



Distance Learning Committee

Strategic Plan for Distance Learning Spring 2003

This strategic plan addresses the concerns and needs of Mt. San Antonio College faculty and students as the Distance Learning Program continues to provide one of the alternative modes of learning. This plan should be viewed as an evolving document, and it will be modified regularly, just as Distance Learning is constantly changing. Each issue identified below needs addressing, with respect to support for faculty, students, and possibilities for future growth.

Accessibility

Awareness

Educational information provided in Distance Learning courses, like traditional classroom courses, must be accessible to students with disabilities, as mandated by state and federal law. The accessibility of course material will be among the factors reviewed by the Distance Learning and Educational Design Committees in the review of new and ongoing Distance Learning classes. If crucial information is found to be inaccessible, recommendations will be made to the instructor to make the information accessible to students with disabilities.

Support

- The Online Learning Support Center and Disabled Student Programs & Services are resources to all instructors who want assistance in assuring accessibility of their educational materials to all students.
- Optimal approach for assuring accessibility is by following universal design concepts. If the college selects a course management system, it would be vital to choose a system with accessibility features.

Review

- Accessibility of Distance Learning materials is a fluid process.
- The first priority is assuring that new courses are designed to be accessible, with review and adjustment as needed for current courses.

Action

- Provide training for faculty regarding accessibility issues. Disabled Students Programs & Services will schedule workshops.

- Add an accessibility component to the “Introduction to Online Learning” and “Introduction to FrontPage” classes offered through Staff & Organizational Learning.
**Cost: “Introduction to Online Learning” [\$3,000/semester]
“Introduction to FrontPage” [\$500/semester]**
- On a case-by-case basis, accommodations are made to ensure web accessibility for certain students, which requires extensive technical assistance and/or equipment.
Cost: \$500 per class on an as-needed basis

Class Size

Awareness

It has been the policy, in the past, to have class sizes in Distance Learning classes the same size as in traditional classes.

Support

- The Online Learning Support Center and Staff & Organizational Learning offers workshops and classes for effective online pedagogy for faculty.
- Distance Learning Committee, in conjunction with the Educational Design Committee, reviews effective pedagogy during the Distance Learning course approval process.

Review

- Many traditional class sizes have been based on the number of seats available in the room in which the class was taught.
- Distance Learning classes do not have the same physical restrictions as traditional classes. Distance Learning classes should have size restrictions, based in effective pedagogy practices, which are delineated in the Title V Regulations on instructor-student contact and interaction.

Action

- Distance Learning class size remain the same as the traditional class size for the first offering of the new course, and then, upon subsequent offerings, the faculty or department may petition the Mt. San Antonio College Class Size Committee for a revised class size, based on a new rationale.
Cost: depends on the number of sections affected

Course Delivery and Management

Awareness

Currently, Mt. San Antonio College does not use a course management system to deliver its Distance Learning courses. A course management system offers more than we currently have for online course management and accessibility. Various course management system's have the added options of tracking student activities, online quizzing and testing, display of student grades, group activities and discussions, student web pages, automatic uploading of rosters, etc. – functions that have been used with our current resources, on a case-by-case basis, on a limited scale. **A course management system would provide these resources and more, for all instructors for all classes, not just online classes.** Acquisition of a course management system would require an ongoing commitment by the College to fund the system on a yearly basis.

Support

- Mt. San Antonio College has several servers that it uses to store and deliver web pages to all students. The servers house online and hybrid courses as well as online components for traditional courses, listservs, online discussion tools, personal web pages, departmental web sites, and multimedia.
- The College has a site license to use FrontPage for web page creation and editing. Other software is also used on the campus for web page and graphics editing, animation, and streaming media.
- Training in all types of software use is offered through Staff & Organizational Learning.

Review

- Mt. San Antonio College does not use a course management system to deliver its Distance Learning courses.
- A course management system would offer more support for online and classroom-based learning.
- Acquisition of a course management system by the College would have major fiscal impact.
- Acquisition of a course management system would require an ongoing commitment by the College.

