On Campus, Online and Off-site Students’ Attitudes towards University

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Introduction
The higher education sector is a rapidly growing industry in the United States and throughout the world, with enrollment and graduation rates growing significantly over the past ten years. In addition, the changing economy and reductions in government spending on education are forcing universities to adapt and become more competitive. Better understanding stakeholders’ experiences and the factors that contribute to the relationship between the university and community are important considerations in assessing how well the university is accomplishing its mission. Past research has shown that organizational identity is correlated with a wide range of attitudes, behaviors, and content variables. Mael and Ashforth (1992) found that organizational identification with alma mater was associated with: antecedents of organizational distinctiveness, organizational prestige, and absence of intraorganizational competition. In previous research, factors associated with membership of university graduates have commonly been investigated through small samples of students after graduation. The current study aimed to capture a more accurate representation of student experience, attitudes, and opinions before students graduate and compare on campus, online and off-site students’ attitudes towards the university.

Participants and Procedure
Participants (N = 6199, 62.5% women; M_<sub>age</sub> = 31.86, SD = 9.79) included Texas A&M University-Commerce students in the last semester before graduation. Participants indicated their racial/ethnic category as European American (57.9%), African American (17.3%), Hispanic (9.8%), Asian/South Pacific Islander (5.6%), Central Asian/Indian/Pakistani (3.3%), Arab/Middle Eastern (2%), multiracial (1.6%), other (1.3%), or Indigenous Peoples (1.2%). Participants completed measures regarding trust in the university, satisfaction with the university, and identification with the university. Unless noted otherwise, all measures used a 7-point Likert-type response scale, from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree.

Materials
Trust. Four items (“I trust A&M-Commerce,” “Texas A&M University-Commerce is fair and just to their students,” “Texas A&M University-Commerce can be relied on to keep its promises,” “Texas A&M University-Commerce has the ability to accomplish what they say they will do”) were adapted from research (Hon & Grunig, 1999, 2002, 2004) to assess trust in the university (α = .92).

Satisfaction. Two items (“I am happy with A&M-Commerce,” “Overall, I am satisfied with my experience at A&M-Commerce”) were adapted from prior research (Hon & Grunig, 1999, 2002, 2004) to assess satisfaction with the university (α = .92).

University identification. We adapted two items (“I strongly identify with Texas A&M University-Commerce,” “I often describe myself as an A&M-Commerce student”) from prior research (Reysen & Katzarska-Miller, 2013) to assess identification with the university (α = .88).

Results
The omnibus test was significant, F(3, 6194) = 89.50, p < .001, η<sup>2</sup> = .042. As shown in Table 1, online students rated their degree of trust significantly higher than both satellite and on campus students. Additionally, satellite students rated their degree of trust significantly higher than on campus students. Online students also rated their degree of satisfaction with the university significantly higher than both satellite and on campus students. On campus students and satellite students did not significantly differ in their degree of satisfaction with the university. Lastly, on campus students rated their degree of identification with the university significantly higher than both satellite and online students. Satellite students also rated their degree of identification higher than online students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>On Campus</th>
<th>Online</th>
<th>Satellite</th>
<th>F(2, 6196)</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>η&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>5.41 (.30)</td>
<td>5.78 (1.09)</td>
<td>5.51 (1.27)</td>
<td>53.89</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
<td>.017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>5.64 (1.35)</td>
<td>5.89 (1.17)</td>
<td>5.65 (1.35)</td>
<td>24.03</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
<td>.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification</td>
<td>5.26 (1.49)</td>
<td>4.83 (1.54)</td>
<td>4.99 (1.58)</td>
<td>48.69</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
<td>.015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Means with different subscripts are significantly different (p < .05).