On-Line Distance Learning Planning Report

Introduction

In March of 1997, the Director of Special Programs formed a steering committee for the leadership and coordination of on-line distance learning. The charge of the committee was to establish a common vision, define strategic directions, and identify implementation strategies for the coordination of on-line distance learning services. Members of the steering committee represent faculty, technology staff, the library, and distance learning administration perspectives.

Members:

Dr. Donald Wagner, director, special programs
Ms. Melanie Hill, coordinator, distance learning program
Mr. Paul Smith, senior coordinator, external degree program
Dr. Elizabeth Kirby, faculty, College of Education
Dr. Marc Miller, faculty, department chair, College of Business
Dr. John Fuller, faculty, College of Arts & Sciences
Mr. Matthew Clay, technology director, adjunct faculty, College of Education
Ms. Mary O’Neill, faculty, nursing, College of Arts & Sciences
Dr. Barbara Mc Kenzie, faculty, department chair, College of Education
Ms. Kathy Kral, computer center
Ms. Carol Goodson, library
Mr. Tom Beggs, director, learning resources
Ms. Diane Williamson, Continuing Education

Methodology

Members of the On-Line Steering Committee attended the following conferences in their efforts to seek information and develop a plan:

Society for Information Technology in Teacher Education, Orlando

The Cyberspace Campus: Student Services and Faculty Development for On-Line Education, The New School, New York City

Delivering On-Line Courses: The How-Tos of Development, Design, and Implementation, The College Board, Chicago and San Francisco

Teaching in Community Colleges On-Line, On-Line Conference

Members also met face-to-face and corresponded through e-mail to report findings and seek feedback during the planning process. Content for key components of the plan were developed by committee subgroups comprised of members with the greatest expertise and experience in the component areas. The resulting proposed plan represents a
synthesis of those topics into strategic directions and implementation goals for on-line learning. A library, organized by subject, of all conference materials, meeting notes, and related articles is available in the distance learning office.

As the nature of distance learning technology is defined by constant changes, the plan is to be seen as a continual work in progress. The following conclusions are reported.

**Conclusions**

**Conclusion 1 - Successful on-line courses are part of complete credit or non-credit certificate or degree programs.**

Recommendations:

1. Enable students to attain certificates or degrees with little time on campus.
2. Begin with certificate and graduate courses, before moving to other areas.
3. Identify change agents in particular departments to drive program development.

**Conclusion 2 - The curriculum should drive the technology, rather than vice versa.**

Recommendations:

1. Initially choose courses that have been successful at other institutions, such as management, nursing, technology, education, and certificate programs. Later add programs or courses that are distinctive or unique, enabling our on-line program to stand out from others.
2. Choose courses which have a high traditional enrollment.
3. Courses should combine technologies and instructional methods where applicable (print, face-to-face, video, www, GSAMS, mail, etc.).
4. Choose courses that are easily adaptable to the technology.

**Conclusion 3 - Distant students should receive the same quality of institutional services (library access, registration, etc) as on-campus students.**

Recommendations:

1. Students should be able to apply easily to the institution on-line, through mail, and by fax.
2. Registration for courses should be on-line and/or by telephone.
3. Procedures for dissemination of textbooks should be established jointly by the bookstore and the distance learning office.
4. On-line access to the UWG library system and document delivery services should be made available to every distant student.
5. Distant students should have access by phone and e-mail to a single point of contact for identifying advisement contacts, educational options, guidance for achievement of educational goals, and campus services.
6. Distant students should be provided with a distance learning handbook, which includes not only course information, but also general information such as deadlines, registration information, phone numbers for support, and success tips.

7. Students should be provided via mail with a "Course in a Box" - a comprehensive package of course materials including supporting videotapes, software, textbook, distance learning handbook, and course syllabus.

8. Class student facilitators should contact each student each week to see if they need any logistical assistance.

Conclusion 4: **Enrollment goals should be established for courses and met through a concerted and planned marketing effort.**

Recommendations:

1. A schedule of all distance courses should be continually updated and be easily accessible on our web page.

2. Reference to on-line programs should be a part of all major university catalogs and publications.

3. Mailings announcing complete degree and certificate programs (credit and non-credit) should be sent to UWG alumni.

4. Information regarding on-line courses should be widely disseminated to current students.

Conclusion 5: **All on-line courses must meet established standards of educational quality and result in appropriate learning outcomes.**

Recommendations:

1. Courses should provide for significant interaction, whether real-time or delayed, between students and faculty.

2. Faculty who are qualified in both subject matter and distance learning delivery systems should be available to provide support and assistance for on-line courses and new instructors.

3. Evaluations should be conducted including regular course evaluations, appropriateness of technologies, and student and faculty satisfaction.