Action

- Explore the feasibility of a three-year budget commitment for a course management system, which includes the software, the support staff needed, as well as training for faculty in the use of the system.
Cost: \$25,000 – 50,000/year
- When funding is approved, reactivate the Mt. San Antonio College Course Management System Task Force to develop criteria for the selection of a system.
Cost: \$3,000 for three faculty to create pilot courses using various course management system platforms to evaluate functionality of individual products

- Work with Information and Educational Technology for integration of course management system with ICCIS.
Cost: to be determined

Distance Learning Team

Awareness

The Distance Learning Team consists of Kerry Stern, Dean of Learning Resources, Dwight Ayle, Coordinator of the Online Learning Support Center, Terri Beam, Online Learning Faculty Mentor (faculty, 40 % reassigned), and hourly Web Designers. The Distance Learning Program has been operating on a minimal budget since 1997. There has been little change to the budget and team members since 1997. There has been a growth in the number of Distance Learning classes offered since 1997, with no significant growth in budget or Team members.

Support

- To provide the type of training and mentoring needed to help faculty reach the level of expertise to teach in an online mode requires trainers (probably in the Staff & Organizational Learning area) and faculty mentors (experienced online faculty in several curriculum areas), as well as technical help (web design, multimedia, and server administration) for both faculty and students.
- The number of faculty who have previously taught or who are currently teaching a Distance Learning course is 60. The number of experienced online faculty to support staff is currently 60 to 1.5 (or a ratio of 45:1).
- The number of already approved Distance Learning courses is 46. In any given semester, several sections of these approved courses are taught. Different sections of the same course may be taught by either novice or experienced instructors, necessitating additional support services for the novice online instructors. The current number of novice online instructors to support staff is approximately 4 to 1.5 (or a ratio of 3:1).
- Currently, the Distance Learning Team supports not only faculty who teach in a Distance Learning course but also faculty who are offering online components in their traditional classes. The number of full and part-time faculty who require support and training for personal or course web sites or adding online components to traditional classes is two to three times that number and is increasing daily. Numbers are based on self-reporting and informal assessment by support staff. The number of regular faculty to support staff is 100 to 1.5 (or a ratio of 67:1).

Review

- Each year, a report should be distributed from the Distance Learning Team to the Mt. San Antonio College community, regarding the current status of the Program and recommendations for the future. The report should include:
 - information on courses offered
 - instructors teaching those courses
 - number of students served

- retention and success of students in these courses
- courses which are having difficulties in enrollment
- new courses which might be suitable for Distance Learning delivery
- recently approved Distance Learning courses
- online learning activities that are innovative and successful
- recognition for faculty who are doing a great job at teaching their Distance Learning courses
- number of support staff and responsibilities

Action

- The Distance Learning Team needs one full-time teaching/learning technology specialist.
Cost: \$72,000/yr (position approved to be filled but, due to current budget crisis, is currently on hold with other positions in Human Resources)
- Additional support staff (web designers, trainers, mentors, and coordinator) will be needed as the program grows.
Cost for web designers = \$20/hr for ~19 hours/week
Cost for mentors = \$28/hr for 5-10 hours/week
- The following maximum ratios of faculty to support staff should be maintained each semester in order to provide effective support for faculty and students. Ratios will not be exceeded, unless additional support staff is hired and funding is increased. The total numbers listed below are constantly changing because novice online faculty move to the experienced category and regular faculty requests vary greatly throughout each semester.

Type of Support for Faculty	Maximum Number of Faculty that can be Supported each Semester	
	Current	Maximum
Experienced online faculty	60	75
Novice online faculty	5	8
Faculty adding online activities to traditional classes	100	112

Facilities

Awareness

The Online Learning Support Center (OLSC) with the Distance Learning Support Team is currently housed in a temporary building, Building 9D. The Distance Learning Support Team is available Monday-Friday at the OLSC for assistance and support for faculty. Space is available for individual and group training or mentoring.

Support

- The OLSC is used for training, workshops, course development, mentoring, presentations, classes, committee meetings, and server storage.
- The OLSC currently houses seven active workstations, scanners, and copiers.

Review

- The OLSC needs to continue to serve all Mt. San Antonio College faculty with their online learning needs.

Action

- Move the OLSC to the Learning Technology Center (temporary quarters) when ESL administration moves to their new building.
- Move the online learning servers to Information and Educational Technology.
- Move the OLSC to the Design Technology Center in 2008.
- Periodic (3-year cycle) update of OLSC equipment, software and supplies.

