Title: Distance Education, 2010-11 Academic Year

Plan Type: Program Plan

OPR: Learning Resources Division

Collaborative Groups: Distance Education Advisory Subcommittee (Academic Senate), Curriculum Committee, Information Technology Committee

References:
Sacramento City College Strategic Master Plan
Los Rios CCD Strategic Plan
College Goals - Sacramento City College
Strategic Vision for Distance Education – Sacramento City College
Information Technology Program Plan
Sacramento City College Academic Senate Guidelines for Distance Education
California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office - Distance Education Guidelines
WASC/ACCJC Distance Learning Manual
Departmental Unit Plans

PURPOSE:
Sacramento City College uses distance education and digital learning technologies to expand student access to educational opportunities. The college applies innovative teaching and learning strategies and high standards for quality and educational rigor in our distance education courses. The college regularly evaluates the effectiveness of distance education offerings and engages in structured planning that results in high quality, consistent student learning experiences. Students taking distance education courses have direct access to a range of support services and innovative digital learning technologies. Distance education plays an important role within the five strategic directions the college has set:
- Student Success
- Teaching & Learning Effectiveness
- Access & Growth
- Community, Economic, & Workforce Development
- Organizational Effectiveness

The college faculty, administration, and staff are committed to providing distance education course and program offerings that use sound pedagogy and good practice; provide a high level of academic rigor; and meet student learning outcomes. In particular, the faculty are committed to offering those courses which lend themselves to a high level of quality and
rigor through distance education modalities. As subject matter experts, faculty at the department level are best positioned to make collegial decisions about which courses are appropriate for distance education, with a secondary review for distance education approval at the Curriculum Committee level. To measure effectiveness in courses offered through distance education modalities, regular evaluation of course offerings must include evaluation of learning outcomes, success rates, and other appropriate metrics. Also critical to student success is the online accessibility of learning resources and student services. Since student life experiences are no longer limited to within the campus boundaries, students benefit from technologies that help them to engage in community-building efforts in an online environment. Finally, governance processes and structures must be aligned to provide for a coordinated approach to distance education that allows for collegial discussion and deliberation of distance education issues and a forum for future policy decisions. The four strategic directions, further outlined below, provide the framework for accomplishing this vision for distance education.

OBJECTIVES:

A. Course and Program Development:
Distance education course and program development takes place under with oversight from the Vice President of Instruction, division deans, and department chairs. Sacramento City College strives to provide access to academic and vocational opportunities by maintaining a coordinated, consistent, and academically appropriate approach to distance education courses. Courses are taught across academic and vocational disciplines using the online, on-campus/online hybrid, televised, and interactive television distance education modalities. Effective course and program development requires active faculty leadership and involvement. Academic departments make decisions about which courses and programs to offer through distance modalities, based on an informed process related to course content, appropriate pedagogy, and data analysis. The college strives to provide students with clear expectations regarding each distance education modality and a predictable selection of courses in order to enhance student access to learning. Students taking distance education courses are provided with opportunities to incorporate community-building and social experiences as part of their learning environment.

B. Instructional Quality:
Sacramento City College is committed to ensuring high quality instruction through its distance education offerings. Quality measures are in place, including regular evaluation of indicators such as student satisfaction, success, retention, and student learning outcomes. Each term, this data is gathered via student surveys, the PRIE Office, the Los Rios Institutional Research Department, and the California State Chancellor’s Office.

Students and faculty have access to learning technologies that provide a coherent, non-intimidating and stable learning environment. Faculty and students receive appropriate training, support, and resources for distance education courses. The Distance Education Coordinator and Instructional Development Coordinator have primary responsibility to provide training to faculty on effective online pedagogy, use of the online learning management system, and other instructional technology resources, as appropriate.

