

# IR&P Research Brief

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## 2004 Digital Divide Survey Results

In spring and summer 2004, the Digital Divide Research Committee developed and implemented the Hartnell College Digital Divide Study through a focus group series, paper surveys, and an online survey. The study was conducted in order to better understand the technological skills, barriers, and needs of Hartnell College's employees and students. The results are intended to provide information that will assist Hartnell decisionmakers in providing better technology, training, and support ser-

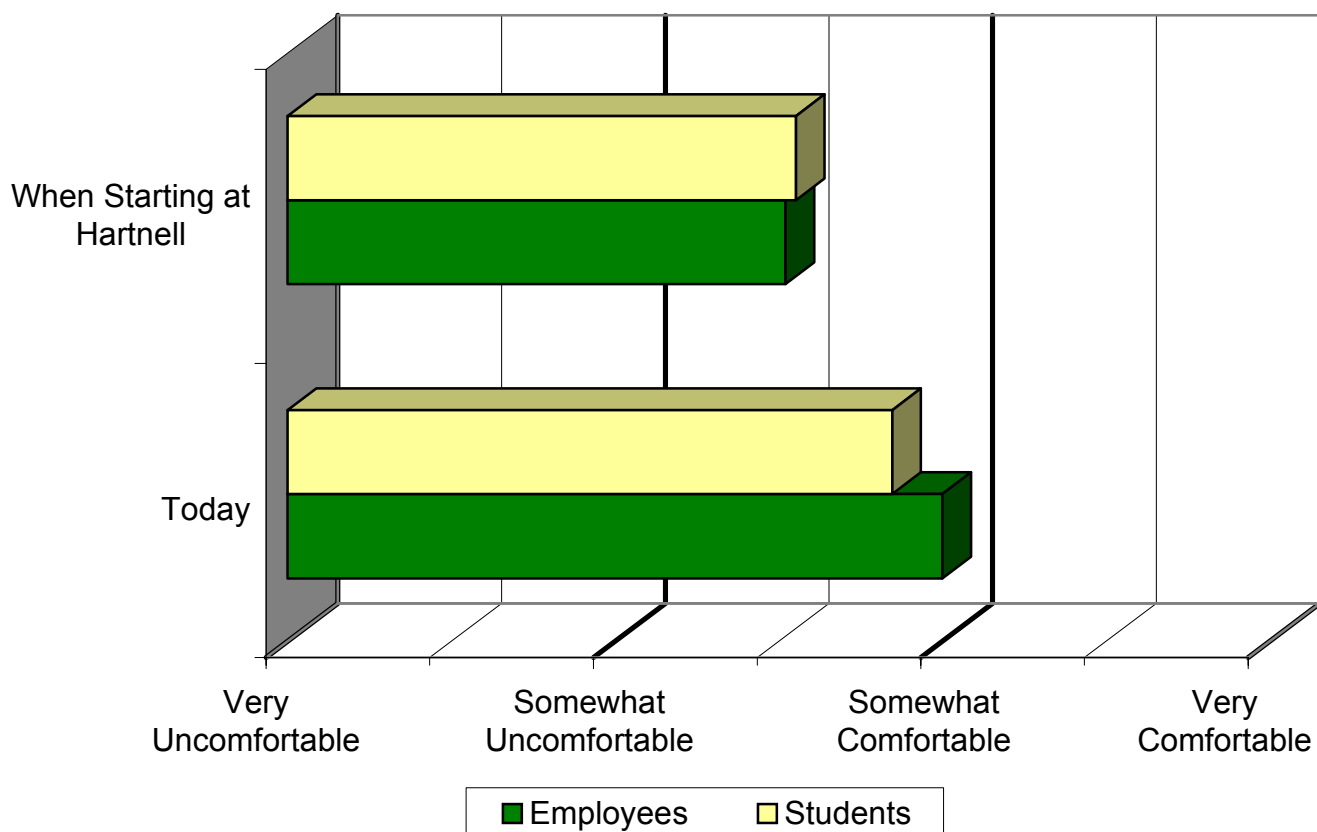
vices for students and employees; and in improving distance-learning programs.

