

# Distance Education Strategic Plan

2012-2013 Academic Year

## Background

In 2008, Cañada's Technology Advisory Committee was formed. Their mission included a goal to "utilize technology to improve teaching and learning, enhance accessibility, improve communications, and deliver instruction in a variety of modalities," but the focus of the committee was to improve and secure technology across the campus (see, Cañada Technology Plan, 2009). In Spring 2010, the Center for Innovation and Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CIETL) was developed, with a focus on professional development, teaching practices, teaching assessments, and student success. In line with CIETL's mission, a subcommittee focusing on distance education, including faculty development, pedagogy and best practices, course development, and student success, was formed in Fall 2010. This committee essentially replaced the distance education component of the Technology Advisory Committee.

Cañada's Distance Education Advisory Committee (DEAC), under CIETL's umbrella, reports to the Vice President of Instruction, and includes a chair (the dean responsible for distance education), distance education coordinator (currently a faculty position), instructional designer (faculty), a representative from the District Distance Education Committee, 3 faculty members, 2 classified staff and 1 student. The committee has been charged with developing a distance education plan that focuses on growing and strengthening our distance education initiative.

To accomplish this task, the committee first compiled a report assessing the current distance education practices at Cañada, within our district, and at our neighboring community colleges. The initial findings suggested that, compared to other colleges, Cañada's distance education was in its nascent stage. To develop our strategic plan, we looked at numerous distance education offerings across the state, studied our current distance education course offerings, and also carefully considered the following documents and surveys:

- Guide to Evaluating Distance Education and Correspondence Education (ACCJC/WASC)
- Periodic Report on Distance Education and Learning (CCC Chancellor's Office)
- Distance Education Guidelines (CCC Chancellor's Office)
- Distance Education Accessibility Guidelines
- SMCCCD Distance Education Strategic Plan
- College of San Mateo's Distance Education Committee Institutional Plan—Fall 2010
- Survey of Distance Education Faculty, Spring 2011

## Current Status

*Course Offerings:* Cañada has approved 133 courses for distance education. In the spring 2012 semester, 39 sections of 28 courses were offered via the distance learning modality with 22 sections offered fully on-line and 17 offered in the hybrid format. There was a total enrollment in distance learning courses in the spring 2012 semester of 1,202 (7.3% of total census enrollment) with 725 of these students in on-line sections and 477 in the hybrid sections. There were no out-of-state students in the spring 2012 semester. The sections in the spring semester were taught by 25 faculty – 11 full-time and 14 part-time.

Analysis of the course approvals for distance education revealed that it was possible for a student to take more than 50% of the units for an Associate's degree in the distance learning format – should the courses be offered by the College. This came about because of targeted course development in general education areas. The only departments that currently offer the major courses in the distance education format are anthropology and economics. The history department has a goal of getting approval for all of their courses to be offered through distance education, but it is not clear when these courses might be offered. Because of this analysis, the College has prepared a substantive change report for distance education - to be submitted to for Board approval in Nov. 2012 and to the ACCJC in the spring of 2013.

When we reviewed the courses approved for distance education and compared it to the degree requirements, it appears that students cannot complete an Associate's degree fully online because of the physical education requirement.

*Faculty Development:* There is a central core of both full time and part time faculty teaching distance education, and most also teach on campus. Faculty have been trained for distance learning through 3 main routes – informal “training” with or without a mentor, STOT (Structured Training for Online Teaching) offered through the district and @One training supported by the State Chancellor's Office. The STOT Program consists of on-line and face-to-face sessions designed to help faculty learn to teach effectively online. Participation requires recommendation by a faculty member's dean or campus VPI. As of fall 2012, 21 faculty have participated in STOT training and at least 5 have taken 1 or more courses through @One. More recently, our instructional designer has worked with faculty through workshops and one-on-one to train them in distance learning pedagogy and Moodle features.

A survey was done in spring of 2011 of 14 faculty teaching fully on-line. Only four of these faculty had been through the District STOT training for online teachers. Well over half (78%) of the faculty members teaching online in spring 2011 were using WebAccess, Cañada's implementation of the Learning Management System Moodle, though some augment with publisher information. More than half (64%) were interested in workshops/training on distance education learning theory and WebAccess. Five faculty members expressed interest in mentoring faculty developing their first online or hybrid course. In response to an open-ended

question assessing distance education faculty, 35% reported a need for more opportunities to share ideas with other distance education faculty.

A second survey went out to all Cañada faculty members in March 2011 to gauge interest in distance education training, development of new courses, enhancement of face-to-face courses with technology, and teaching online. Thirty faculty responded to the survey, with almost 70% reporting high to extremely high interest in developing courses and teaching online, enhancing their traditional courses, and participating in training or workshops.

In the spring of 2011, the College hired a part-time instructional designer, who works with CIETL, to offer a series of workshops and one-on-one consultation for all faculty. His primary focus is on distance education, but all faculty are encouraged to attend workshops to gain expertise in adult pedagogy and to enhance student learning for all courses, whether on-line or not.

## **Student Support**

A full outline of student support services can be found in the substantive change report. Through WebSmart, students can perform all aspects of registration online – initial registration, drops or adds, withdrawal, select variable unit levels of enrollment, and select a grade option for a class. They can view grades, view an unofficial transcript, pay fees and view their account statements and payment history online. Appointments for any student service can be made through their WebSmart account. Financial aid services are available on-line as well. Books may be purchased through the bookstores website and other on-line book vendors.

