Distance Education Strategic Plan

2015-2017 Academic Year

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.

Background

Cañada's Distance Education Advisory Committee (DEAC) 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, 2-3 faculty members, 2 classified staff and 1 student. The committee was charged with developing a distance education plan that focuses on growing and strengthening our distance education initiative.

Current Status

Course Offerings: Numbers of courses and total overall enrollment in distance learning continues to grow. In the fall 2015 semester, 72 sections of 55 courses were offered via the distance learning modality with 60 sections offered fully on-line and 12 offered in the hybrid format, which includes both hybrid and web-assisted formats. There was a total enrollment in distance learning courses in the spring 2015 semester of 2,404 (16.4% of total census enrollment) with 1,937 of these enrollments in on-line sections and 467 in the hybrid sections. To date, we have only had 1 out-of-state student and that was in the spring of 2013. The sections in the spring 2015 semester were taught by 42 faculty – 22 full-time and 20 part-time. Because it is possible for a student to take more than 50% of the units for an Associate's degree in the distance learning format the College submitted a substantive change report for distance education to the ACCJC in spring of 2013, which was approved.

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. 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.

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. They can view grades, view an unofficial transcript, pay fees and view their account statements and payment history online. Financial aid services are available on-line as well. Books may be purchased through the bookstores website and other on-line book vendors. eCounseling is available, especially for more routine questions. The library offers an array of online resources and services that support all students. An on-line orientation for students is now available.

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.

The Learning Center provides 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. Tracking the usage of the Learning Center we have learned that historically most online students come to the Center rather than choosing online support.

Analysis of the Distance Education Program at Cañada College

Strengths of the Distance Education Program
- We have a core group of faculty from across the College interested in developing effective 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 as indicated by the District Strategic Plan.

Weaknesses of the Distance Education Program
- Measure G supported the instructional designer and the faculty coordinator. With Measure G ending, the position of instructional designer has ended, leaving no faculty leadership in distance education.

- The Center for Innovation and Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CIETL) used to be a home base for faculty development and training for distance education and it no longer exists.
- Our courses have been concentrated in limited disciplines, but there is some growth in other areas. Few courses in CTE programs are offered through distance education.
- There are currently no District-wide policies for faculty assessment of teaching via distance learning modalities or for coordination of offerings through distance learning.
- The Data Dashboard was setup to identify students from out-of-state who have enrolled in on-line courses, but there is no process for identifying student before (or during) enrollment, leaving the College open to state authorization issues and penalties. However, since we have not had any out-of-state students in recent semester, this is probably not a critical problem.
- There is no College-defined vision for the growth of distance education
- Success of students in online courses has improved, but remains lower than the success in face-to-face courses.

Update on goals from last year

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 light of the state-wide initiative for online education (OEI), as much as possible, we should take advantage of the tools and contracts being developed by the OEI to leverage our limited resources. A progress report was submitted to the College in Aug. 2105.

Goals for the 2015-17 Academic Years

Objective #1: Broaden distance education course offerings to meet the needs of Cañada students
  Action Plan 1.1 Determine the overarching goals of the College in terms of distance education.
  Action Plan 1.2 Each semester track online offerings and enrollment, along with results from student surveys, to plan for future offerings. Share the reflections with Deans and faculty to ensure planning and scheduling allow growth as indicated by the data review with student input.

Objective #2: Develop a community of well-trained DE faculty members
  Action Plan 2.1 Work with and through the district to coordinate faculty development around distance education.

Action Plan 2.2 Encourage faculty to attend DE conferences and share their
experience with their colleagues

Action Plan 2.3 Annually update and share the Distance Education Handbook with
faculty

Objective #3: Increase student awareness, retention, and success

Action Plan 4.1 Annually assess and review the performance of students in online
compared to face-to-face classes.

Action Plan 4.2 Monitor the development of student success tools by the OEI and
coordinate discussion and adoption (if appropriate) across the district.

Action Plan 4.3 Adopt the OEI tutoring platform and recruit and train a cadre of
student tutors for online tutoring with an emphasis on writing and math.

Action Plan 4.4 Assess the usage and effectiveness of online tutoring.