### Who completed the surveys?

Completed questionnaires were returned by 205 employees (36% of all faculty, classified staff, and managers) and 740 students. The typical student respondent is a 25-29 year old Latina whose primary language is English and primary educational goal is to transfer to a four-year college or university; who is a first gen-

eration college student and is not eligible for financial aid; and has attended Hartnell College for one to three years. In addition, she has a computer and access to the Internet at home; is somewhat comfortable with using technology; and is moderately satisfied with technology at Hartnell. She also has never previously enrolled in a distance-learning course and is somewhat unlikely to enroll in a distance-learning course in the future.

Graph 1. Overall Technology Comfort Level Over Time by Group



**What are respondents' technology comfort and skill levels?**

One of the positive findings of the survey results was that both students and employees reported increased technology comfort and skill levels, as shown in Graphs 1 and 2. Survey results show that higher proportions of respondents are comfortable with technology and possess moderate technology skills or higher now compared to when they first started at Hartnell.

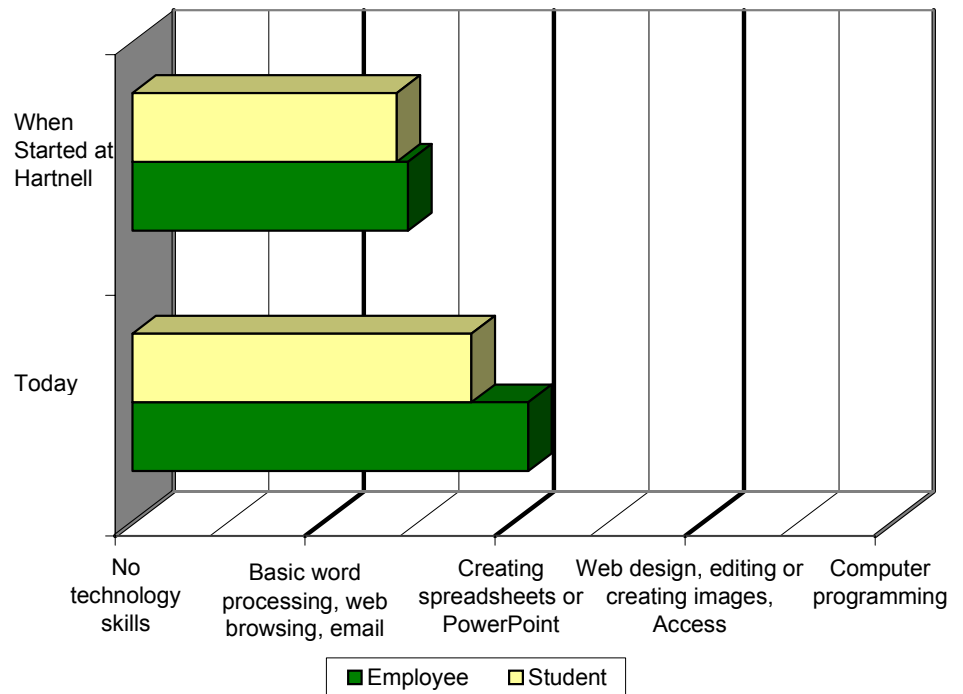
**How do students and faculty view distance learning?**

Only 14% of the student respondents have taken a distance-learning course and only 16% of the faculty respondents have taught a distance-learning course. Of these respondents, approximately two-thirds of the students were satisfied with their overall distance learning experience, while less than one-half of the faculty were satisfied with their distance learning teaching experience. In addition, most students and faculty indicated that it is unlikely that they will take or teach, respectively, a distance-learning course when also given the option of a face-to-face or hybrid course (See Graph 3).