4. Appropriate evaluation procedures should be developed and data should be reviewed and used to make course and program improvements.

Conclusion 6: **Appropriate faculty support services and training are vital components of success.**

Recommendations:

1. All on-line faculty should participate in training programs covering technology, curriculum and syllabus development, hands-on practice, communication, and administrative responsibilities.
2. Enable on-line faculty to work under mentorship of seasoned distance faculty.

3. Provide library of print, video and on-line reference materials regarding distance instruction.

4. Offer a comprehensive certificate program in distance education through continuing education. This would be offered statewide.

5. Provide each on-line instructor with a distance learning student facilitator to assist with class management.

6. Provide faculty assistance from distance learning office in building web pages for courses.

7. Provide a web page that offers continuous information regarding new technologies.

8. In order to encourage faculty to develop distance learning courses, they should be provided with opportunities to meet with successful distance education instructors from other institutions, view other successful programs, etc.

Conclusion 7: **Technologies chosen must be adaptable and usable by a large number of faculty and potential students.**

Recommendations:

1. Software should be compatible with both Macintosh and PC platforms, and reasonably fast and easy to download from a standard home modem.

2. On-line faculty should be internet-savvy and seasoned computer users.

3. Students should complete an on-line orientation course prior to starting on-line courses.

4. Prepare appropriate "fall-back" technologies.

5. Determine "hours" that technical support staff will be available to students.

6. Remember that on-line teaching/learning is **not** for everyone.

Conclusion 8: **Development and delivery of on-line courses will require an increased time commitment from faculty. Reward structures should be set in place to provide incentives for these faculty.**

Recommendations:

1. Successful on-line instruction should be recognized for purposes of promotion and tenure.

2. On-line courses should never be an "overload."

3. Faculty should receive adequate time during the academic term prior to teaching on-line for course development and training.

4. Faculty participation in on-line teaching should be encouraged and supported by department chairs and deans.
Conclusion 9: The benefits of engaging in on-line learning for the university include increased visibility, enhanced quality of instruction, and increased accessibility and enrollments.

Recommendations:

1. The university should continue into the next stages of implementation of on-line delivery.
2. University personnel should be continually informed and updated about on-line programs.

Implementation Steps:

In-Progress:

___ Begin using on-line instruction as a supplement to traditional courses. Provide Nicenet or WebCt pages as a back-up to all GSAMS courses. (Selected faculty, distance learning)

___ Develop comprehensive distance learning web site for on-line students. (distance learning)

___ Work with continuing education to develop an on-line distance learning certification course. (Distance Learning, Continuing Education, Dr. Miller, Dr. Kirby)

___ Send letter for course proposals to faculty. (Dr. Hynes, Dr. Wagner)

___ Develop student support services for distance students. (distance learning, Ms. Goodson, registration, bookstore, financial aid)

___ Train student facilitators in web page development, on-line support. (distance learning)

___ Develop and conduct needs assessment for online learning programs. (distance learning - Ms. Gubbins)

Summer Quarter:

___ Purchase comprehensive online classroom management software (WebCt) and become adept at its features and usage. (distance learning, Ms. Kral, Mr. Clay, Dr. Miller, Dr. Kirby, Dr. Fuller, Ms. O’Neill)

___ Develop comprehensive training program for faculty teaching online (distance learning, Dr. Miller, Dr. Kirby, Dr. Fuller, Ms. O’Neill, Dr. Mc Kenzie)

___ Develop evaluation procedures for on-line courses, including learning outcomes, student and faculty satisfaction, and program evaluation. (distance learning, Dr. Miller, Dr. Kirby, Dr. Fuller, Ms. O’Neill, Dr. Mc Kenzie).

Fall Quarter:

___ Develop technical prerequisite requirements for distance classes.

___ Determine curriculum/courses/programs to be offered. (Dr. Wagner, deans, department chairs)

___ Establish enrollment goals for on-line courses. (Mr. Smith)

___ Begin offering 50/50 on-line courses (courses that are at least 50% on-line). Fall classes will include MGT 403 and MED 840. A nursing course is being developed for spring.

___ Develop a distance learning student guide. (distance learning)
Establish a method of providing each student with a single point of contact for advisement, progress monitoring, and academic guidance.

Begin providing student facilitator services to on-line instructors and students. (distance learning)

Make deans, directors and department heads fully aware of benefits and plans for on-line learning. (Dr. Wagner)

Develop and begin marketing efforts for on-line courses (distance learning, Mr. Smith)

Winter 1998

Begin offering first fully (at least 75%) online courses.

Fall 1998

Begin offering complete degree programs on-line.

OnGoing:

Encourage and reward faculty innovators. (vp, deans, department chairs)