Cost: \$35,000 every three years

- Recommend ongoing replacement budget allocation for technology needs.
- Recommend ongoing budget allocation for faculty computers.

Cost: \$200,000/ year for 1/3 replacement

Faculty Readiness for Online Teaching

Awareness

Faculty must acquire new skills in order to be an effective online teacher. The dynamics of the class interaction changes considerably when the face-to-face component is absent or reduced. Distance Learning courses must be designed to meet the needs of the online student with regular effective contact between the instructor and students. Ongoing training should be provided to faculty.

Support

- Training opportunities for increasing knowledge and skills for online learning should be readily available to all faculty.
- Faculty should receive administrative support from department chairs and division deans, as well as the Distance Learning Committee and Team for guidance in:
 - choice of appropriate courses for online delivery
 - suggestions and alternatives for scheduling
 - quality standards in the curricula these courses offer to students.
- Novice online faculty also receive additional training and support from experienced online faculty mentors to develop class activities that provide the variety of learning opportunities for students to achieve the course's learning objectives.

Review

- Some training opportunities for increasing knowledge and skills for online learning are available from Staff & Organizational Learning.

- Academic Senate, Educational Design Committee, Distance Learning Committee, and Staff & Organizational Learning need to work closely to provide quality training and mentoring to faculty.

Action

- Under the direction of Academic Senate, Staff & Organizational Learning, Educational Design Committee, and the Distance Learning Committee will create a task group of experienced online faculty and staff to:
 - develop a criteria and process to certify that faculty have acquired the knowledge and skills for teaching online courses
 - develop a new Distance Learning course approval process that meets current Title V Regulations
 - periodically review course outlines and measurable objectives of all courses that are taught in a Distance Learning mode with Distance Learning instructors and their departments
 - provide feedback to instructors and departments for further improvement
 - communicate online faculty needs to deans for online learning support.
- Fund training and mentoring.
Cost: Average for software class taught in Staff & Organizational Learning is \$80 for a two-hour class. It would cost \$4,000 a semester to support the current software curriculum being taught in Staff & Organizational Learning.
- Provide faculty readiness process (certification) for online teaching.
Cost: \$500/instructor for completion of certification process

IET Support

Awareness

The Information and Educational Technology Team (IET) maintains the connection to the mainframe and the Internet and provides computers and support for faculty. In addition, they support communication tools and handle all student Internet access. It is essential that the Distance Learning Program sustain a close and cooperative working relationship with IET.

Support

- Infrastructure should continue to be provided to support online activities.
- IET should support the Distance Learning Program's ability to use the Web for a variety of services for both faculty and students. Services and programs include, but are not limited to:
 - safeguarding access to information on the Internet
 - faculty technical support (Help Desk), 7:30 am – 4:30 pm, Monday-Friday
 - computers for faculty
 - facilitate purchases of software and hardware
 - telephone and fax functions

- maintenance of the Internet and email connection and accounts on campus and from off-campus
- notification of upcoming system maintenance and “down times”
- student technical support (Help Desk), 24/7
- interactive web resources (application, registration, transfer info, grades) for students
- ICCIS “enhancements” of the future
- provide storage, maintenance, and security of the online learning servers

Review

- The Distance Learning Program and IET need to work more closely to provide the services and support needed for the Distance Learning faculty and students.

Action

- Develop 24/7 student support plan to implement incrementally over a three-year period.
- IET should support the Distance Learning Program by directing its efforts toward:
 - standard email accounts for all Mt. San Antonio College faculty and students
 - listservs for all classes
 - posting of student grades
 - schedule of classes
 - faculty directory
 - student ID numbers (instead of Social Security numbers) on all student records and communications
 - meeting the needs of Distance Learning instructors with hardware and software purchases.
- To maintain a close working relationship, a representative from IET should attend all Distance Learning Committee meetings and report back to IET. Also, a representative from the Distance Learning Committee should attend all Information Analysis and Communication Council meetings and report back to the Distance Learning Committee.