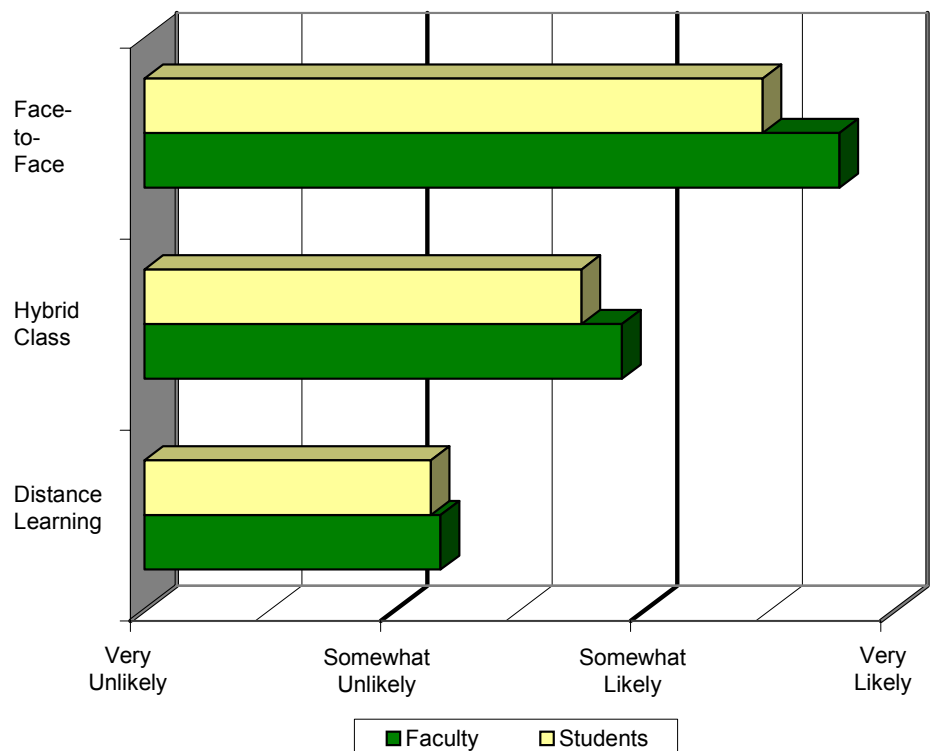
**Are students and employees satisfied with technology at Hartnell College?**

When asked about which technological service they were most satisfied, the largest proportion of employee respondents stated that they were most satisfied with technical assistance and training, access to the Internet and college network, and equipment and support provided by the Faculty Resource Center

**Graph 2. Average Technology Skills Rating Over Time**



**Graph 3. Likelihood of Taking/Teaching Courses Using Different Delivery Modes by Group**



(FRC). Conversely, employees specified that they were most frustrated with support for purchasing, learning to use, and maintaining technology; old and unreliable computer hardware; and difficulty in accessing or slow response of the network or computers. Students were most satisfied with access to the Internet and college network, and were most frustrated by having an insufficient number of computers available for student use (See Graphs 4 and 5).

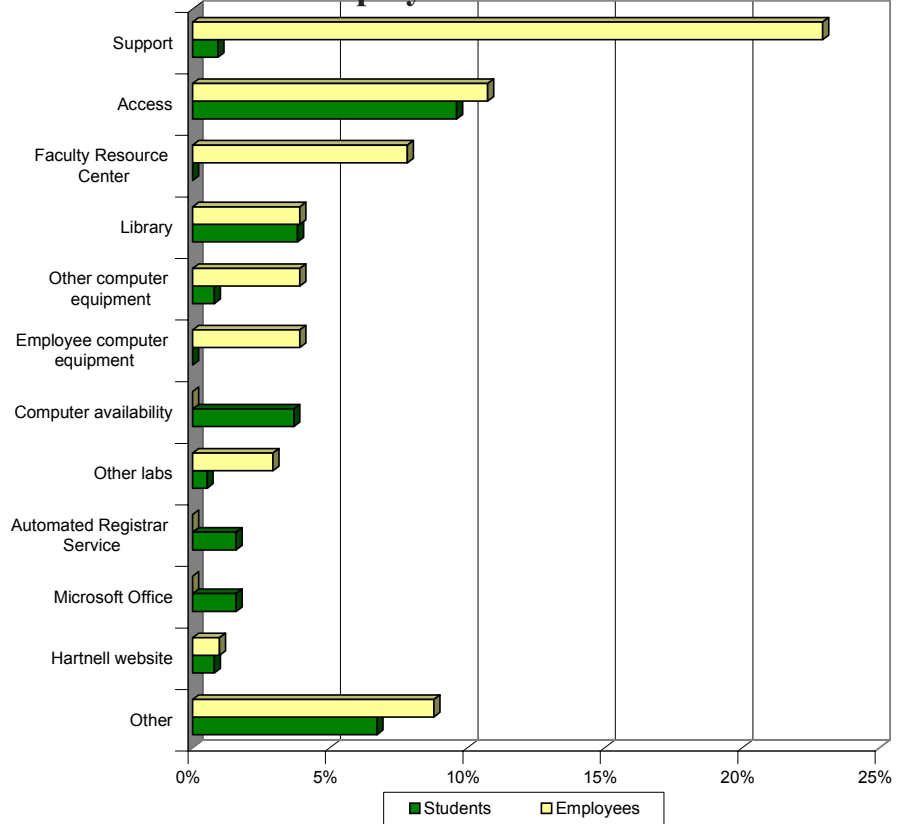
**How can Hartnell better meet technology needs?**

