Students In Conversation: Why We Take Online Classes - Or Not Episode 159

00:00:00 **Genesis**

When I was in classes, I was very introverted and through Zoom, I was able to come out of my shell because I was behind my screen. And I was actually able to tell people the things that I wanted to. Since then I've become very extroverted, and that is a thing of the past. But I'm very grateful for the pandemic because I was not as extroverted before.

00:00:23 **Christina**

Hi, I'm Christina Barsi.

00:00:24 **Sun**

And I'm Sun Ezzell, and you're listening to the Magic Mountie Podcast.

00:00:28 **Christina**

Our mission is to find ways to keep your ear to the ground, so to speak - by bringing to you the activities and events you may not have time to attend, the resources on campus you might want to know more about, the interesting things your colleagues are creating, and the many ways we can continue to better help and guide our students.

00:00:45 **Sun**

We bring to you the voices of Mt. SAC, from the classroom to completion.

00:00:49 **Speaker 1**

And I know I'm going to achieve my goals, and I know people here are going to help me to do it.

00:00:54 **Speaker 2**

She is a sociology major and she's transferring to Cal Poly Pomona. Psychology major, English major ...

00:01:00 **Sun**

From transforming part-time into full-time.

00:01:02 **Speaker 1**

I really liked the time that we spent with Julie about how to write a CV and a cover letter.

00:01:09 **Christina**

Or just finding time to soak in the campus.

00:01:12 **Speaker 1**

To think of the natural environment around us as a library.

00:01:15 **Christina**

We want to keep you informed and connected to all things Mt. SAC, but most importantly, we want to keep you connected with each other. I'm Christina Barsi, Mt. SAC alumni and producer of this podcast.

00:01:26 **Sun**

And I'm Sun Ezzell, Learning Assistance Faculty and Professional Learning Academy Coordinator.

00:01:31 **Christina**

And this is the Magic Mountie Podcast.

00:01:34 **Sun**

Welcome back to the Magic Mountie Podcast, I'm your host Sun Ezzell. Today's episode features Mt. SAC students in conversation with podcast host and Professor of Marine Geo Sciences and Geology, Tania Anders, about why they take online classes or not. Thanks for joining us to hear directly from students about how they're navigating their educational journeys. Enjoy!

00:01:57 **Tania**

Hi there, Mt. SAC, listeners of the Magic Mountie Magic Podcast. My name is Tania Anders, and I'm one of your hosts of the Magic Mountie Podcast. And I'm joined today by a couple of my students that have kindly offered to sit down and have a chat with me, about why they take online classes or why not, because some are still taking online classes and some are not.

00:02:19 **Tania**

So, during the pandemic, we all learned to take or teach online classes. And I wanted to know from my students what were some of the things that they liked about the online classes when we first transitioned to them, or also, what were some of the things that they didn't like.

00:02:35 **Tania**

First of all, thank you so much for being here with me. And when you speak for the first time, maybe you could also give us your name and what you're majoring in if you've already picked a major, and then maybe you can tell me a little bit about what you liked of the online classes when we first transitioned, because I'm guessing for many of you, that was the first time you took online classes.

00:02:57 **Tania**

So, I'll pass the microphone around. And if you could tell us a little bit about yourself, that'd be wonderful.

00:03:04 **Oceana**

Hello, my name is Oceana. And I would have to say that some of the things that I did like about the online classes, well, when we first transitioned to them, was the amount of flexibility that we had. And I still agree with that today. Even though during the pandemic, there wasn't so much to do, it still was nice that you could complete the assignments on your own time when you had the time.

00:03:26 **Genesis**

Hi, my name is Genesis and I'm a political science major here at Mt. SAC. I would have to agree with Oceana. I really did enjoy the flexibility when the world decided to transition back into somewhat normality, and we went back to in-person working. I also enjoyed the flexibility because I was able to work my school schedule around my work schedule and my day seemed to flow a lot better.

00:03:49 **Tabitha**

Hi, my name is Tabitha. I'm a history major here at Mt. SAC. I definitely agree that the flexibility was probably the most appealing aspect of online schooling, because it also helped me with my work. Like I could do Zoom at work. I could take a break and just have my computer with me, or you could even do it on your phone, which was really helpful.

00:04:07 **Tabitha**

And also like, because COVID, there were a lot of elderly people in my life who I had to take care of. And so, some people live far away. So, it just took a lot of stress from having to think like, "Oh, I have a class at three o'clock. I have to be at Mt. SAC at three o'clock." Versus "I have a Zoom at three o'clock, I just have to have internet connection" which is a lot more accessible nowadays.