Student Support

Awareness

To prepare students to be successful in their online courses, they need to be provided with opportunities for interaction, mentoring, training, and tutoring. The College’s Orientation Program provides students with their first introduction to Mt. San Antonio College classes and access to quality education. Each Distance Learning class provides a Mandatory Meeting during the first week of classes to further orient the student for success in an online environment. The SOLAR Quiz (Skills for Online Learning – Assessment of Readiness) provides additional advice for online students.

Support

- On-campus students should have the opportunity, on an individual or group basis, to learn online skills, such as:
 - Internet navigation
 - email basics
 - word processing
 - spreadsheets
 - online discussion forum
 - netiquette.
- Tutors should be available for both face-to-face and online tutoring of Distance Learning students.
- Students should have the opportunity to collaborate and network online with other students, faculty, and other institutions or individual experts.

Review

- Students should have more support opportunities provided to them, so that they may be successful in online classes.
- Faculty, students, and staff should actively be involved in the design of support programs to be offered to students.
- All support programs should be reviewed periodically.

Action

- Tutorials for students to develop online learning knowledge and skills should be created by a group of experienced online faculty and students. These tutorials should be available at the Learning Assistance Center for all students.

Cost: \$1,000 [Stipend]

- Investigate the need to create and offer a one-unit course on Online Learning Skills for students.

Cost: \$1,000 [Stipend]

- An Online Learning Skills course could be offered in a variety of formats:
 - semester long at one hour a week
 - nine-week course
 - four-week course, etc.
- Further enhance the SOLAR Quiz to provide more diagnostic information to students.

Cost: \$1,000 [Stipend]

- Explore alternative options for the Mandatory Meeting in order to provide students with needed skills for successful online learning.

Retention and Success of Students in Distance Learning Courses

Awareness

The Distance Learning Committee studied the retention and success of students in online, hybrid and regular classes. The results show that retention and success of students in online and hybrid classes is lower than those in traditional classes.

Support

- The Distance Learning Committee has requested that the Office of Research and Institutional Effectiveness (RIE) continue the study of retention and success in online and hybrid classes.

Review

- The College will continue to monitor the retention and success in online and hybrid classes.

Action

- The Office of Research and Institutional Effectiveness will continue to study the retention and success of students in online, hybrid, and traditional classes each year.
- The study results will be forwarded to the Distance Learning Committee, the Educational Design Committee, and the Academic Senate.

Budget

Awareness

Funding is required to maintain and grow the Distance Learning Program. Funding is used to operate the Online Learning Support Center, provide hourly technical support staff, and make purchases of hardware and software for the Distance Learning Program. The College supports the Program by providing released-time for the Online Learning Faculty Mentor.

Support

- The College supports the Distance Learning Program by providing funding.
- The Dean submits budget enhancement requests when funding is available.

Review

- The Distance Learning Program should evaluate its budget every year and make recommendations for future budgets.
- Budget allocations should be based on the faculty/support staff numbers mentioned earlier under Distance Learning Team.

Action

- Growth in the Distance Learning Program past the maximum faculty support numbers requires an increased budget allocation.

Projected Cost for Growth

	Current maximum #	Scenario A 100% increase	Scenario B 200% increase
Experienced faculty	75	150	225
Novice faculty	8	16	24
Faculty adding online components to traditional classes	112	224	336
	Current budget	Additional cost	
Training	0	14,000 (ongoing)	28,000 (ongoing)
Faculty readiness for online teaching	0	10,000 (ongoing)	20,000 (ongoing)
Redesign for accessibility	0	3,000 (ongoing)	6,000 (ongoing)
ICCIC enhancements	0	TBD	TBD
Course Management System	0	50,000 (ongoing)	50,000 (ongoing)
CMS evaluation	0	3,000 (one-time)	3,000 (one-time)
Staffing	124,000 (ongoing)	87,000 (one full-time Teaching/Learning Specialist and hourly)	152,000 (one full-time Teaching/Learning Specialist, one Web Designer and hourly)
Supplies	20,000 (ongoing)	5,000 (ongoing)	5,000 (ongoing)
TOTAL	\$144,000	172,000 + <u>144,000</u> \$316,000	264,000 + <u>144,000</u> \$408,000

Note: Computers for faculty should be replaced every three years.

Cost: \$200,000/every three years