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Title

Opportunity costs associated with the provision of student services : a case study of web-based lecture technology / Ross H. Taplin ; Rosemary Kerr ; Alistair M. Brown

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Abstract

Universities aim to provide services that are not only beneficial to students but also efficient relative to possible alternative services. Using opportunity cost, this study considers staff and student perceptions of the usefulness and valuation of web-based lecture technology (WBLT). It reveals that a quarter of students did not use WBLT while many staff members thought WBLT had a negative impact on their face-to-face teaching. Further, over a third of students sampled said they would not be affected if WBLT were not made available and many staff members felt constrained by WBLT technology. Some staff members spent a lot of time preparing WBLT while others eschewed the technology altogether. Nevertheless, a relatively small number of students place enormous value on WBLT, as do some staff, even if only simple audio of lectures are provided. The academic policy implications of this study suggest that university provision of WBLT could take into account the opportunity cost of WBLT use as a valuation-basis, possibly recovering costs through extra fees. This

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would allow for improved decision-making by university administrators and facilitate a move towards a useful measurement basis of WBLT. A wider academic policy implication is to consider whether all universities should produce and deliver WBLT at all and to what extent it should encourage staff to develop enhanced WBLT. Provision of sophisticated WBLT or any other service for students bears an opportunity cost in terms of less preparation by staff for face-to-face lessons or other effective teaching or research.(HRK / Abstract übernommen) Taplin, Ross H.. E-Mail: r.taplin@curtin.edu.au