Distance Education Department
Mid-Year Progress Report for Academic Year 2015-2016
February 2016

Mid-Year Progress

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Online Student Enrollment

Following the sectional plan initiative to increase online student enrollment, the department has implemented some of its action plans and revised, withdrawn, or delayed others due to limitations such as the college's restriction on marketing outside of its service area. Below are changes to and progress on the action plans.

1. With the knowledge of the faculty chairs and the Manager of Public Relations, Marketing & Development, the department conducted an assessment on marketing segmentation to identify online education needs and solutions to certain problems. Currently, the department is collaborating with the Manager of Public Relations, Marketing & Development to incorporate the findings into a marketing plan for distance education programs, expected to be completed by spring 2016.

2. Due to uncontrollable events, the department revised its action plan to implement an online incarcerated student program. Instead, we identified the military as a strategic partner to increase online enrollment, and worked with the Admissions and Records Department and faculty chairs in the application process for the Air Force GEM Program and the SOC CTE programs. The GEM Program was approved in November 2015 and added to the college website at the end of December 2015; the SOC CTE programs is expected to be approved by the end of the first quarter of 2016.

3. Targeted marketing strategies were initiated with the purchase of two opt-in email distribution lists. The plan is to distribute information about college programs and service offerings to potential online students, especially those in the population with a wide equity gap for our current online courses. It is expected that the marketing message will also be targeted toward senior high school parents and first-year students at four-year universities to be most effective. The marketing message will focus on the college's transferable courses, the low cost, and Cerro Coso Community College as an option for students and parents to consider outside of going to work or a four-year university. Several email distributions will go out in April and May 2016 to increase enrollment for summer and fall 2016 online courses.

4. Lastly, the department had planned to promote the college's new faculty online training to the California Community College community in order to increase enrollment. With the decision of the KCCD to adopt a new learning management system, Canvas, it will be necessary to redesign the course content. Hence, this action plan has been withdrawn. As we understand the Canvas environment more, it may be feasible to re-evaluate this plan.

5. Despite the changes to these action plans, first-day enrollment and census enrollment for online courses still increased by 3% and 5% respectively over the previous academic year. This may be due to improvements in processes and customer service as well as changes in the economy and the overall education environment.

Online Student Engagement

The decision of the college to adopt Canvas has had a major impact on the priorities of the department. During the past months of the 2015-16 academic year, the Distance Education Department made progress in or changes to its initiative to improve online student engagement as demonstrated below.

1. The department has written scripts to fix accessibility issues on the college Moodle site, including scripts to increase font size and to improve contrast ratio, which helps the visually impaired. When JavaScript is introduced to the college Moodle site to increase interaction and information processing and control of site content, the department ensures that it does not affect accessibility (e.g., that it is device-independent). Faculty members are also required to caption their videos using DECT grant funds through the

department, YouTube, or 3CMedia.

2. The department created mobile-friendly designs for the Cerro Coso course template and the KCCD template using custom JavaScript. Students and faculty were able to enjoy the mobile-friendly designs starting in fall 2015.

3. The department has withdrawn its action plan to develop a Moodle 3.0 training course. Instead, the department is working with a faculty member to develop a training for new online faculty that incorporates Canvas and pedagogy training, which will also be developed using the competency-based model. Also, the department is preparing to train faculty in Canvas. In addition, the department will be offering the "Applying OEI Course Design Rubric" workshop by @One to faculty at the Ridgecrest location this March.

4. The department produced twenty-nine ADA-compliant videos in support of the effort by faculty and the Student Services Department to improve online student engagement. The videos allow students to see images and scenarios and hear from experts in ways that make content more understandable and relevant.

5. The department has withdrawn its action plan to create analytical reports in Moodle. Instead, the department is exploring the creation of analytical reports in Canvas, and currently seeking input from committee members, faculty, and administrators about what reports may be needed.

6. Camtasia and Articulate Studios were identified as two software applications that can enrich online student engagement. Two faculty members have started to utilize these applications to make their course content more interactive, and the department has recruited five more faculty to start using them. Currently, the department is exploring how to make interactive software applications more accessible to faculty outside the Ridgecrest campus.

Streamline Distance Education Operational Processes

In the past months of the academic year, the department achieved the following related to this initiative:

1. In collaboration with faculty, managers, and staff, a faculty technology area was created where faculty members can use software applications and content development tools to make their course content more engaging to students. Equipment and software were purchased for the area. Training in these software applications and tools is available to faculty upon request; video tutorials for the software have been distributed to interested faculty. Seven faculty members expressed interest in using the technology area, and two of them have already created course content with the equipment. The other faculty are expected to begin developing their course content in March 2016.

2. With LRC subject experts, the department has conducted assessments on proctoring and tutoring to identify online students' needs in this area. An online study group tutoring service is being developed in-house and will be offered as a pilot service to MATHC055 students this spring 2016. Two vendors of possible online services for students have also been identified: NetTutor and Proctorio.

3. If the California legislature had approved the state joining the WICHE State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (W-SARA), the college would have been permitted to enroll out-of-state students while staying compliant with State Authorization for Distance Education regulations. Unfortunately, the California legislature did not approve the state joining W-SARA for this academic year. To ensure that the college remains compliant with the regulations, the college has determined that it will offer online programs only to residents of those states and territories where it has authorization. The department has added text to the college website to inform out-of-state students about the restrictions. The department also plans to inform students of this regulation in the automated confirmation letter they receive when they register.