



Distance Education

Strategic Plan

2006

Distance Education

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Prepared for
Citrus Community College by:

- Dr. Stephen L. Lindsey, Dean
- Bruce Langford, Faculty Coordinator
- Lari Kirby, Distance Education Supervisor

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Introduction

As pointed out in the History portion of this report, Citrus College has for many years sought ways to meet the needs of students with various types of non-traditional instructional delivery. We believe that these numerous and varied methods of instruction have had one thing in common – they have all represented a purposeful attempt to more completely fulfill the college’s mission statement, namely “...*to meet the many educational needs of the students and the communities of the San Gabriel Valley...*” While night and weekend classes, as well as study abroad opportunities, have been a part of the college offerings for many years, online classes (known as distance education) are of fairly recent origin. The precursor to our online program was our foray into the world of ***Instructional Television*** (“ITV”). In the Spring 1989 semester Citrus College first offered students the opportunity to earn college credits by watching television programs (broadcasts were on various networks including KCET – 28, KOCE – 50, and KVCR – 24), completing study assignments, attending seminars on campus, and taking a mid-term and final examination. In that first semester the college offered three ITV classes (ECON 100, HIST 108, and SOC 201). Seven years later Citrus offered its last ITV classes. In the summer of 1996, Dr. Ken Guttman experimented with the first distance education class offered on campus. Then, in the fall semester of that same year a hand full of innovative faculty members stepped forward to join with Dr. Guttman and help Citrus College launch its distance education program. During that fall semester (1996), eight on-line classes were offered. Over the past decade the program has grown, and this fall (Fall 2006) over 70 distance education classes will be offered at Citrus.

There have been many developments and changes during the 10 years of the program’s existence, and it is anticipated that many more changes will occur in the years ahead. In order to better prepare the college and the Distance Education Program for such changes, it was thought that we would do well to stop and reflect on where the program has been, to consider the program’s current position, and finally to think about the future of the program. That is the purpose of this report, which we are calling the “Strategic Plan.” Somewhat analogous to the program review process for the school’s academic departments, it is our hope that this report will not only serve as a reference to those who would like to learn more about the program, but that it will also provide direction for future decision-making by those who would be guided by the information contained herein. It is anticipated that the process of preparing such a report will be repeated periodically (perhaps every few years) in order to provide continuity and to allow for the significant unexpected changes and developments that occur regularly in the field of higher education (particularly in areas where technology plays an important role).

To this end, then, we present this report, which contains input from faculty, staff, students and administrators. Thank you to all of those who have provided input and assistance with this project.

History

Since its inception, Citrus College has sought out ways to meet the needs of students. Through the years this ongoing effort has led to various types of non-traditional instructional delivery methods. One such method utilized by the college was known as ***Instructional Television*** (“ITV”). In the spring semester of 1989 Citrus College first offered students the opportunity to earn college credits by watching television programs (broadcasts were on various networks including KCET – 28, KOCE – 50, and KVCR – 24), completing study assignments, attending seminars on campus, and taking a mid-term and final examination. In that first semester the college offered three ITV classes (ECON 100, HIST 108, and SOC 201). For the following seven years Citrus offered ITV classes to its students.

Growing dissatisfaction with the ITV approach, coupled with a growing interest in computers and internet access by students, led to the discontinuation of ITV offerings. Citrus offered its last ITV classes in the spring semester of 1996. During the summer session the first distance education class was offered, and in the fall semester of that same year a hand full of innovative faculty members stepped forward to help Citrus College launch its distance education program. During this first semester, eight on-line classes were offered. Initially, growth was rather slow. During the early days of distance education, several faculty members stepped forward to lend their leadership skills to the program. Among them were Dr. Kenneth Guttman, Dr. Bruce Solheim, and Professor Maia Greenwell-Cunningham. Eric Nightingale began his service as the dean over the program in 1996. In the spring semester of 1999, 15 classes were offered as distance education classes. Thereafter growth in the program began to accelerate. By the year 2000 approximately 35 distance education classes were being offered each semester. In the spring of 2002 Dr. Stephen Lindsey was appointed dean over the distance education area. By that time nearly 55 distance education classes were being offered. Ongoing faculty input has been sought and provided through the years of the program, and direct faculty leadership has continued in recent years through the position of distance education faculty coordinators. The coordinators have served as liaison between faculty and the college administration in working on issues related to the program. Both Professor Brian Waddington and Professor Bruce Langford have served in that capacity in recent years. In 2002 the position of Distance Education Supervisor was created, and Lari Kirby was appointed to that position.

Today, the distance education program consists of nearly 80 classes presented in an online fashion or as hybrid (integrated) classes. The program currently has more than 40 instructors, most of whom are full-time faculty members of the college.

Details regarding the growth of the program are contained in the section that follows. In Appendix 1 of this report you can see a detailed report showing all faculty members who have taught distance education at Citrus through the years, what class or classes they taught, and when.

General observations

- Stephen Lindsey

It has been my pleasure to provide managerial support as dean of the distance education program since the Spring 2002 semester. In this capacity I have had the honor of working closely with outstanding faculty members and deans from virtually all divisions and departments on campus. In addition, I have been teaching distance education classes for several years.

Our distance education program has experienced significant growth over the course of the past decade. In the Spring 1999 semester we had 613 students enrolled in 15 distance education classes. This past spring (Spring 2006) we had 3045 students enrolled in 69 distance education classes. The growth of our program mirrors similar growth in such programs on college campuses nation-wide.

