Title: Distance Education
Plan Type: Program
OPR: Dean, Learning Resources
Collaborative Groups: 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
Los Rios CCD Distance Education Strategic Options Report
California Community Colleges 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

OBJECTIVES:
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 collegiate 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.

A. Course and Program Development: 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.

B. Instructional Quality: Sacramento City College is committed to ensuring high quality instruction and best practices through its distance education courses, with student satisfaction and learning outcomes that are equivalent to those offered in person.

C. Student Services: The college uses innovative means to provide access to a range of support services and learning resources for distance education students that parallels those available to on-campus students.

D. Governance and Management: Distance education considerations are fully integrated into the college planning processes, systems, management, and governance structures.

**PROCEDURES:**

**A. Course and Program Development**

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. 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. Distance education courses, with clearly understood modalities and predictable selection, 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. To realize this vision, the college:

- Affirms that it is the responsibility of faculty to address issues of curriculum development and quality.
- Recognizes that it is within faculty purview to make decisions regarding distance education course offerings, degrees, or certificates.
- Acknowledges that methods of presentation and course materials are to be under the
control of the faculty member assigned to develop and/or teach the distance education course. Oversight by the faculty member’s colleagues within the department or program shall be subject to the usual norms and responsibilities of supervision and oversight associated with the functions of the department.

- Recognizes that faculty members engaged in distance education instruction shall have academic freedom as teachers, including “freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject” (“Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure”).
- Initiates departmental review processes to determine which courses are appropriate for distance education, based on content and pedagogy. Department chairs and deans, in consultation, make decisions about scheduling approved distance education courses.
- Regularly provides appropriate data to academic departments to assist in their decisions regarding distance education offerings.
- Ensures that courses approved for distance education within degree patterns are easily identifiable to students.
- Provides a selection of courses offered through distance education that is predictable by term, thereby helping students to plan their sequence of courses.
- Incorporates campus life experiences using digital technologies and provides students with information regarding appropriate college activities.

**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. Students and faculty have access to learning technologies that provide a non-intimidating and stable learning environment. Faculty and students receive appropriate training and support for distance education courses. To realize this vision, the college:

- Ensures that the standards, expectations, and learning outcomes in distance education courses are equivalent to those of the same courses offered in-person.
- Conducts a distance education review of all courses proposed for distance education modalities, adhering to college curriculum policies and procedures for distance education.
- Requires hybrid courses to meet the same standards for quality and rigor as fully online and traditional in-person courses.
- Provides for regular evaluation of distance education courses and modalities, producing evidence that distance education students achieve course learning outcomes.
- Measures student success rates, when compared with traditional course data by distance education modality, as valid indicators of the strength of the distance education program.
- Promotes retention of students in distance education modalities that meets or exceeds the statewide average for distance education.
- Effectively addresses issues related to distance education through the college Student Code of Conduct.
- Provides students with electronic access to information and/or instruction demonstrating how to be successful in distance education courses.
- Enhances instructional integrity of courses by providing access to secure, stable, and user-friendly learning management systems for students and faculty.
- Ensures that the opportunity for faculty to participate in the development and
delivery of distance education courses remains voluntary.

- Requires appropriate training of individual faculty for teaching in distance education modalities before a faculty member teaches in that modality. Sacramento City College requires instructors teaching through distance education modalities to demonstrate appropriate preparation, by meeting two of the following criteria:
  - Faculty has previously taught the course
  - Faculty has taken at least one distance education course
  - Faculty has distance education teaching experience or has enrolled in any of the following:
    i. SCC Online Institute
    ii. CVC or @ONE distance education training courses
    iii. Other verifiable distance education training courses
- Employs a process to verify that a faculty member is prepared to teach through distance education modalities before such courses are assigned.
- To maintain high quality standards, provides faculty members teaching distance education courses with timely and appropriate levels of support.
- Provides adequate support staff and overall resource levels for the success of distance education students and faculty.
- Trains faculty in accessibility requirements for distance education courses (ADA, Section 508 standards) and ensures accessibility for students with disabilities.

