, computer-mediated delivery, and hybrid mixtures of models (Chang, 2004). The use of Web-based technologies to both supplement and replace traditional lecture courses has become the popular solution from the administra-

tive perspective (Berger & Topol, 2001; Casini & Vincino, 2003) and some say that Web-based asynchronous instruction is now the leading DE delivery mode (Chang, 2004). Even so, it appears that asynchronous learning approaches that include no lecture sessions are not as successful as initially expected (Ginsberg & Foster, 1998; Hara, 1998; Johnson, 2000; Wilkes, Simon, & Brooks, 2006). The question is: What are the key benefits of teleconference-based distance learning as opposed to the strictly computer-based asynchronous approaches?

To help answer this question, three specific studies concerning teleconference-based DE are reported and reviewed here to clarify the nature of student motivations and responses to teleconferencing and technology-mediated support in DE courses, providing an empirical basis for discussing critical considerations in the choice to expand live instruction course delivery with teleconference extension and with Web-based course supplements. Each of these studies was conducted independently, but the same introductory information systems course was used for all three studies.

One empirical perspective develops the concept of media uses and gratifications for distance education, particularly demonstrating the role of social motivations for engaging in teleconferenced DE courses. Another perspective examines converged Web and teleconference technologies in the development of multisection distance education course offerings. This draws upon work of Newcomer and Stafford (2001) on dual-classroom pedagogy, as adapted in Stafford and Simon's (2002) innovative instruction study, and is developed here as a case-based demonstration of the "high-technology adjunct" approach to DE. The empirical discussion concludes with the report of a study that examines differential motivations of teleconferencing students at geographically dispersed sites, using Internet protocol (IP) teleconferencing. As these three exploratory studies are compared, some common understand-

ings begin to appear. The chapter is organized in the following manner. First, theoretical perspectives concerning student motivations in DE are discussed. Then the results of three exploratory studies are presented. The first study deals with social gratifications for teleconferenced courses, the second study discusses a new technology-enabled educational opportunity called "the high-tech adjunct," and the final study examines student preferences for distant and local teleconference sections. Following those three studies, a summary and conclusions are provided.

## **THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES**

Asynchronous Web-based delivery of lectures is popular with administrators due to cost considerations, but for students, the lack of live interaction with instructors in strictly asynchronous courses is challenging when frequent clarifications or elaborations on course material are required, as frequently may be experienced in technical courses (Flowers, Pascarella, & Pierson, 2000; Gloster & Doss, 2000). Even so, there is a case to be made for promoting the use of teleconferencing technology in the classroom, given the beneficial influences of hands-on experience in preparing students for future high-tech careers (Alavi, 1994). Yet, when considering all technologically-mediated approaches to course delivery, students might not accept Web-mediated asynchronous courses as comparable substitutes to live instruction, and one typically sees higher dropout rates and lower retention rates in asynchronous Web-based classes than in traditional lecture-format classes (Brewer, 2004).

Live interaction instruction makes important contributions to the education process (Abler & Wells, 2005). These benefits come in the form of social presence in technology-mediated courses, reducing alienation, and providing participants with the sense and benefits of a traditional classroom or seminar room (He, Zhang, & Cheng,

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