00:04:26 **Cali**

I'm Cali, I'm a history and music major and I definitely agree. It was a lot less stressful to do the online classes. I felt a lot calmer and relaxed when I was doing my assignments instead of stressed because I had to do those and then go to campus, which took kind of a while. And it also was just easier for me to get to work and get all that done rather than having to have my schedules fight each other.

00:04:49 **Elijah**

Hi, this is Elijah and I am a biology major. I disagree. I don't like online classes because you don't get as much on hands help or a proper demonstration as in-person.

00:05:05 **Tania**

So, that was probably one of the challenges when we had to all transition to the online classes because of the pandemic. So, you mentioned a lot of advantages of when we had to transition, but were there also some disadvantages? Elijah already mentioned some of them, that you felt during the pandemic by having to transition to online classes?

00:05:26 **Genesis**

I would say that one of the disadvantages for myself, this was my first year in college and I felt like I missed out on that college experience. Now that I'm a bit older and I've been in school for a while, I have accepted that, but definitely, have a bit of regret not being able to meet people and talk to people.

00:05:48 **Cali**

I think that one of the disadvantages was definitely learning alongside some of the teachers and the frustrations of dealing with that, because sometimes, the assignment wouldn't publish correctly or the teachers weren't sure of how to get the information across to you. And so, a lot of it was just being told to read X chapter through X chapter, and then answer questions without really any sort of context or background.

00:06:11 **Cali**

So, that was definitely a little challenging at first, but once I noticed some of the teachers getting better at it, it did get better.

00:06:18 **Oceana**

I would have to say that one of the disadvantages, I would agree with Elijah, saying that you don't get as much hands-on experience, especially for those classes that can be a little more difficult for some people. I know math is a big struggle for a lot of students.

00:06:34 **Oceana**

And that was one of the classes that I was definitely trying to avoid while taking online classes, because I like having someone next to me that can show it. And it's a little more difficult to show step-by-step, what exactly they're doing through a computer screen?

00:06:50 **Tabitha**

I actually thought there were quite a few disadvantages to online teaching, like Cali said, the lack of structure in the teaching because a lot of teachers were first like transitioning themselves. So, it was really unorganized. And I feel like a lot of teachers allowed for more leeway and like flexibility in terms of not turning in your assignments. And that is a good thing. But also, I feel like in the long run, it put me at a disadvantage because my major's history.

00:07:14 **Tabitha**

And then also, cheating is so much easier online. And when you're like just trying to get your classes passed and you have life going at you and then your teachers are allowing for more flexibility as well, it kind of allows you to get away with it.

00:07:27 **Tabitha**

But then, you return back to on campus learning and you're kind of a little bit behind or you're like, "Oh, I should have learned that in my last class, but I don't remember it because I wasn't actually learning.

00:07:36 **Tabitha**

And then also, with the like hands-on teaching, like it's less personal. So, you don't really get to formulate like friendships or like just associations with people just like general associations where you can like know that this person's this major. So, if I ever need help with this class, they could help me.

00:07:52 **Tabitha**

It's less personal. And also, I feel like it leaves more room for you to not want to communicate with your teacher because you don't know them. It's not personal, you're only talking to them through a computer. So, when you're struggling, you don't feel like you can go to them for help. So, you kind of struggle in silence more often than not.

00:08:06 **Tania**

Oh, that's really interesting that you say that because partially, I felt like students talked to me more when we were in the online world. It became kind of casual because we're all sitting in our own living rooms, bedrooms, wherever we all were. And we had some nice conversations.

00:08:22 **Tania**

But I will say it worked the best when we first transitioned, which was when I had still met the students face-to-face. That very first semester where we had the first three weeks together before we all had to go home because we had already made a connection and we're already a class community and it did get harder with the length of the pandemic. I agree with you. That is definitely harder.

00:08:46 **Tania**

Thank you for sharing that. So, our campus is back open again, of course, as of this academic year. And I'm just curious if some of you are still taking online classes now that you know, and had experienced some of the benefits and some of the disadvantages like you mentioned. But I'm curious, are you still taking online classes even so, and what are the reasons for you doing that?

00:09:08 **Oceana**

So, I currently am taking online classes still here at Mt. SAC. I would have to say that about half of my classes, and I'm a full-time student, are online. It's nice because since we've been doing online for so long, I feel like more professors have perfected their teaching style through online. So, it doesn't feel as you know, per se, messy as it was the first couple or first two semesters.

00:09:35 **Oceana**

I definitely like it because they've learned to engage their students. We had more discussion posts. I feel like that was the one thing that I really liked during our online classes, is that really helps you engage with other students while also not engaging with them at all.