C. Student Services

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 resources are provided in distance-friendly formats, and students are aware of the availability of these resources. Students participate in training, orientations, and community building experiences that bolster their chances for success and enhance learning in distance modalities. To realize this vision, the college:

- Ensures distance education students have access to core, essential student services through online or web access.
- Presents online student services to distance education students in such a way that they are easy to locate and have a consistent look and feel.
- Provides distance education students with orientation materials relating the services and activities available to them, including tutoring, library services, counseling, e-mail, health services, student activities, and other appropriate activities and services.
- Provides appropriate program orientations, advisement, student readiness assessments, and preparatory training materials for students enrolling in distance education courses.
- Offers students access to technical support resources, including online knowledgebase and 24/7 help desk resources.
- Makes certain access to library services, including reference librarians and full-text databases, are easily accessible to distance education students through electronic means.
- Offers tutorial and counseling services in a distance-friendly format.
- Provides distance education students with online access to textbook lists and the ability to order textbooks or other class materials online.
- Provides, when deemed appropriate by the faculty member, test proctoring services for distance education students as a method of reducing scheduling, employment, travel, and childcare barriers to student access and success.
- Encourages the use of technology to provide access to student life experiences.
• Fosters a sense of community through technology tools that extend the campus community to the virtual environment.

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. To realize this vision, the college:

• Supports distance education efforts by providing sufficient levels of staffing for faculty and staff training, ongoing professional development, administration of learning management systems, and utilization of instructional technology resources.
• Provides appropriate base funding levels for college-wide distance education support.
• Maintains campus network and infrastructure support at levels that support the use of distance learning technologies and pedagogy.
• Pursues opportunities for grant funding of distance education projects, as appropriate.
• Demonstrates its commitment to collegial dialogue, policy direction, and planning for distance education through a shared governance body or coordinating committee that provides a forum for distance education issues and decisions, exclusive of course or program approval for distance education (outside the scope of the Curriculum Committee and its Distance Education Subcommittee). When appropriate, the issues are incorporated within existing shared governance committee structures.
• Promotes administrator training on the vision, modalities, instructional methods, and services offered for distance education.
• Integrates distance education enrollment management, data reporting, support services, and related issues into the administrative dialogue by examining structures for enhanced program planning and administration.
• Expects and plans for significant growth in distance education.
• Aligns planning processes with existing regulations, guidelines and requirements for distance education.
• Ensures that a structured, collegial process remains in place for approval to teach a course or offer a program in a distance education mode.
• Makes data available to faculty and administrators regarding distance education offerings, enrollments, trends, and other appropriate indicators.
• Provides information about distance education modalities and requirements that is easily accessible to students via the Internet, with clear descriptions and an easy to use navigation interface.
• Makes college facilities available for distance education course orientations by faculty, using a coordinated scheduling process.
• Ensures that course orientations are scheduled and conducted in a consistent manner across divisions.
• Provides regular access to campus computer lab facilities for distance education students.
• Meets accessibility guidelines and requirements for the delivery of instructional services.
• Provides access to help desk and technical support services to students and faculty,
including access beyond published campus hours.

- Initiates dialogue with appropriate governance and/or administrative entities on issues with district-wide implications for distance education.
- Establishes and supports digital learning as a component of institutional teaching and learning strategies and culture.
- Communicates executive leadership’s commitment to distance education.
- Provides coordination of the distance education goals across departments.
- Recognizes the distance education efforts of faculty.
- Fosters a culture of innovation with regard to digital learning initiatives, development of virtual resources and services, and instructional methods.
- Allocates appropriate funding for the continuous upgrading of the technology infrastructure and support services as well as new services, as required.
- Promotes and ensures quality in all SCC distance education endeavors.