I appreciate the strong support given to the distance education program by the college, including its leadership (the Trustees, the Superintendent/President, the Vice President of Instruction, and the various divisional deans), the faculty, and many other groups across campus (MIS, the bookstore, library, counseling, student services, the Learning Center and the Testing Center to name a few). Together we are meeting the needs of a large number of students who benefit from this method of instruction.

The students who are enrolling in our distance education classes for the most part reside within our school's general service area. Many, if not most, of our distance education instructors require their students to come to campus periodically during the semester (for such things as student orientations, exams, etc.). Many of these students are unable to take traditional classes for reasons including work schedule conflicts, family commitments, and physical limitations. Distance education provides such students with an alternative opportunity to advance academically.

The classes that our instructors prepare and place online are supported by an online course delivery system. The system we are currently utilizing is Blackboard (Bb), and it has provided us with a relatively stable platform for our offerings during the past several years. Any system we choose to utilize now or in the future should provide features such as easy entry and manipulation of course content (syllabus, assignments, announcements, faculty contact information, etc.), secure student grade display, and interactive capabilities for faculty-to-student and for student-to-student contact. The Bb system provides all of these features.

Bb is not utilized exclusively for our distance education classes. Bb is also used by numerous groups on campus to accomplish various tasks, such as the administration of surveys, online discussions and much more. In addition, it is available for use in traditional classes by all faculty members, even those not teaching distance education classes. In fact, the use of Bb in traditional classes is growing at a very fast rate. Such use is not intended to replace traditional class procedures and protocols. Faculty

members continue to provide all necessary class elements in hard copy in the classroom to those students who do not have ready access to either a computer or the internet. The increase in the use of Bb on campus has given rise to the additional need for training and support for our faculty. The distance education office has provided, and for the foreseeable future will continue to provide such training and staff support. However, I anticipate that this additional need for training and support will bring with it the need for additional staff in the distance education office.

The distance education program at Citrus is currently operating with the following personnel and managerial oversight:

***Dean of Business and Distance Education:** provides managerial support*

***Distance Education Supervisor:** daily operations and supervision*

***Web Page Specialist:** 49% position, providing necessary help and expertise*

***Hourly and on-call help:** As needed*

***Faculty coordinator:** works weekly as a liaison between faculty and DE staff/management*

I commend the past and present distance education supervisors, coordinators, and staff members who have worked diligently in the program through the years. I also commend our outstanding faculty members who have developed and taught distance education classes over the past several years. Many of our current distance education faculty members have been with the program from its inception. Some have played significant roles in the development and growth of the program. Clearly the program would not be where it is today had it not been for the fine efforts of the faculty and staff, coupled with the support and encouragement provided by the college leadership.

General observations

- Bruce Langford

I have been teaching in Distance Education at Citrus College since 1998 and have been Faculty Coordinator for the program over the last three years. As would anyone in that position for that amount of time, I have formed opinions based on my experience and observations. While these opinions should be given no more or less weight than they so richly deserve, in my position as Faculty Coordinator, I am obliged to make them.

The Program

I believe that Distance Education at Citrus College is working well and meeting the needs of an ever increasing number of students. As statistics in this document will show, our completion and success rates compare more than favorably to the national average. The majority of our students indicate they are satisfied with the program and the education it provides. Our faculty seems satisfied with the technology available to them, the working conditions within the program, and the supervision under which they work. By any measure, the program in its current state is successful.

Kudos go to those whose vision built the program. They are mentioned by name elsewhere in this document. Additionally, credit goes to the Dean over Distance Education, Steve Lindsey, for managing a multifaceted program that often requires coordination and agreement among disparate members of the community. And, of course, thanks go to the Distance Education staff who contribute far more to the program than their number, or the hours allotted them, would warrant.

In short, things are good. I believe this document supports that. In addition, I think there are things we can do to make it even better.

Growth

The potential for growth is, quite literally, limitless. It is hindered or enhanced solely by the amount of resources allotted to it by the District and the college administration. Currently Distance Education serves about 2,000 to 2,500 students a semester, or roughly 10% of the college enrollment. This could be doubled or tripled virtually over night were courses made available. Granted there are philosophical issues involved. How much of a student's education should be accessible on-line? How much priority should be given this delivery method? How successful can the average student who has come through a traditional public school education be in Distance Education? These questions, and many more, are addressed elsewhere. But clearly, that a good, comprehensive education is deliverable on-line has been, and continues to be, demonstrated on a world-wide level. Citrus College can be as much, or as little, a part of that as it chooses.

Emergency Preparedness

Of a major concern to me is emergency preparation in the event that a natural disaster, terrorist attack, epidemic, or similar event makes it necessary to close the campus for a short, or extended, amount of time. Distance Education is in the perfect position to mitigate such a disaster. Delivering education on-line, over distances great or small is what we do. We have the technology and the expertise. It is, frankly, foolish not to be prepared to use this valuable and available tool should the situation call for it.

In light of this, I recommend that:

- ALL of our classes be placed on Blackboard. Each class should have a “shell” and have the current roster of students enrolled on the site.
- All students should be told how to access Blackboard in the event of an emergency.
- All faculty should be given basic training in the use of Blackboard.

Not only would this provide a valuable tool for traditional education in the classroom, but literally, at a moments notice, delivery could be switched to Distance Education and a semester could be salvaged in the event of a disaster. We have the means.