00:09:50 **Cali**

I am also still taking online classes because as Oceana mentioned, I am taking a lot of units this semester. And so, structuring all those classes around work has been kind of a challenge when I was taking some in-person classes. And so, the online classes have made that a lot easier for me.

00:10:07 **Cali**

Also, I know for myself, I like to take my learning at my own speed. I like to get things done quickly and absorb it quickly, which is fairly effective for myself. And so, having that flexibility with the online classes has been really nice while still having some structure with a couple in-person classes.

00:10:25 **Tania**

Just as a quick follow-up question - so, does that mean you're doing a combination of face-to-face classes and online classes? Yes, okay.

00:10:35 **Elijah**

Even though I'm the one who disagree on online class experience, I still do half my classes in person and computer. And it's very flexible and still help me do what I need to do without overwhelming or struggles.

00:10:51 **Tania**

So, why are you taking online classes then?

00:10:53 **Elijah**

I want to do them, so I can quickly do what I need to do.

00:10:59 **Tania**

Yeah. So, that you can get your degree faster and transfer.

00:11:02 **Elijah**

Quicker.

00:11:02 **Tania**

Yeah, no, that makes sense.

00:11:04 **Oceana**

I was also just going to say, including the flexibility from these online classes, I myself am more of a night owl kind of person. So, it really comes in handy when you've had a really long day or just anything. And you have time on your hands and you know you're not going to be going to sleep anytime soon.

00:11:20 **Oceana**

It really helped to be able to do all those assignments and look through all the lectures on your own time. Especially since I would really like to take more online classes, but there's been some times where you could be worried about taking classes at night because sometimes, you never know who will be in the parking lot or on campus late at night. So, I like that flexibility that it gives me to do it when I want, without having to worry about necessarily safety reasons.

00:11:47 **Genesis**

I am also taking a mix of both online and in-person classes. And I am a fan of online classes just because before the pandemic and before Zoom, when I was in classes, I was very introverted, and through Zoom, I was able to come out of my shell because I was behind my screen and I was actually able to tell people the things that I wanted to.

00:12:07 **Genesis**

Since then, I've become very extroverted. And that is a thing of the past, but I'm very grateful for the pandemic because I was not as extroverted before.

00:12:17 **Genesis**

I also like online classes because through discussion post, you're able to review others' work and see what the professor is looking for, see which assignments the professor is commenting on and kind of take pieces from your classmates.

00:12:31 **Genesis**

I also enjoyed the flexibility. I work an eight to three job, so my morning's pretty filled. So, I'm able to take night classes through online classes.

00:12:39 **Genesis**

And with online classes, I tend to stagger them in what subjects I'm best in, and that I'm confident in. So, those classes I would take online in classes such as math or science, I'll take in-person because I know those are the subjects that I lack in.

00:12:55 **Tania**

That's really interesting. So, it sounds like most of you are doing a combination right now of face-to-face and online. So, I guess my next question for you then is what does the college of the future look like to you? So, what do you think we have all learned from the pandemic? And how can colleges best meet your needs?

00:13:15 **Tabitha**

When you say college of the future, I assume you mean like what we think is going to start to change rather than what we think should be better.

00:13:22 **Tabitha**

I think that in the future, we're definitely going to see a lot more online certifications and trainings, like more diverse. Because before we had it where like people who were doing fashion classes here at Mt. SAC, couldn't do it online because they didn't know how to adequately transition that to Zoom. But I think that now that has time progressed, they're realizing that there is a market for that, that it is beneficial to people.

00:13:44 **Tabitha**

So, I think they'll find more ways to transfer these degrees online, also because it's appealing in terms of work. People have to work more nowadays because the cost of living is going up. And so, it's a lot harder to balance education and work.

00:13:57 **Tabitha**

So, I think that we're going to see an increase in them trying to do that transition to make it more easier for people. I also think that they'll try and make it a little bit more cost-effective, like cheaper for admissions to get in just because education is very important. And I think that people are starting to see that, that it's highly valued and it's important.

00:14:16 **Tabitha**

And also, I think that there will be more women just because there's been already an increase in how many women are going to college. So, I think that we'll just generally see more women going into fields that they're not typically going into.

00:14:27 **Tania**

I have a follow-up question for all you there because you mentioned, and I completely agree, because the cost of living has gone up so much, really everybody has a job on the side. But you also mentioned that some classes, you definitely see the benefit of doing them in person.

00:14:42 **Tania**

Would it be beneficial for you to have schedules that are like longer blocks or where you have the opportunity to come in just like one or two days a week? Or would you like to see more evening classes offered? Although we already heard that that might not be something you want to do. Like how can our campus serve you best with the in-person classes that we're offering?

