

Distance Learning Program: A Report to the Board of Trustees

Background

Mt. SAC's Distance Learning Program has seen tremendous growth since 2000: from 18 to 129 courses. The program now enables students to earn two degrees, eleven certificates, and the general education program with more than 50% of credits being earned through Distance Learning (DL). Approximately 1.6% of our students in the DL program take only online courses; the vast majority takes a combination of regular, hybrid, and online courses. The following table illustrates the growth in number of sections of online and hybrid courses and enrollment through a few snapshots:

	2001-02		2004-05		2007-08		2009-10	
Type	Sections	Enrollment	Sections	Enrollment	Sections	Enrollment	Sections	Enrollment
Online	154	2169	191	3557	336	6992	209	TBD
Hybrid	39	773	52	1099	108	2759	115	TBD
Total	193	2942	243	4656	444	9751	324	TBD

(Source: DL Courses & Enrollment Data, Research & Institutional Effectiveness, Jan. 2009)

Progress

Faculty Development

Distance Learning's growth is supported by significant faculty development, course approval process, content management systems administration, and online learning support. Faculty develop Distance Learning courses with the support of Distance Learning Coordinator and Assistant Distance Learning Coordinator. The Online Learning Support Center (OLSC) staff and the IT team provide workshops and technical support. Additionally, to teach Distance Learning courses, faculty must complete the certification process (SPOT). To avail faculty development to more faculty, In Spring 2010, the OLSC team launched Blackboard Basics Online and SPOT Online. Since 2005, 414 faculty learned to use Blackboard, of whom 32.6% teach DL courses; since 2006, 135 faculty have been certified to teach DL courses. Faculty also had an opportunity to participate in campus discourse on DL program and online support at the latest Distance Learning Dialogue held on March 19, 2010, which drew 45 participants.

Student Success

Mirroring state and national statistics on student success in distance learning courses, Mt. SAC's student retention and success rates in online courses trail those in hybrid and traditional courses. From 2001-2008, the overall success rates in regular courses were 68.1%, compared to 61.4% in hybrid courses, trailed by 56.6% in online courses. The College has attended to the success gap in online and hybrid courses with a Strategic Objective (under College Goal #2) on student success in DL courses: By 2015, the College will improve the average student success rate for distance learning courses by 2% over the

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2008 baseline. Additionally, Academic Senate Resolution 2009-11 aims “to improve student success in DL courses, use consistent format/display for schedule notes, emphasis on strict use of Mt. SAC email, online faculty directory, department, division, and instructional area web pages.”

Distance Learning Program Accountability

ACCJC Substantive Change Proposal

Recently, ACCJC approved the College’s proposal “that students [are] able to complete 12 of its Certificate Programs, 2 of its Associate of Science Degrees, and the General Education Program through courses offered by means of distance education. These courses are offered in the traditional online format and/or in the hybrid format that requires students to attend at least some on campus meetings. The programs that offer students the ability to complete them with 50% or more of the courses being taken online are” (Source: Substantive Change Proposal, submitted April 2009):

- Business: Human Resource Management - Level I Certificate- 9 units
- Business: International - Level I Certificate- 9 units
- Business: International - Level II Certificate- 18-19 units
- Business: Management - Level I Certificate- 9 units
- Business: Management - Level II Certificate- 19 units
- Business: Management - Level III Certificate- 30 units
- Business: Management - 30 units (AS Degree)
- Business: Small Business Management - Level I Certificate- 9 units
- Business: Small Business Management - Level II Certificate- 18 units
- Business: Small Business Management - Level III Certificate- 30 units
- Small Business Management - 30 units (AS Degree)
- CIS Professional Certificate in LINUX - 12 units
- Hospitality: Food Services Certificate- 7.5 units
- Introduction to Computer Information Technology Certificate- 11.5 units
- The General Education Program – 60 units

The Authentication Mandate for Student Participation in DL Courses

The Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 mandates that students taking DL courses be authenticated. The College has designated the start of Fall 2010 as the deadline for transitioning to authenticated methods for student “participation” in DL courses (Distance Learning Committee Recommendation, April 2009).

Future Developments

Distance Learning is expected to grow as demand for classes outpaces availability of classrooms and parking spaces. Since 2000, the Distance Learning Program has grown 700%; however, the personnel resources allocated to support the program has not kept pace. To assure a quality program as it grows exponentially, the College will need to invest more resources to support faculty development and student support in e-learning. Hence, we intend to apply for a USDE Title V grant in Spring 2011 to support Distance Learning and online learning support.