Targeted Consumers

I used to say that distance education is a good alternative to no education at all, but a poor substitute for the classroom. Having spent a good deal of time in distance education now, seen what is possible, and reviewed many of the educational products delivered in that way, I am now quite prepared to admit that in some instances a superior education is available on-line, depending upon the subject, the instructor, and the availability of technology. Still, having said that, I would still prefer to direct the delivery of education on-line toward those students who would not otherwise have access to an any education at all, rather than those who prefer, for the sake of convenience, to take a class on-line.

There are still far too many students who choose Distance Education because they think it will be easier or involve less work. Nothing, of course, could be further from the truth. Often, just the opposite is true. For distance education to succeed it requires the right student and the right instructor. Distance Education relies heavily on the two things many students find the most difficult: reading comprehension and writing skills. Still, for the dedicated, self disciplined student and the instructor willing to invest more than the amount of time it might take to teach a traditional class, this is a wonderful medium of delivery. I would like to see it increasingly “marketed” to those who would not have access to an education were it not for this educational tool. That, for me, is a more rewarding use of the technology than as an alternative for the student who just can’t be bothered to rearrange a work schedule or who thinks it will take less time and be easier than sitting in a classroom.

Faculty Training

An outline for Faculty Training appears elsewhere in this document. In the same way it is important to attract students who will be successful in Distance Education, it is also important to attract and train faculty who will be successful. Additional and alternative skills than those required for the traditional classroom are needed for Distance Education. While I would certainly not advocate a training program devoid of flexibility, freedom, and room for personal inspiration; to turn a faculty member loose in Distance Education with no idea of what to expect or how to succeed is unfair to them and to the students.

Accessibility

Citrus College has worked very hard to make all of its Distance Education web sites accessible to those whose physical limitations might otherwise hinder them. I support and applaud this work. However, when the goal of accessibility actually impairs the availability of education to traditional students, either on-line or in the class room, then it becomes self defeating. I support the interpretation of the law used at other institutions (Mt. Sac, for example) which says that we are WILLING and ABLE to provide alternative delivery SHOULD THE NEED ARISE. I know of NO faculty member who would not go out of his way to provide the means of an education for any student with physical disabilities. But to prohibit the use of web sites and films because they are not “accessible” when the accessibility is not required by any student present is penalizing the majority for the sake of a non-existent minority.

Those are my observations and suggestions. Thanks for the opportunity to make them and for the chance to work in the Distance Education program at Citrus College. I have enjoyed it. I have learned from it. I hope I have contributed to it.

In closing, I am reminded of a line frequently used by Dennis Miller after he finishes a tirade on one subject or another. It is apropos in this case as well. As a caveat to all of the above, I would say:

“But that’s just my opinion. I could be wrong.”

General observations

- Lari Kirby

I have had the opportunity, challenge and pleasure of participating in the Distance Education program since its inception. My involvement began from “outside” the area to Administrative Secretary for the Dean of Distance Education, Eric Nightingale. I have had the opportunity not only to work for the current Dean, Dr. Stephen Lindsey, but each of the Faculty Liaisons over the years – Dr. Kenneth Guttman, Dr. Bruce Solheim, Maia Greenwell-Cunningham, Brian Waddington and Bruce Langford... Four years ago I was proud to accept the position of Distance Education Coordinator/Classified Supervisor.

The Distance Education program was “born” in the summer of 1975, with one class, taught by Dr. Kenneth Guttman. Today, the program consists of 79 classes presented in an online fashion or a hybrid (integrated) presentation. The program currently has 40 plus instructors, most of which have been with the program for 6 – 8 years. Over the years, the program was a fully support World Wide Web based offering and is still changing over to a Blackboard support environment. The demand for Blackboard continues to grow not only for distance education, but for use in the traditional enhanced classroom environment. It provides the opportunity to communicate with the traditional student, as well as provide materials, and provide grade information in a secure environment accessible to the student from anywhere. The creed of distance education began as “any time, any place, any where” and the students will continue to seek this modality. We have had many students complete coursework around the world. I continue to speak with students who tell me “without distance education I would not have been able to complete my associate’s degree.” A high percentage of the distance education students are single parents, students working full time jobs, and students with limitations not allowing participation on campus.

The Distance Education program at Citrus College continues to be growing. The percent of growth was substantial in the past year. I anticipate that the program will continue to expand in course offerings, as well as research additional opportunities benefiting Citrus College overall. Focused diligence on staffing and equipment will be needed if we are to continue succeeding in this area.

The program has received support from the district over the years in many ways – student services, administration, faculty and students. However, as technology continues to change rapidly and the demands of incoming students continues to grow, the key participants will need to constantly evaluate software, opportunities to expand, build instructor pools, research other options for delivery in an accelerated fashion, streamline registration, reporting and integration of student data. The implementation of WingSpan will assist with much of this.

Today’s student needs/wants/demands accelerated opportunities from off campus to complete their education at the community college level. They seek streamlined, online, opportunities to excel in upper level education.

Technology is ever changing – it's considered out of date once it leaves the shelf. Focus will be needed in staying current if we wish to continue to "lead the pack" in Distance Education.

I look forward to the future in Distance Education as well as Citrus College. The changes that have occurred and are coming are, in my opinion, are positive not only for the students but Citrus. Five years from now I anticipate that Distance Education will more than double and be in yet an even higher demand from the community. By implementing more technology one can envision students from all points "attending" Citrus College.

Growth of the distance education program

- Spring 1999 through Spring 2006

Distance education offerings at Citrus College have increased significantly over the past several years. The pages that follow show spring semester distance education offerings over the past 7 years, dating back to Spring 1999. The charts show the distance education classes offered, and the number of students enrolled in each of the classes.