When asked how Hartnell College can better serve their technology needs, employees most often mentioned providing additional training, including Microsoft Office and web design; upgrading computer hardware and software; and increasing the availability of support staff. Students indicated that the college could better meet their needs by providing more computers and by upgrading computer hardware and software (See Graph 6).

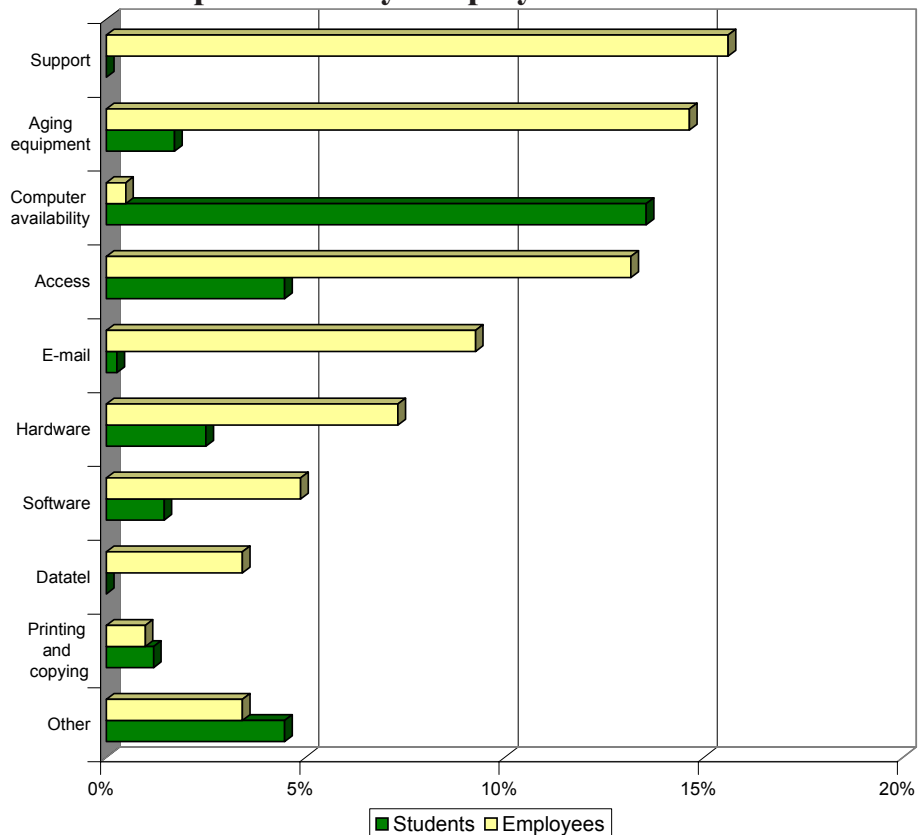
**Does a digital divide exist at Hartnell College?**

Survey results show that while the vast majority of employees and students have access to technology and use it for both work/school and personal purposes, a “digital divide” still exists between some student sub-groups. Specifically, financial aid eligible students are less likely to have access to technology at home than are non-financial aid eligible students; and older students are less likely to use technology than are younger students. In addition, Latinos and students whose primary language is Spanish are less likely

