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Students With Disabilities Taking Online Courses at Rural University: A Quantitative Investigation

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STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES TAKING ONLINE COURSES
AT RURAL UNIVERSITY: A QUANTITATIVE INVESTIGATION

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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This quantitative investigation explored the enrollment and success of students with disabilities taking online courses at Rural University as compared to their peers without disabilities. As online education continues to become more popular and sought out by students who might not otherwise attend college, the venue of online education has been scrutinized to determine its effectiveness as compared to traditional classrooms. This study evaluated the enrollment trends and student performance in online courses at Rural University over a time period from 2005-2011.

The results indicated that while students without disabilities continue to increase their participation in online courses, students with disabilities are following similar patterns. Success, as measured by GPA for both groups, was higher for online courses than for face-to-face courses and was statistically significant for students without disabilities. Factors of age, gender, ethnicity and credit hours achieved were all found to be significant as having an effect on the success in online courses for students with and without disabilities. In addition, having previously earned credits in higher education was determined to be predictive of a higher GPA for both groups.

This study has provided a basis for future research in the area of online education for students with disabilities. Having data that shows students with disabilities demonstrates a higher level of performance, as measured by GPA, in online courses

provides viable avenues for success that may not have been considered in the past.

Although the level was not found to be statistically significant, it provides an alternative approach to higher education for students with disabilities that can be further explored.