Learning outcomes for distance education courses are equivalent to those of courses taught in a traditional on-campus format. The Sacramento City College Academic Senate has provided clear guidelines requiring quality measures and outlining acceptable instructor preparation to teach in distance education modalities.
C. Student Services:
Under the direction of the Vice President of Student Services and the Dean of Learning Resources, the college provides access to a range of support services for distance education students that parallels those available to on-campus students. Access to student services, technical support, and learning resource services are provided in distance-friendly formats, and students are aware of the availability of these resources. However, some services continue to require an on-campus visit and are not yet available to students online or without special arrangements.

Students participate in orientations and community building experiences that bolster their chances for success and enhance learning in distance modalities. The college recognizes that adequate student preparedness is critical to ensuring the success of students enrolled in distance education courses.

D. Governance and Management:
Distance education considerations are fully integrated into the college planning processes, systems, and governance structures. The college commits the resources and support systems necessary to ensure student and faculty success in distance education offerings. A governance structure is in place that reflects appropriate policy dialogue, planning, and coordination of distance education issues, including compliance with regulations governing distance education instruction. Information is readily available to students and faculty about distance education offerings, orientations, and technical support services.

The Distance Education Coordinator bears ongoing oversight responsibilities for distance education. In addition to ensuring compliance with appropriate regulations and guidelines, other responsibilities include but are not limited to: responsibility for advancement of policy initiatives; vision and planning; coordination with campus governance groups; implementing a faculty training program; working with the Information Technology Division, Instructional Development, Media Services, and District Information Technology staff to ensure appropriate resources are made available for distance education.

PROCEDURES: Summary of Distance Education Initiatives

1. Measurement of Key Indicators

Action: Measure and evaluate student retention, success, and satisfaction in distance education courses. Sources for student satisfaction include but are not limited to college surveys, district surveys, and Chancellor’s Office surveys.

Whom: DE Coordinator, PRIE Office, Los Rios Research Office

Objective: Instructional Quality

Resources Required: None (Existing Resources)
2. Development of Faculty Training Resources

**Action:** Continue development of online, self-paced training resources, empowering faculty to deliver online instruction via the learning management system (Desire2Learn). Creation of online, self-paced tutorials is an essential component that allows two coordinators to provide group training and individualized support to the 265 faculty currently using Desire2Learn (as of the Fall 2009 semester).

**Whom:** DE Coordinator, Instructional Development Coordinator

**Objective:** Course and Program Development

**Resources Required:** $1500 Annually (Software upgrades)

3. Improve Online Access to Services

**Action:** Extend implementation of online student services and learning resources to ensure distance education students have reasonable and adequate access to an appropriate range of accessible services. Areas of focus include, but are not limited to: Orientation, Counseling, Assessment, DSP&S, Library Reference, Tutoring, and Writing Center services.

**Whom:** AVP Student Services, Dean of Learning Resources, DE Staff

**Objective:** Student Services

**Resources Required:** None (Existing Resources)

4. Clarify Distance Education Modalities

**Action:** Engage in a collegial process that evaluates the appropriateness of existing titles and descriptions of distance education delivery modalities. Current modalities are defined as: Online, Hybrid, Televised, and Interactive Television. Changes in technologies and the blending of delivery mechanisms have brought about increased cross-over between these modalities and the names and definitions should be refined to reflect current practice. Modifications should seek to increase clarity and help students better self-select into appropriate courses based on delivery mode. Advocate for changes district-wide, if necessary, as this action has college and district-wide implications for curriculum practices and the SOCRATES curriculum management system.

**Whom:** DE Coordinator, DE Subcommittee of the Curriculum Committee, Academic Senate President

**Objective:** Course and Program Development

**Resources Required:** None (Existing Resources)

5. Measurement of Student Learning Outcomes

**Action:** Actively participate in college-wide dialogue regarding measurement of student learning outcomes as they relate to distance education courses and delivery. Develop processes to electronically track student learning outcomes for courses taught online using the learning management system.
(Desire2Learn). Train faculty in implementation of online SLO tracking in the learning management system.