By way of summary, in Spring 1999 only 15 classes were offered in the distance education format, with 613 total enrolled students. This past Spring (2006), 69 distance education classes were offered, with 3045 total enrolled students.

The average number of distance education students has increased by 347 each spring semester over the past 7 years, which amounts to an average percent growth rate of 38% per year. The average number of distance education classes offered has increased by 8 each spring semester over the past 7 years, which amounts to an average percent growth rate of 31% per year. The average number of students per distance education class has not changed much over the years. In 1999 there was an average of 41 students enrolled in each distance education class offered. In 2006 the average was 44 students per distance education class.

The attached sheets show the distance education classes offered and the students enrolled during the spring semesters over the past 7 years. In nearly all cases the enrollment figures were for the date classes started or immediately thereafter.

Student success rates in distance education classes

- Comparison with traditional classes (includes statistical charts)

Success rate comparisons for students in DE classes vs. students in traditional classes:

One of the concerns regarding delivery of education in an online format is the success rates of the students. How many of the enrolled students actually complete distance education classes with other than a failing grade? How many fail? How many withdraw? And, how do these numbers compare with students taking the same classes in the traditional (in-class) manner?

At the end of each spring semester the distance education team (with help from the MIS department) accumulates and analyzes data regarding these important questions. The detailed information for the past 3 years (2003/04, 2004/05, and 2005/06) is included with this report, and is set forth in the pages immediately following this sheet.

The data can be summarized briefly as follows: When comparing distance education classes with the same traditional classes taught by the same professors, the percent of students who complete the course with a failing grade (an F) is nearly the same, and has remained consistent over the past few years. Distance education failures are slightly higher, averaging 22.5% over the past 2 years, while traditional failures average slightly less over the same period, at 19%. However, the big difference is that distance education students have a much higher withdrawal rate (averaging 30% over the past few years compared to the traditional class withdrawal average of 15%). It follows that the percent of students successfully completing DE classes over the past 3 years is significantly less than for traditional classes. The average success rate for DE classes is 45%, compared to 62% of the students taking traditional classes.

A chart summarizing this data is set forth below. For the full data, see the pages that follow.

Spring 2004 - 06
Same instructor
comparisons

DE vs. Traditional delivery

Citrus College

Comparisons re completion and success rates

Pass=A-D

Overall summary

	DE Classes					Traditional classes			
	<u>Census</u>	<u>Pass</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>F</u>		<u>Census</u>	<u>Pass</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>F</u>
2006 Total:	2352	897	935	512	2006 Total:	2868	1474	820	546
Percent:		38%	40%	22%	Percent:		51%	29%	19%
2005 Total:	1023	547	203	235	2005 Total:	1833	1298	161	344
Percent:		53%	20%	23%	Percent:		71%	9%	19%
2004 Total:	1427	627			2004 Total:	1222	800		
Percent:		44%			Percent:		65%		

Faculty survey summary

In preparation for the Strategic Plan, the Distance Education faculty was surveyed regarding key areas of the Distance Education program. These areas included “Scheduling and Course Offerings,” Delivery Issues and Methods,” “Staffing,” “Management and Evaluation,” and “Technology.” While clearly there is overlap in these categories, this arrangement allowed for soliciting the preferences and recommendations of the faculty with regards to Distance Education.

All faculty currently teaching in the Distance Education program received the survey. The survey was sent electronically, that is via email, to approximately 40 people.

It should be noted that the response to the survey was minimal, with only about 20% of the faculty responding. Reasons for this may be two-fold. The survey contained 23 questions and required more than a cursory glance and quick response. In addition, it might be concluded that since the majority of the faculty are content with the current state of the program, there was little incentive to register an opinion. Of course, other reasons are possible, but one prefers to believe that the apparent apathy is the result of this contentment.

Scheduling and Course Offerings

The dominate issues in this category involved the offering of a degree on-line and the use of hybrid or integrated classes. Hybrid or integrated classes are those classes which are a mixture of traditional classroom attendance and an on-line delivery format.

While there was some diversity of opinion as to just which degrees should be offered on-line, response was overwhelmingly in favor of doing so. Concerns involved the offering of classes that require a lab. However, provided that the logistics of the delivery method could be addressed, perhaps through the use of hybrid classes, faculty were certainly in favor of making enough classes available so that students could earn a degree through distance education.

It should be noted that while a California Community College can only offer two degrees, an Associate of Arts or an Associate of Science, a “major” or emphasis in any number of disciplines is possible.

The faculty was also overwhelmingly in favor of hybrid or integrated classes. This was seen not only as a way to solve issues that might arise in offering labs, but also as the best of both worlds when it came to a combination of face to face contact and the delivery of information through distance education.

Delivery Issues and Methods

A major area of interest in this category was whether or not Citrus should design its on-line courses in such a way that would NOT require students to ever come to campus. The response was overwhelmingly in favor of such a design.

This, in turn, raised the issue of testing and how it could be done off site while still insuring academic honesty and integrity. A number of suggestions were made such as the use of timed exams and essay exams, as well as the use of proctors off campus. While faculty varied in their approach to solving the problem, it was clear that they were willing to try and solve it and saw the advantages to offering a “purely” distance education curriculum, at least in some disciplines.

When it came to limiting the number of students in a distance education course, feelings, even among those who favored not doing so, were mixed. Most faculty, while expressing concern over just how many students could be adequately educated in an on-line class, still felt that setting the number of students in a course should be up to the individual faculty member, as it is with a traditional class.

