

# The Impact of Online Learning on the Students and Faculty at Valencia College

By: Rachel Pienkosz

After the COVID-19 pandemic, many things about the world have changed, and learning is no exception. When all classes shifted to online learning, Valencia students and professors faced unprecedented challenges.

In March 2020, the first statewide lockdown order was initiated, and in-person classes at Valencia College were halted. Suddenly, everything was different. Valencia College moved over 4,000 courses online and moved all staff to remote work environments (Plans for fall 2020 Valencia College, 2020).

Many professors had never taught online classes before, and some students had never learned online, so it was a great transition for everyone involved. Professors and students juggling 3-5 classes at a time (and for full-time professors, sometimes 5-7 courses) who were learning online for the first time experienced everything from confusion to troubleshooting issues. Some professors had never even used Canvas (the online learning system used by Valencia College) beyond grading prior to the pandemic.

With the increase in online learning, Valencia College professors started facing challenges with student participation. A study by Brookings.edu stated, “New evidence from 2020 also suggests that the switch to online course-taking in the pandemic led to declines in course completion.” (Cellini, 2022).

Justin Stone, a professor of Humanities at Valencia College, said, “It takes a dedicated kind of student to be successful online.”

Two major components of online learning are the self-regulation of a schedule and the lack of a ‘hands-on’ aspect in a classroom. This is a hurdle for a lot of students, specifically those with learning disabilities.

Valencia College student Vanessa Stewart, 20, said, “I struggle with severe ADHD, and learning online was challenging for certain classes like sciences and mathematics. I’m a hands-on learner, and doing experiments or learning new math concepts on a computer was extremely difficult.”

With time, online learning has become familiar and easier for everyone. Valencia College records (provided by Brandon McKelvey, Valencia College VP of Technology, Research, and Analytics) reported that by Fall 2021, 73.6% of classes were being conducted online compared to the 96%

of online classes in Fall 2020. While some students and professors still chose to stay online, those anxious to get back in a classroom were able to have those sessions.

Dr. Susan Dunn, Dean of Behavioral and Social Sciences of Valencia West Campus, said, “I think students have become better online learners [...], especially those who take a mixture of class modalities.”

As of Spring 2023, 62.9% of classes are offered online, and 18.6% are offered onsite (McKelvey).

Now that the effects of the pandemic are decreasing and the adjustment to education’s “new normal” has taken effect, online learning has become less of a struggle. The Valencia community was able to figure out how to take a complication and adapt it into an asset.

## Sources

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Dr. Susan Dunn, (407) 582-5549, [sdunn18@valenciacollege.edu](mailto:sdunn18@valenciacollege.edu)

Justin Stone, (407) 582-2052, [jstone2@valenciacollege.edu](mailto:jstone2@valenciacollege.edu)

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Vanessa Stewart, (407) 922-2949, [vstewart@mail.valenciacollege.edu](mailto:vstewart@mail.valenciacollege.edu)