00:15:06 **Genesis**

With the in-person classes that Mt. SAC is offering, I think just a variety of both kinds of classes because every student's different and everyone has a different learning ability and how they learn. So, just having an open variety for everybody and everyone would be the best for a college in the future. So, as a campus Mt. SAC could assist every student individually.

00:15:28 **Cali**

I see a lot more access to certificates and not necessarily lower-level degrees, but faster degrees because a lot of people, especially students coming in, fresh out of high school or who have been out of the loop of education for a while, aren't informed necessarily of their access to credentials and certificate programs that could get them a good-paying job and set them up for a good future.

00:15:50 **Cali**

And having that online accessibility with everything listed out for you, all of your opportunities, everywhere you could get those done - and the ability to get those classes done online, would really help students who want to set themselves up for a good future, but who also know that maybe going through a long amount of education isn't for them. So, it kind of creates opportunities for everybody while still having that same level of rigor as you would while you're in person.

00:16:16 **Tania**

I like that. Yeah, that's a really valuable point too. I want to kind of start wrapping up our conversation here. This has been really, really helpful and really interesting. But I wanted to ask and give you an opportunity if you wanted to add something else, what are some other thoughts that you may have that we haven't addressed yet?

00:16:35 **Oceana**

I think personally, one of the things that I'd really like to see is make it even. And when I say that, I mean, have the availability of online classes comparable to in-person classes. So, you don't have to worry about if you're not going to get into one, then you have the opportunity to get into another. Because I feel like it's not necessarily so even, I mean, I feel like they're trying to do it, but I would really like to see it more balance 50/50 opportunity for students to have the accessibility to online or in person.

00:17:05 **Cali**

I would definitely like to see some increased resources for textbooks, for reading materials, and different online programs. Because right now a lot of students pay kind of a lot, even for eBooks. Some of the books that I paid for, for my oceanography lecture class, if I hadn't rented them, like a used copy, would've been $200 just for an eBook.

00:17:25 **Cali**

And so, I think finding increased resources for people that can afford to buy those textbooks or even rent them, would be really important for getting free PDFs and programs available and established.

00:17:36 **Tania**

One more question that I just thought of is how do you guys feel about lab classes? Like we are in a lab class right now. You're some of my students in my oceanography lab class. And how do you feel about online lab classes? Did you enjoy that? Is that one of the ones where you're like, "Oh man, that's where the hands-on learning is definitely an advantage."

00:17:56 **Genesis**

I definitely do think that lab classes in person are better than online. I did take the oceanography lecture class online, and that was one of the classes that I really struggled with. And I determined I would never take a science class online ever again.

00:18:10 **Genesis**

After that, I had this science class, which is a lab and in-person, and I feel like I've learned so much more and even covered things that I learned in the past that didn't really stick in my past oceanography class. So, this was very helpful.

00:18:24 **Cali**

Having taken a lab class online that was for music. It was a lot more difficult to figure out certain aspects of the learning. For a lot of the subjects we covered that would've been easier in person that I'm now learning are super easy, were way complicated online, because it was hard to convey exactly what you needed to do and how to do it effectively through just text, when you can demonstrate it visually or actually show or play the recording of what you're doing.

00:18:55 **Tabitha**

I took a lot of lecture classes online, but I never got a chance to take a lab class online. But from this lab class we're taking, it generally just seems like a lot of the learning we do is collaborative. And most of the time in this class, whenever I'm confused about something, I walk around and I ask my lab partners, if they know what's going on. And a lot of the time, I figure out what I'm supposed to be doing from that, just collaborating with them and asking questions and seeing what they're doing.

00:19:20 **Tabitha**

And I think that when you do online classes like that, it's a lot more difficult to collaborate like that because then you have to figure out the times in which they're working as well. Like not everyone works at the same time. Someone wants to do their lab at three in the morning, and then another person wants to do it at 8:00 AM.

00:19:33 **Tabitha**

So, I think it becomes a lot harder to collaborate in terms like that. So, it's just like classes like lab like this and math classes. They're just a lot easier to do in person.

00:19:42 **Tania**

I really appreciate all of the information and your perspectives that you've shared. And I really, really, really hope that you are now getting a true college experience the way you've dreamt of having it. My son is also new in college as of COVID , and he spent one year at Mt. SAC as a virtual student. He never set foot on this campus.

00:20:06 **Tania**

And so, I felt the same way as a mother in this case, that it's sad to miss out on the opportunities to actually talk to others while you're walking across campus or just throwing a Frisbee around with others. And so, I hope that you're getting that experience now.

00:20:22 **Tania**

Thank you so much for your time. I super appreciate it. And I wish you all the best, of course, for your college careers.

00:20:34 **Christina**

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