Other minor issues such as length of classes, introduction pages, transferability, and the open house orientation for distance education students were also addressed in this section.

Staffing

A key element of interest in this category was whether or not Citrus College should limit the number of distance education classes an instructor could teach. While most faculty expressed no desire to teach a full load of distance education classes, and also felt that faculty should be on campus at least some of the time, they nevertheless preferred that a limit not be universally imposed, but rather left to the faculty member and the needs of the department.

In addition, most faculty indicated that the current process of assigning distance education classes to faculty was working well. As for the criteria that should govern these assignments, faculty indicated that it should go to those who had been trained in distance education and demonstrated an ability to work successfully in that medium of delivery. As one faculty member wrote, “DE teaching is a privilege, not a right.”

Faculty also indicated they had no problem allowing teachers from outside the area to teach on-line classes through Citrus College. Most faculty felt that, provided the logistics of paper work, maintaining student contact, and faculty interaction could be addressed, this was one way to expand the distance education offerings.

Other issues such as training for distance education faculty, the frequency of faculty meetings, and support staff were also addressed in this section. Faculty were quick to say that the current support staff has done an excellent job of meeting their needs.

Management and Evaluation

Evaluation of the current management system was mixed. Current management is a result of the combined efforts of the Dean over Distance Education, the Dean of the faculty member's Department, the advice of a Faculty Coordinator, and the approval of the Vice President of Instruction. While a fair number of faculty seemed quite comfortable with this arrangement, others suggested it should be streamlined and reduced to one person with the authority to make decisions. Some suggested this should be a faculty member, others an administrative position.

When it came to the evaluation of faculty teaching distance education classes, most faculty wanted more strict evaluation rather than less.

Technology

This section dealt with the technological needs of both individual faculty and of the program. Issues of office and lab space were also addressed as well as content and navigation of the Distance Education home page.

PLEASE NOTE

A full copy of the survey is available in Appendix 2 of this document. In addition, there is a breakdown of responses to each question as well as a list of comments by those who responded.

Administrator survey summary

In March of 2006 an eight question survey regarding the Citrus College distance education program was distributed to various administrative managers at the college. Of the 10 surveys distributed, 5 written responses were received. Both the survey itself and the written responses are set forth at length in Appendix 3. To summarize the entire survey here would be redundant. However, a few interesting observations can be highlighted.

- Most respondents (80%) feel that the DE program should grow in the coming years. Of this group, most (75%) feel that the college should definitely work toward offering sufficient DE courses so that a student could earn a degree completely online.
- The management structure for the DE program and the procedure currently used for the assignment of DE classes is viewed favorably by a majority of those responding.
- All respondents expressed a desire that full-time faculty members participate fully in the campus community and activities, and that they not be assigned “too many” DE classes (though there was no agreement as to the definition of “too many” classes). Regarding adjunct faculty members, the majority expressed the sentiment that they should be local, and thus also able to be a part of the campus community to some degree.
- All respondents expressed support for “hybrid” or “integrated” classes, which combine the traditional classroom with some information delivered online.

Student survey summary

In its original design, circa 2004, the Distance Education Student Survey contained approximately 50 questions. This was revised in 2005 to 35 questions. A further revision in 2006 reduced the survey once again to its current 14 questions. Every attempt has been made to garner as much information as possible while reducing the amount of time required to take the survey. This has resulted in increased participation and, as a result, increased data.

The survey this year was made available via Blackboard to approximately 1650 students. Approximately 340 students responded, representing a 20% return.

Both the Student Survey itself and a Statistical Summary of Student Responses can be found in Appendix 4. The Summary includes the approximately 350 written comments made by students in addition to the totals for multiple choice answers to each question.

To summarize the entire survey here would be redundant. The appendix document does that quite well. However, a few interesting observations can be highlighted.

- When asked why they took a distance education course, most students responded that it was prompted by their work schedule and its inherent impediment to taking a traditional class.
- When asked what classes they would like to see offered which are not currently on the schedule, the predominate answer was math.
- The majority of students believe that the course objectives in a Distance Education course are clearly presented, there is an agreement between what is “advertised” and what is presented in the course, and that assignments and exams are graded in a timely manner.
- The majority of students found communication with their instructor to be timely and efficient.
- Over half the respondents said that the course they took did not require them to come to campus.
- About half the students said their grades in distance education were about the same as the grades they received in traditional classes. Approximately 20% said they were higher and 20% said they were lower.
- Finally, when asked about their overall level of satisfaction with Distance Education at Citrus College, 94% said they were very or somewhat satisfied.

We encourage a detailed examination of the Statistical Summary of Student Responses. We believe it is one indication that the Distance Education program is successfully meeting the needs of our students.

Selection of classes and assignment of instructors

The processes by which classes are selected to be offered in a distance education format, and the processes by which faculty members are selected to teach such classes, are varied and have developed over time. Some of the processes are generally described below:

- In many instances faculty members play a significant role. It is often a faculty member who initiates the process by expressing an interest in teaching a particular course using the DE format. Such a request would be made to that faculty member's divisional dean, and if the divisional dean approves of the idea, it is then carried forward to the Dean of Distance Education and his staff for further discussion and consideration.
- In some cases, the initial idea to offer a class using the DE format comes directly from a divisional dean. The idea is brought forward to the Dean of Distance Education and his staff for further discussion and consideration. If a decision is made to move forward with the class, an appropriate faculty member is eventually consulted regarding the teaching of the class.
- In some cases, the initial idea to offer a class using the DE format comes from one of the directors (such as the Director of Vocational Education). Appropriate faculty members are consulted, and the idea is brought forward to the Dean of Distance Education and his staff for further discussion and consideration.
- In some instances the idea to offer a particular class in the DE format will come either from the Dean of Distance Education and his staff, or from the Vice President of Instruction. It is possible that an idea might also originate from other sources. In each case, such an idea eventually results in collaboration and discussions by and between the Dean of Distance Education and the divisional dean of the department under which the course falls.