Some eCounseling is available, especially for more routine questions. In addition, DegreeWorks is now available on-line to students for degree planning. The library offers an array of online resources and services that support all students. An on-line orientation for students is in development and should be available in fall 2012.

Students are encouraged, but not required, to take a self assessment to determine if online learning is the type of learning in which they would be able to engage and be successful. However, no student is prevented from enrolling in an online course based on the self assessment. This self-assessment is available on the District's Distance Education Gateway.

The Learning Center attempts to provide support for all classes, no matter their mode of delivery. Most of the students taking Cañada's online courses live within driving distance of the college, however many of them work. Currently we offer online support for math and biology via CCC Confer. Students, using their student ID can log onto WebAccess, and during select times, chat, talk, and draw their problems. For writing, students can upload documents via Google docs when the tutor is on duty.

Tracking the usage of the Learning Center we have learned that most online students come to the Center rather than choosing online support. Additionally, more and more faculty utilize textbooks that have support built in. For example, our pre-algebra, elementary and intermediate algebra, statistic and calculus students do their homework on MyMathLab or MySTATLAB, from Pearson Education, which accompanies their textbook. Built into the program are tutorials that provide immediate feedback.

## **Analysis of the Distance Education Program at Cañada College**

### **Strengths of the Distance Education Program**

- Measure G supports the instructional designer and the faculty coordinator. In addition, a Dean has been assigned to oversee the distance education program.
- The Center for Innovation and Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CIETL) is well-established and supported by the College with release time for the faculty coordinators.
- We have a group of faculty from across the College interested in developing distance education
- Faculty and staff have access to regular training, through STOT and @One
- Excellent IT support (both at the district and college level) is available to faculty, staff and students
- The district supports a course management system (Moodle) hosted by MoodleRooms. Every section of every course every semester has a Moodle shell available for use – whether the course offers any portion of the content through distance learning.
- There is district support for the growth of the distance education program.

### **Weaknesses of the Distance Education Program**

- The technical review group within the curriculum committee currently approves the distance education addendum of each course. These individuals do not necessarily have any expertise in the requirements for distance education, particularly around student authentication requirements and regular and effective contact guidelines.
- We have limited trained faculty
- Our courses are concentrated in limited disciplines
- There are currently no District-wide policies for faculty assessment of teaching via distance learning modalities
- There are no procedures in place to identify students from out-of-state enrolling in on-line courses, leaving the College open to state authorization issues and penalties.

## Where are we going?

Because distance education at Cañada is in its foundational stages, we have the opportunity to build a well-designed, student-centered, and robust distance education initiative that will decisively propel Cañada College towards excellence in distance education. Given input from faculty members, consideration of best practices, and limited resources, we believe our goals should focus on developing a community of well-trained faculty members and strategically growing our distance education offerings to support degree, certificate, and transfer paths.

In support of this vision, our major goals last year focused on developing faculty and courses. Survey results suggest there is increasing faculty interest in incorporating distance education and technology into current classes, developing hybrid and online classes, and supporting one another through this process. Significant strides were made on many of the goals and objectives in the strategic plan from last year.

## How will we get there?

### Mission

The mission of the distance education initiative is to increase opportunities for our diverse student population by offering flexible and innovative instruction via technology. In keeping with the mission of the College, the distance education initiative is committed to meeting the changing needs of our community by developing distance learning opportunities that increase student access, support student success, and provide quality instruction in general, transfer, career, and basic skills education, while also fostering relationships between faculty, staff and students.

**Goal #1:** Broaden distance education course offerings to meet the needs of Cañada students

**Objective 1.1** Review the rate of growth of on-line offerings and enrollment to allow planning for future offerings. Share the reflections with Deans and faculty to ensure planning and scheduling allow growth as indicated by the data review

**Objective 1.2** Survey our students to determine which students are looking for on-line education and which courses they would be taking

**Objective 1.3** Develop a process and plan for determining if out-of-state students are enrolling in our on-line courses

**Goal #2:** Develop a community of well-trained DE faculty members

**Objective 2.1** Continue to provide training and support for faculty interested in teaching via distance education

**Objective 2.2** Work with and through the district DEAC to coordinate faculty development through STOT training and through @One

**Objective 2.3** Encourage faculty to attend DE conferences and share their experience with their colleagues

**Objective 2.4** Share the Distance Education Handbook with faculty

**Goal #3:** Develop DE assessment

**Objective 3.1** Have distance education modifications to courses reviewed by experts in distance learning

**Objective 3.2** Work with the trust committee to help develop specific evaluation tools for distance education courses that target requirements for accreditation of distance education.

**Objective 3.3** Continue to routinely assess and review the performance of students in on-line compared to face-to-face classes.

**Goal #4:** Increase student awareness, retention, and success

**Objective 4.1** Link a self-assessment of student readiness for distance education to course descriptions in WebSmart

**Objective 4.2** Determine whether changes to the course descriptions for students might prevent misconceptions about courses and the requirements for on-line learning

**Objective 4.3** Continue to monitor services to students enrolled in distance education to ensure access to services

**Objective 4.4** Develop an “online bill of rights/code of conduct” and a transparent grievance/appeals process for on-line students for the 13-14 catalog

**Objective 4.5** Complete a study of the student services offered by other colleges with robust and successful distance education programs and determine what we can add or improve at Cañada College

**Objective 4.6** Recruit someone knowledgeable about student services and interested in distance learning to help plan the growth of services to our distance learners