**Whom:** DE Coordinator, Instructional Development Coordinator, PRIE Staff, Department Chairs  
**Objective:** Instructional Quality  
**Resources Required:** None (Existing Resources)

6. **Support Infusion of Multimedia into DE Courses**

**Action:** Provide training and assistance for faculty in creation of video, interactive multimedia materials, and other rich content for use in distance education courses. Leverage existing multimedia production resources, such as the video production studio, interactive video classrooms, and New Media Lab, to increase faculty access to multimedia tools.

**Whom:** DE Coordinator, Instructional Development Coordinator, Media Services Staff  
**Objective:** Course and Program Development  
**Resources Required:** $4500 Annually (Design/Production Software Licenses -- $2000)  
(Hardware Peripherals -- $1000)  
(Transcoding Software Licenses -- $1500)

7. **Development of Modeling Rubrics for Course Design**

**Action:** Develop and provide modeling rubrics for use by faculty developing online courses. Investigate best practices and existing models. Provide sample course structures and documentation that conveys best practices in course design for faculty new to the online environment.

**Whom:** Instructional Development Coordinator  
**Objective:** Instructional Quality  
**Resources Required:** $500 (Workshop and/or webinar registration)

8. **Provide Resources for Student Readiness / Digital Learning Center**

**Action:** Provide online training for students who need assistance with technology skills required for successful learning in distance education courses. Effectively communicate to students the minimum technology requirements and competencies for success in distance education modalities. Ensure that students have access to these services and resources so they can be successful in DE courses. Develop a Digital Learning Center to include on-site and virtual support services for students.

Advocate for the addition of a Learning Technologies Coordinator, a faculty position geared toward student success in DE environments. This position will lead the Digital Learning Center effort, to include development of student readiness assessments, interactive training modules, and provide direct
assistance to DE students via courses, workshops, drop-in appointments, and other training opportunities. This position has been recommended by the Distance Education Advisory Subcommittee and requested through the faculty prioritization process since 2008. While this position is critical to the long-term goal of enhancing student readiness and success in distance education courses, the center can be initially operated with a combination of student help and collaborative effort of the Distance Education and Instructional Development units. This new faculty member will teach existing course offerings related to online student success (currently staffed by adjunct faculty) and develop additional curriculum.

Whom: DE Coordinator, Instructional Development Coordinator, DE Staff
Objective: Instructional Quality, Student Services
Resources Required: A) Space for student intake and a minimum of 8 computer workstations. Potential office space for one faculty member. Since this initiative directly supports student success, it would make sense to locate this center near existing Learning Resources services (Tutoring, Writing Center, etc.) Suggested location for this center is in the space currently occupied by the CAHSEE program (which is scheduled to end no later than December 2010).

B) $3500 Annually (Student Help -- $2500) (Software and Supplies -- $1000)

C) New faculty hire – Digital Learning Coordinator (60% Coordinator, 40% Instructional Load). (Note: This position has been submitted and ranked through the faculty prioritization process.)

9. Monitor Compliance with Minimum Training Guidelines

Action: Develop and implement a mechanism for faculty to certify that they have received appropriate training for teaching in a distance education course, in compliance with the Academic Senate Guidelines for Distance Education. Develop a procedure to notify deans and department chairs when classes are assigned to faculty not meeting the minimum requirements as specified in the Academic Senate guidelines.

Whom: DE Coordinator
Objective: Governance and Management
Resources Required: None (Existing Resources)

10. Research and Implement New and Emerging Technologies

Action: Investigate, advocate for, test, and implement new technologies that directly support instruction in distance education modalities. Technologies used to support and engage students in online learning are continually changing. In order to maintain effective online teaching and learning practices, it is important that faculty teaching in this modality have access to new technological enhancements that enrich teaching and learning opportunities across the disciplines.

Whom: DE Staff, Instructional Development Staff, Information Technology Staff
Objective: Instructional Quality, Course and Program Development
Resources Required: $2500 Annually (Computer peripherals, software)

11. Increase Student Retention and Success – Early Alert

Action: Gather data from DE students and enrollment information to facilitate early intervention opportunities. Implement an early alert strategy for distance education students to improve student retention and success rates.