In every case, the course in question must at some point be approved by the Curriculum Committee for teaching in the distance education format. A class generally will not be offered until it has met this requirement.

The Dean of Distance Education and the divisional dean normally work closely together in selecting the faculty member who will teach a particular distance education class. Good distance education instructors possess certain skills especially appropriate to the DE format. *“High-quality online teachers know that they constantly must be in touch with their students to ensure the students’ success... Online instruction emphasizes active participation by and frequent interaction among teachers and students.”* **SREB publication, April 2003**

Faculty training

Training for Distance Education faculty has been designed with three groups of people in mind: a newly assigned Distance Education Instructor, a faculty member wishing to teach in Distance Education, and a traditional instructor who wishes to learn the tools of distance education delivery.

Newly Assigned Distance Education Instructor

Assuming that a course has been approved by Curriculum for Distance Education, and once an Instructor has been assigned to a Distance Education course through the collaboration of the Dean of Distance Education and the Dean of the Division, a NEW faculty member must go, or have gone, through ALL of the steps in training before teaching a Distance Education course. The oversight of completion is ultimately up to the Dean of Distance Education, though the Dean may assign such oversight as he or she sees fit. It is not impossible to imagine that a potential faculty member from outside the area could complete this process long distance, but that would certainly be the exception and not the rule.

Instructor Who Wants to Apply to Teach Distance Education

An instructor who shows an interest in learning the tools of Distance Education or might want to teach a Distance Education class in the future may go through some or all of the steps in the training process. In the event that the instructor reaches Step 6 (Build a Site) he or she may use an existing course or one that has not been approved by Curriculum for Distance Education as a practice model. Obviously the requirements for course approval and faculty assignment will have to be met before the class is actually taught through Distance Education.

Traditional Instructor who wants to learn Blackboard

For a traditional Instructor who wants to learn Blackboard and other distance education delivery tools and methods for use in a traditional class room OR in the event of an emergency that may require the temporary shift of a traditional class to distance education delivery, the Distance Education Faculty Training offers an excellent opportunity. The Instructor may go through some or all of the steps depending on their level of interest.

The scheduling of Blackboard trainings, the placement of faculty into those classes, and the assignment of staff to work with faculty is the job of the Distance Education Supervisor. The assignment of a mentor to work with faculty is the job of the Faculty Coordinator.

**Distance Education Guidelines, faculty self-assessments,
and the class site review process**

The college and everyone involved with the DE program (including the faculty teaching the classes, the DE Dean, the faculty coordinators, the DE staff, and the divisional deans) desire that the level of quality of DE classes be (and remain) high. Some of the steps that have been taken to assure that a high quality level is attained and maintained are as follows:

Guidelines: In 2004 the Distance Education office (dean and faculty coordinators), working in conjunction with faculty members teaching DE classes, developed guidelines setting forth expectations for all DE classes offered at the college. These guidelines cover such areas as: Timely, appropriate and regular interaction between students and faculty; instructor contact information; course essentials (such as assignments, grading policies, schedule, etc.); ongoing announcements; where to get technical help; and accessibility issues. Once developed, the guidelines were presented to and approved by the Faculty Senate. All DE faculty members are given a copy of these guidelines. A copy of the guidelines is included in this section.

Faculty self-assessment: The DE office distributes the DE Guidelines to the all faculty members teaching DE classes. The faculty members are asked to review the guidelines, to review their DE classes, and finally to submit to the DE office a written report setting forth the steps they have taken with their class to meet the guidelines.

Review of class sites: The primary tool utilized by faculty members in teaching distance education classes is the online class website (“site”). Historically, faculty members worked in conjunction with the DE web staff to prepare and post their sites as well as subsequent changes and updates. However, in recent years the college has contracted with Blackboard, a company that hosts most (though not all) of our class sites with a “platform” (also know as “course delivery system”) that allows faculty members to design and make changes to their own sites, in most cases without any help from the DE staff. Currently, most sites are prepared and maintained by the instructors. Each site is located online, and students are directed to go to the site in order to proceed with the course.

Most class sites include links that allow students to access the class syllabus, the semester assignments, information about the professor, textbook information, interactive discussion boards, and other class features the professor deems appropriate for the class. In addition, there is normally a link that allows students to view their scores, points and grades on various quizzes, papers, assignments and exams as the course progresses.

Given the importance of the class site to the success and quality of a DE class, in recent years the DE office has developed a procedure whereby faculty members and the DE office can evaluate DE class sites and teaching. The process involves the review of a DE

professor's site. The DE Dean and the faculty coordinator review most if not all links and "pages" of the class site. Substantive content is not analyzed. Rather, the review is done primarily with the DE guidelines in mind. Once the review is completed, a written report is prepared. A sample of such a report is included in this section. Thereafter, the DE Dean, often with the faculty coordinator, will meet with the faculty member in order to review the report, make suggestions and recommendations where deemed appropriate, and answer any questions that might arise. Numerous such meetings have taken place over the past several years, and the procedure has proved very helpful.

