INTRODUCTION

The advent of the Internet has transformed the way people work, shop, play, and access education. This report examines CSM student Internet connectivity as indicated by the proportion of students voluntarily providing email contact information. Email account information is currently the only reliable indicator of Internet connectivity among CSM students.

Before examining CSM-specific data, it is important to review recent data on connectivity of Americans to the Internet, broadband services, and computers. As is well known, increasing numbers of Americans have integrated computer technologies into their daily lives and are using them in a variety of places and for a wide range of activities, especially in the realm of higher education. Recent national data on connectivity indicate the following:

- As of October 2003, the total number of U.S. Internet users: 150,000,000:
  - This figure represents 53% of the total U.S. population
- Proportion of U.S. households with Internet access:
  - 1998 – 26%
  - 2001 – 50%
  - 2002 – 64%
- The rate of growth of Internet use in the U.S. is approximately 2 million new users per month
- Nearly 75% of all Americans—204 million individuals—use computers:
  - Nearly 95% of children between the ages of 5 and 17 use computers
  - 80% of 14-17 year olds and 70% of 10-13 year olds use the Internet
- Those who have been the least traditional users—the poor, elderly, and some ethnic groups—are currently becoming the fastest adopters of computer technologies:
  - Between 1999 and 2003, Internet usage among households earning less than $25,000 per year has been increasing at a rate of nearly 50% per year

Figure 1
Proportion of CSM Students Using Email
Fall 2000 - Fall 2003
In contrast, the rate of increase among households earning $75,000+ has increased at a rate of 13% per year.

A combination of declines in computer prices and increased Web access in academic, work, and public environments has made the Web more readily available to all people.

The highest rates of Internet connectivity and access to broadband (high speed) Internet services are in metropolitan areas:

- Unequal Internet connectivity—especially broadband services—are associated with rural/urban location, rather than income or race.

The expanding use of new technologies among the nation as a whole is reflected among CSM students. As the data presented below indicate, students are using these technologies in increasingly greater numbers each semester.

**FINDINGS**

It is important to note that the figures provided underestimate the number of students utilizing email accounts. For reasons of privacy, many individuals are reluctant to provide email information. (Email account information is not mandatory in order to complete a WebSMART application for admission.)

- Figure 1 displays the proportion of CSM students with email accounts for 4 consecutive Fall terms, Fall 2000 – Fall 2003:
  - The proportion of email users increased from 20% - 56% during this period of time.
  - Figure 2 displays the age distribution of CSM email users:
    - 18 years old or less: 53%
    - 19 – 21 years: 55%
    - 22 – 30 years: 60%
    - 31 – 40 years: 61%
    - 41 years or older: 52%
    - All Students: 56%
  - Figure 3 displays the educational objectives of CSM email users:
    - Acquire new job skills: 69%
    - Undecided/Other: 58%
    - Transfer: 55%
    - Degree/Certificate: 51%
    - Enhance current job skills: 49%
    - All Students: 56%

The above information is based upon total student enrollment for each term reported. A separate analysis of new, first time students enrolling indicates a greater proportion of students with email:

- Fall 2003 – 63%
- Spring 2004 – 76%
Figure 3
Proportion of CSM Students Using Email
By Educational Goal
Fall 2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Goal</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acquire New Job Skills</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided/Other</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree/Certif.</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhance Current Job Skills</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Students</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CONCLUSION

Few technologies have spread as rapidly, or become so widely used, as computers and the Internet. These information technologies have become common fixtures of everyday life for the vast majority of Americans. The rapidly growing use of computer technology among all Americans is reflected in the patterns of usage by CSM students. This trend has the potential to enrich our campus, facilitating our students’ educational success, and provide skill sets required to find employment.

All post-secondary institutions are rapidly becoming educational communities online. This does not mean, of course, that face-to-face, personal interaction has been superseded or will ever be replaced—especially in the classroom or counselor’s office. Rather, our students can increasingly take advantage of the information resources provided by the Internet, as well as develop the familiarity with new technologies essential to educational success. On a day-to-day level, our students can conduct nearly all of their educational affairs on-line. These include such things as: application; admission; orientation; course enrollment; engage in discourse with a professor, counselor, or other students; apply for financial aid and scholarships; request transcripts; and retrieve information regarding transfer or career opportunities.

This report has examined changes in the “connected” CSM student population. As of this writing, 85% of CSM students have enrolled in Spring 2004 courses via the Internet (WebSMART). The question arises about those students who either cannot or choose not to use the Internet. Is it because of lack of access, lack of skill, or concerns regarding confidentiality of providing personal information over the Internet? Future research will consider the “unconnected” CSM population.