Whom: DE Staff, PRIE Staff, Student Services Staff

Objective: Student Services, Instructional Quality
Resources Required: None (Existing Resources)

12. Provide Online Opportunities for Student Engagement and Community

Action: Promote opportunities for community building and participation in campus life among distance education students by extending the campus community into the virtual environment. Examples include utilizing social networking tools, providing access to campus events via video streaming, and other interactive virtual collaboration opportunities. Research shows that students who study at a distance have higher rates of satisfaction and success when they are actively engaged in regular interaction with other students and feel connected to their college community.

Whom: DE Staff, Media Services Staff, Individual Event Sponsors (Faculty, clubs, centers, etc.)

Objective: Course and Program Development
Resources Required: None (Existing Resources)

13. Develop a College-wide Strategy for DE Course Accessibility

Action: Develop a college-wide strategy for ensuring that distance education courses are accessible to students with disabilities. Assess a spectrum of distance education courses to measure how effectively course meet access requirements for students with disabilities (ADA, Section 508, and other applicable regulations).

Whom: Disabled Student Programs & Services staff, Instructional Development Coordinator, DE staff

Objective: Course and Program Development
Resources Required: None (Existing Resources)

14. Investigate Enhanced Student Authentication Strategies

Action: Investigate appropriate strategies to ensure secure student authentication for online courses. In response to the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008, work with district-wide stakeholders to implement additional authentication or verification strategies to ensure that the students taking distance education
15. Evaluate Existing Organizational Structure

Action: Evaluate the existing organizational structure for Distance Education and Instructional Development to ensure that the college commitment to growth and access in distance education provides for clear lines of communication and facilitates effective program leadership. Determine whether a reorganization of these areas would be beneficial, and reorganize if necessary.

Whom: Dean of Learning Resources, Vice President of Instruction, Vice President of Administration, DE staff, Instructional Development staff, and other stakeholders as necessary

Objective: Governance and Management

Resources Required: None (Existing Resources; others resulting from this process TBD)

MEASURES OF MERIT:

As part of an ongoing evaluation of program effectiveness, the following actions serve to track progress toward program goals:

- Each semester, student and faculty satisfaction are measured through an online survey. Results are tabulated through the state Chancellor’s Office and made available to the college. Analysis of the survey results is helpful in finding opportunities for improvement in the distance education program. These results are easily compared to those of other colleges across the state.
- Annually, students are presented with a student satisfaction survey that is much more specific to Los Rios and its system of technology and instructional support. This survey is administered by the Los Rios Research Department, and the results of this survey show trends and differences across the Los Rios colleges. The questions asked in this survey have a strong breadth and depth that is specific to Los Rios.
- Each semester, retention and success rates are tracked for each of the distance education modalities. These statistics aid in the development and deployment of early alert resources.
- Ongoing feedback is gathered from faculty at the conclusion of each training initiative (workshop series, etc.) to address areas of improvement or further training needs.
- Maintain ongoing dialogue between instruction and student services, and continue college-wide assessment of services and resources available to distance education students, including recommendations for areas of improvement. This is a critical effort in order to establish and maintain parity of services for distance education students.
• Analyze the number of faculty requesting multimedia support for their distance education courses and increased requests for use of video capture facilities as a means of capturing course lectures or supplements. This occurs on an annual basis.
• Each semester, account for the number and type of online resources, events, and other community building activities that “virtualize” the campus life experience for distance education students.
• Maintain ongoing dialogue with DSP&S specialists regarding distance education issues, and measure progress toward the establishment of accessibility guidelines for DE courses.

ANNUAL PLAN AND RESOURCES:

RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS: $12,500.00 (See Individual Program Summary/Procedures)

DATE: November 23, 2009

REVIEW CYCLE: Annual