Distance Education Website, Class Introduction Pages and Accessibility

Website and Class Introduction Pages

Over the course of the past several years the Distance Education program has developed a web site for the overall DE program. This site can be visited at the following URL: www.citruscollege.com. By clicking on the link for the desired term under the “Online Courses” caption on the far right of the site, students can see a listing of classes being offered for that term in a DE format. By clicking on the ticket number for the desired class, students are then taken to the “introduction page” for that specific class. The introduction pages should provide interested students with appropriate information to inform (and hopefully to attract) them. In this regard, each introduction page is periodically reviewed by our distance education office staff, and where appropriate changes are either made or recommended to the instructor. In addition, faculty members are encouraged to review their own introduction pages and to make corrections, changes and updates where appropriate. On the page that follows is a sample of the type of memo that is sent periodically to faculty members teaching DE classes with recommendations regarding their DE class introduction pages.

Accessibility

Since 2001 the Distance Education program has been working with Disabled Student Programs and Services in an attempt to insure accessibility of distance education classes and materials to all Citrus College students. This joint effort has involved extensive interaction between the two programs, and the diligent and ongoing efforts of the Alternate Media Specialist who has assisted in this effort. A report listing some of the steps taken and accomplishments achieved has been prepared by Joyce Miyabe, former Alternate Media Specialist, and is included in this section. Clearly these efforts will be of an ongoing nature. Citrus College and the Distance Education program are committed to providing education and resources to all of our students.

**Accreditation Self-Study (2003) relating to distance education,
And our Mid-Term Report (2006) showing progress madeFaculty**

In 2003 Citrus College conducted an Accreditation Self Study. Included in that study was a *Special Report On Distance Education*. The report included three major areas of study.

- Curriculum and Instruction
- Institutional Context and Commitment
- Evaluation and Assessment

Each of these main categories had 4, 11, and 2 sub-categories respectively. Each of these sub-categories was comprised of three sections.

- Description
- Self-Evaluation
- Planning Agenda

The Planning Agendas from each of the sub-categories created a total list of, to put it simply, thirty things “to do.” The way in which each of these items has been addressed is articulated in the following Midterm Report.

Budget for distance education

On the pages that follow are both the Adopted Budget for distance education for the 2005-2006 fiscal year, and the draft budget for distance education for the 2006-2007 fiscal year.

A few items that are worthy of note:

1. The significant increase in the budget for line item 5840 reflects the college's decision to move to a higher level of service provided by our online course delivery system. The recent upgrade increased substantially the memory of our system, as well as increasing the bandwidth and speed of the system. These improvements were deemed appropriate given the ever-growing usage being made of the system by the college.
2. Although the annual expense of our online course delivery system is allocated to the distance education cost center, this system is used extensively outside of the distance education program (such as for traditional classroom use). Furthermore, other distance education assets (staff, resources, etc.) are utilized outside of the distance education program.

Commendations

1. Most sites have been evaluated for accessibility and the results given to the Distance Education office and individual faculty members.
2. A training routine for new faculty has been created.
3. A Self-Review and Administrative Review of all distance education class web sites is in place and functional.
4. Distance education sites are routinely up and ready for preview the week before classes begin.
5. An up-to-date “Introduction Page” is available for “visitors” for almost all Distance Education web sites.
6. The acquisition, and continuous upgrade, of Blackboard has provided faculty with an excellent operating platform from which to administer distance education courses.
7. Student evaluations are solicited on a regular basis.
8. Distance education success rates compare favorably with the national averages.
9. An overwhelming majority of students are satisfied with the distance education program.
10. The Citrus College class schedule now carries specific designations for distance education courses.
11. There is a “Distance Education – Online Classes” page in the class schedule which offers information to students specifically about distance education courses including the need for self motivation and instructions for accessing Blackboard.
12. Training on Blackboard is offered to faculty on a regular basis.
13. Distance Education faculty are surveyed on a regular basis regarding the program.
14. The Testing Center provides faculty and students with a valuable resource for exam administration and proctoring.
15. The Learning Center is staffed with helpful individuals who can help distance education students who may need assistance with the technical aspects of a distance education class.
16. Distance education faculty members meet together regularly to share information, methodologies, practices, and ideas, and to keep current regarding upcoming events.

Recommendations

1. The newly developed training system for faculty members should be implemented as soon as possible.
2. All Citrus College classes should have an active shell on Blackboard.
3. All Citrus College faculty members should be encouraged to attend basic Blackboard training.
4. The ongoing administrative review of distance education class web sites should continue.
5. Potentially successful math and science courses should be added to the distance education course offerings.
6. The Distance Education department is lacking in full time staff. The need for additional staff will likely increase in the coming years. The addition of full time staff should be a college priority.
7. At least three offices, a reception area, a computer lab, and meeting space should be provided for Distance Education in the new "Center for Innovation."
8. Distance Education should find new ways to target students who do not have access to a traditional classroom education.
9. Ongoing consideration should be given to the possibility of offering adequate distance education classes to allow students to earn their AA degree entirely online.
10. In cooperation with the Office of Student Services and the Dean of Admissions and Records, continue to work toward preparing and adding information about distance education to the college catalog.
11. Distance education staff and faculty members should continue to attend functions such as the annual Tech Ed conference in an effort to keep current with changing technologies.
12. The distance education staff should continue to monitor various online course delivery systems and software, noting features/capabilities as well as pricing.
13. Distance education faculty members should continue the practice of meeting together regularly for the purposes of sharing information, methodologies, practices, and ideas, and to keep current regarding upcoming events.