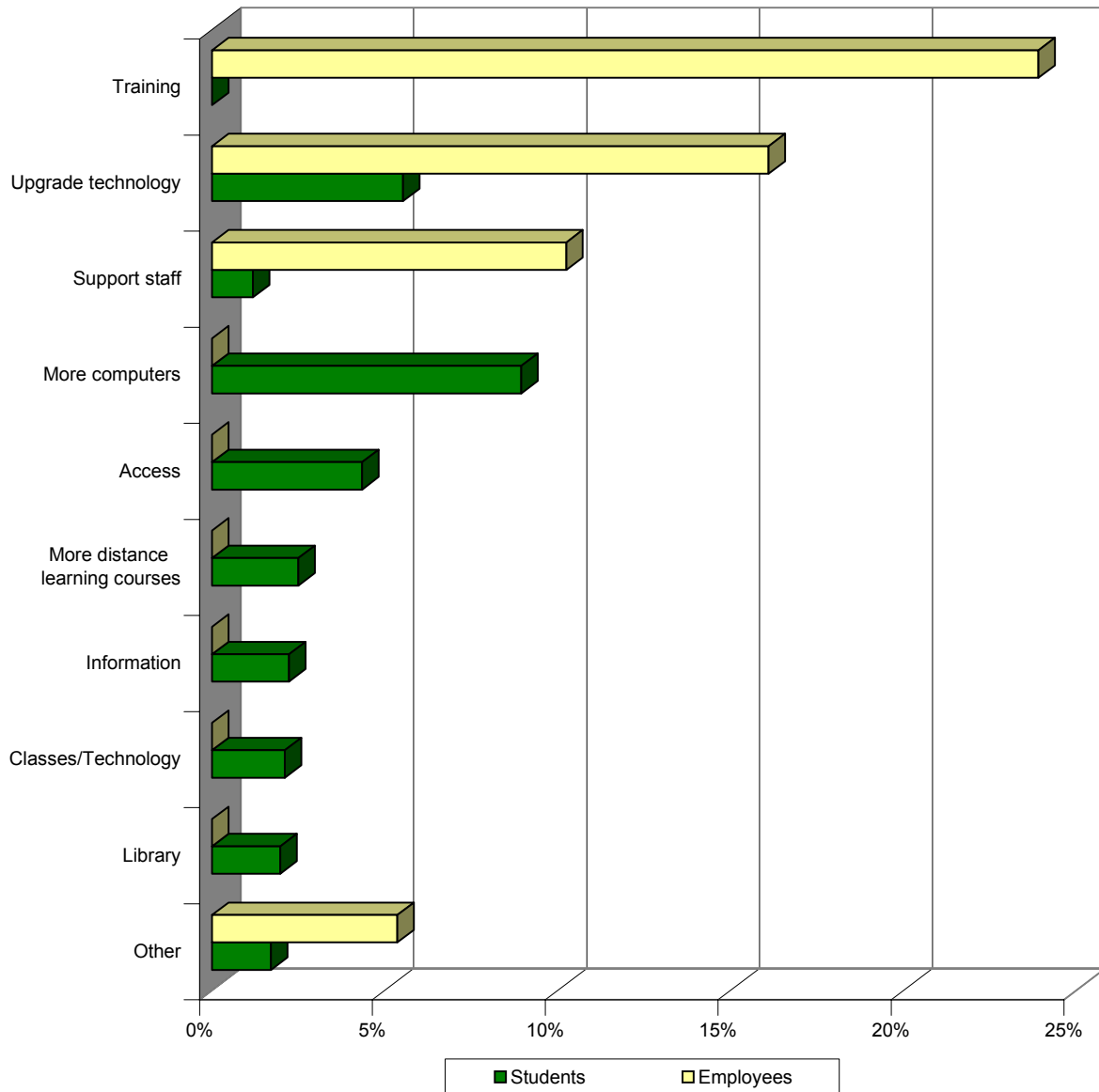
**Graph 4. Technological Service Providing Greatest Satisfaction to Employees and Students at Hartnell**



**Graph 5. Greatest Technological Frustration Experienced by Employees and Students**



Graph 6. How Hartnell Can Better Serve Employee and Student Technology Needs



to have access to technology or use technology than are students from other ethnic groups and students whose primary language is English or another language.

However, survey results also show that Hartnell College has helped to reduce this digital divide. When they

first enrolled at Hartnell, a significantly lower proportion of students who are Latino, older, first generation college students or whose primary language is Spanish had basic technology skills than did students who are White, younger, are not first generation college students or

whose primary language is English. However, since these students have been enrolled at Hartnell, significant differences among subgroups related to basic technology skills have been eliminated, with the exception of differences between age groups.

**Research Brief** is a publication of the Institutional Research and Planning Office. More detailed information may be found in the **2004 Digital Divide Final Report**, which is available upon request. The report is also available on the web at: [www.hartnell.edu/irp/reports](http://www.hartnell.edu/irp/reports)

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