**MEASURES OF MERIT:**

1. Availability of statistics regarding student retention, success, and satisfaction in DE courses for each semester.

2. Assessment of student learning outcomes (SLOs) for distance education courses.

3. Implementation of curriculum guidelines outlining "regular, effective contact" in distance education courses.

4. College-wide assessment of services and resources available to distance education students, including recommendations for areas of improvement.

5. Attendance at training opportunities and institutes provided for online, hybrid, and televised course faculty.

6. Revised schedule and catalog descriptors for distance education modalities.

7. Formal placement and recognition of distance education within the governance structure.

8. Adoption of modeling rubrics by faculty teaching new online and hybrid courses.

9. Student use of online orientation and training materials.
10. Implementation of tracking mechanism for faculty training in DE instruction.

11. Changes in student awareness regarding DE modalities, offerings, and processes.

12. Users trained and courses converted to the Desire2Learn LMS platform.

13. Assessment of distance education course patterns and to identify programs with substantive changes.

**ANNUAL PLAN AND RESOURCES:**

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<tr>
<td>1. Measure and evaluate student retention, success, and satisfaction in distance education courses.</td>
<td>September, February</td>
<td>Learning Resources Division / DE / PRIE</td>
<td>Data from PRIE staff</td>
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<td>2. Develop guidelines regarding &quot;regular, effective contact&quot; between distance education faculty and students to ensure compliance with Title 5.</td>
<td>October</td>
<td>Distance Education Subcommittee of Curriculum Committee / DE</td>
<td>Existing Resources</td>
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<td>3. Conduct an audit of student and learning resource services available to distance education students to ensure distance education students have reasonable and adequate access to the range of student services appropriate to support the program.</td>
<td>November - April</td>
<td>AVP Student Services / Dean of Learning Resources / DE staff</td>
<td>Existing Resources</td>
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<td>4. Improve the availability of ongoing faculty training for distance education modalities.</td>
<td>August - May</td>
<td>DE / Instructional Development</td>
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<td>5. Re-examine the titles and descriptions for the online, hybrid,</td>
<td>October-</td>
<td>Distance Education</td>
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televised, and interactive television delivery modalities for distance education. Modifications should seek to increase clarity and help students better distinguish between distance education modalities.

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<td>6.</td>
<td>August - May</td>
<td>Executive Council / Academic Senate</td>
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6. Implement an advisory committee or standing committee charged with advancing collegial dialogue, policy, and standards regarding the delivery of distance education courses, not to include those issues which are the purview of the Curriculum Committee.

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7. Actively participate in college dialogue regarding measurement of student learning outcomes as they relate to distance education courses and delivery.

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8. Update the Distance Education portion of the college catalog to reflect any specific program requirements, equivalency of expected learning outcomes to traditional courses, nature of faculty-student interaction, and transferrability of courses.

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9. Develop and provide modeling rubrics for use by faculty developing distance education courses.

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10. Develop methods to clearly communicate to potential distance education students the nature of faculty and student interaction, expectations regarding student technological competence or technology skills, training for students requiring assistance with technology skills, minimum technology requirements for distance education modalities, and availability of support.

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11. Implement a tracking mechanism to ensure faculty have received appropriate training for teaching in a distance education modality, and develop a procedure to notify deans and department chairs when classes are assigned to faculty not meeting appropriate training requirements for teaching in a distance education modality.

| Services. | June - July | DE / IT / Deans | Online database development |

12. Promote awareness of distance education and digital learning opportunities across the college.

| July - June | DE | Existing resources |

13. Investigate, advocate for, and implement new technologies or enhancements that enrich digital teaching and learning opportunities across disciplines.

| July - June | DE / IT | $3000 |

14. Migrate all online, hybrid, and web-enhanced faculty and courses from Blackboard to the Desire2Learn learning management system. (Blackboard sunsets at end of Spring 2009 semester.)

| July - May | DE / Instructional Development | Existing resources |

* OPR = Office of Primary Responsibility; OFR = Office of Facilitative Responsibility

**REVIEW CYCLE:** Annual