The Future (five year forecast)

Needless to say, it is difficult to predict what lies ahead for any particular program or department, particularly for programs or departments that are significantly tied to technology. Major changes in technology can develop rapidly and unexpectedly. Having said this, however, there is still value in anticipating and planning for the future. In this section an attempt is made to both forecast future events as well as set some direction for the future. We will start with growth projections.

Distance education classes in general: As of the Spring 2006 semester, our distance education program offered 69 classes and had 3045 students enrolled. This represents a significant increase from the 15 classes and 613 students served in 1999. Over the past 7 years, the number of distance education classes offered each semester has increase on average at the rate of 8 classes per year. The number of students enrolled in distance education classes has increased on average at the rate of 347 students per year. If we use these figures to extrapolate 5 years into the future, we would anticipate that by Spring 2011 we will be offering 109 distance education classes, with 4780 students enrolled.

Short- term distance education classes: In recent semesters (as well as during the summer term) the college has begun offering 9-week (short-term) distance education classes. These classes start late in the semester and cover the same material over a shorter period of time. It is a bit premature to predict the direction we will take with these types of offerings. However, they have been well-received by the students. They have in most cases had adequate to strong enrollments. There are several studies indicating that short-term distance education classes tend to have reduced drop rates as well as greater success rates. Our best forecast is that these types of offerings will increase in the coming 5 years.

Traditional classes: It is possible that given the recent rapid growth of distance education, the rate of future growth may temper a bit. However, during the next 5 years we anticipate a dramatic growth in the number of faculty members who will be using our online course delivery system for their traditional classes. In fact, we anticipate the day when course sites will be created each semester for every class in our schedule, thus allowing all faculty members the option of using the online site as an additional resource for their students.

Emergency Preparation: Should a future emergency (such as an earthquake) occur preventing faculty members and students from coming on to the main campus for an extended period of time, faculty and students might be able to continue and even complete coursework in both distance education and traditional classes by utilizing the online course sites.

Faculty training: With projections of increased distance education offerings in the coming years, it follows that we will either have to increase the number of classes being

taught by existing faculty members, or obtain new faculty members to teach the additional classes. Whether or not we continue our practice of having our full-time professors teach a significant portion of their load in the traditional format, we anticipate a growing need for faculty training. Distance education classes involve certain skills and approaches that are not necessarily repetitive of those previously mastered by teaching traditional classes, not the least of which is a working knowledge of the online course delivery system utilized by the college. In addition, faculty members who teach distance education classes can benefit from becoming familiar with and eventually utilizing new technologies in their classes. All of this will necessitate a strengthening of our training methods and procedures. It may also add to the need for additional staff support for our distance education office.

New technologies: During each of the past several years numerous members of our faculty and staff have attended an annual conference/trade show known as Tech Ed. The conference offers numerous workshops, and recently developed programs and hardware are displayed. In addition to Tech Ed, there are many other sources of information regarding new teaching and learning techniques and technologies. Developments such as CC Confer (a method of conducting a group discussion by telephone with simultaneous computer display) and podcasting (voice and/or video display/playback capabilities from a teacher's website) represent some of the recent technological developments that are being utilized by distance education instructors in their classes. Such developments will continue, and perhaps accelerate over the coming 5 years. In order to be alert to such developments and opportunities, the distance education staff and our faculty members need to continue to attend such conferences as Tech Ed.

Online course delivery system: In the early stages of distance education at Citrus College, the school developed and supported its own course delivery system. Through the hard work of several dedicated staff members, the college managed to support its class offerings for in this manner for a period time. However, as the number of class offerings grew, and the desire for more sophisticated capabilities increased, the college eventually "outsourced" the task of providing and supporting the "platform" for our distance education classes. Currently the college contracts with Blackboard, a company that provides the online course delivery system (both the programming and the server) utilized by our campus. Blackboard is used for online class materials for both our distance education as well as our traditional classes. In addition, the Blackboard program has also been used on occasion for non-academic uses on campus. Recently the college upgraded the services received from Blackboard to increase both storage and speed of our system. It is anticipated that the need for more storage and more speed will increase in the years ahead. Such programming and services do not come cheap. In fact, the cost is great. There are other companies and organizations that are developing or are currently providing their own online course delivery systems. Changes in the marketplace regarding these types of services and programming are anticipated in the years ahead. Hopefully, competition will keep pricing competitive and continue to raise the quality of product and services.

Office space: The office space presently allocated to our distance education program is adequate for current needs. The distance education office is presently housed in the Hayden Hall, with a small training lab, a reception area, a large office for our Distance Education Supervisor, and 2 smaller offices for our web specialists. It is anticipated that the distance education offices will be moved to the Center for Innovation (currently under construction) once that building is complete. Comparable accommodations will be required in the CFI to keep the distance education office running at its present level of efficiency and service. Obviously, as the need for staff increases in the coming years, so will the need for additional office space.

Conclusion: We stand in the river of time, and the future is coming toward us like the water of that great river. We must be ever-vigilant, watching for opportunities (and pitfalls) as they approach, and then positioning our programs (both distance education and other programs) in such a way as to take advantage of the opportunities as they arrive.

Appendix 1

Listing of Distance Education Classes and Faculty

Appendix 2

Faculty Surveys

Appendix 3

Administrator Surveys

Appendix 4

Student Surveys