The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly of Distance Learning

**Good** - There are many obvious advantages in using distance education such as:

- If a student works full-time or has limited access to an institution he or she can easily access the class anytime and virtually from anywhere
- No commute, fighting for parking spots, & less time away from home
- More efficient use of one’s time
- Virtually anyone can use it - reaching a much larger audience than traditional methods
- Classrooms will be less crowded
- Lessen the chance of a schedule conflict between classes
- Supporting more environmentally friendly technology by decreasing the use of paper and photocopying - everything is nearly electronic

**Bad** - Although there are many advantages there are disadvantages as well:

- Less one-on-one interaction between student and teacher
- Less interaction with other students
- Delayed feedback from peers and instructors
- Lack of direct assistance and explanation from instructors
- Easy to fall behind if student does not have time management skills
- Need access or to own a computer, internet & specific software - may not be enough room available in computer lab
- Harder to receive feedback if the faculty member is busy - can’t just go to their office hours
- Pay online technology fee for registering each distance education course
- The user needs to be somewhat computer savvy
- Can be challenging when submitting assignments electronically

**Ugly** - Although distance education does free up time, like any college course there is still work to be done. Distance education is often promoted as an easy way to learn, which it is easier in the sense of not commuting and easy to fit into a schedule but the fact is a student who is married, has a child, & works full-time is very busy. Sometimes distance education is conceived as a fix-all solution, but this is not always the case.

- Expensive to train new instructors on how to use distance education
- Difficult to motivate students for learning
- Some instructors have a negative attitude toward online technology, this could be because they are temporarily removed from their comfort zone
- Instructors will have to re-design a course to fit online learning objectives
- Instructor cannot receive visual feedback as well compared to traditional teaching
- Different teaching practices from traditional classroom environment
- Hard to stop students from cheating during quizzes or examinations

Sources:

**COLLEGE DISTANCE EDUCATION COURSES: EVALUATING BENEFITS AND COSTS FROM INSTITUTIONAL, FACULTY AND STUDENTS’ PERSPECTIVES**