Distance Education Department
Annual Section Plan for Academic Year 2018-2019
November 2017

Description Of Section

Connection to College Mission

The mission of the Distance Education Department is to support Cerro Coso Community College's mission by providing students with a flexible alternative avenue to academic success through quality distance learning courses using contemporary information technology.

The college strives to become a recognized leader in online education among California community colleges and beyond, by creating innovative and cost-effective solutions to overcome challenges in online learning. The Distance Education Department is dedicated to upholding the highest standard of professionalism and advancing the quality of distance education programs to meet or exceed student and faculty expectations.

To accomplish this, the department is committed to supporting the college in several ways:

· Providing quality, accredited online degree and credential programs that satisfy general education and meet the requirements for transferring to bachelor programs

· Helping faculty use distance learning technologies and pedagogies to deliver quality courses and programs

· Enabling local and remote students to fulfill degree, certificate, and transfer requirements in a timely manner with flexible classes

· Constantly assessing the effectiveness of distance education programs and improving their quality and productivity

· Ensuring that distance education programs are conducted in accordance with applicable rules, regulations, and policies stipulated by the college and the state and federal governments

Review And Planning

Performance and Equity Gaps Still to be Addressed

The Distance Education Department continues to address the challenges of providing accessible online courses, making online courses engaging and effective, and narrowing the gap between male and female students in online courses.

One step in addressing accessibility has been making faculty and staff aware of the importance of following accessibility rules, through training on the 508 regulations and how to create accessible course content. The department will be taking further steps as part of its accessibility initiatives for this academic year and next academic year. An accessibility plan for online courses will be developed this year, and for next year, tools such as the Ally tools will be integrated with Canvas to help faculty self-audit their courses for accessibility. Accessibility remains an issue for online courses; the department is aware of this and will continue to improve in this area to make all online course content compliant with 508 regulations.

Another challenge for the department is helping instructors develop more engaging online course content. Online course engagement has always been a challenge for faculty because, in general, online learning lacks instant feedback for students and instructors, especially if a course is poorly designed. In addition, online courses give students the ability to walk out at any time during the learning process; hence, engagement is essential to motivate student success. The department is continually searching for avenues to help faculty develop engaging course content.

Finally, there is the challenge of narrowing the gender gap. Efforts in previous years resulted in only a 1.1% narrowing of gender gap, from female to male enrollment ratio of 72.3% to 27.6% in 2014-15 to a ratio of 70.4% to 28.7% in 2016-17. In 2017-18, promotion and advertisement of STEM-focused programs will hopefully help narrow the gap.

Annual Planning: Actions Taken

Develop Multimedia and Interactive Contents for College Website

The initiative to develop multimedia and interactive content for the college website was withdrawn. The student service departments found other avenues to develop their multimedia content.

Develop College Copyright & Fair Use Guidelines

Working with librarian faculty members, the department developed a draft copyright handbook for faculty reference. The Vice President of Academic Affairs must still provide feedback and approve the handbook. The final draft is expected to be completed by the end of December; then it will be added to the Faculty 411 page for faculty reference.

Enhance Student Support Services to Online Students

This initiative has made some progress. The department has developed a platform that supports student services within Canvas, and has also launched pages for student services within the platform. The department is in the process of completing the second phase—making this platform more visibly appealing, interactive, and multimedia-rich.

In regard to metrics for this initiative, the online retention rates for summer 2017, spring 2017, and fall 2016 were 87.3%, 84.8%, and 83.5%, respectively, while the rates for summer 2016, spring 2016, and fall 2015 were 86.5%, 79.7% and 81.0%. This indicates an improvement in online retention rate per semester since the implementation of the student support service platform. However, it must be noted that other initiatives were implemented at the same time and may have also affected the retention rate. All other metrics will need to be measured at a later date when more progress on the initiative has been completed.

Implement Canvas Learning Management System

For academic year 2016-17, the department completed the implementation of Canvas as the college's learning management system. All online courses are now being offered in Canvas.

Initiatives for Next Academic Year

Update Distance Education Operating Manual

Is this part of a multiyear initiative?

Yes

Specific Action Steps to be Taken:

In order to appropriately update the manual, these steps must be taken:

- Gather information relating to distance education practices from various stakeholders (e.g., Pedagogy and Technology Committee, VP of Academic Affairs, VP of Student Services, Educational and Media Specialist, etc.). Create an outline of the updated manual.
- Write the manual, ensuring that the documentation of department practices and procedures supports the actual practices and procedures.

Lead Measure of Success:

- An outline of the updated department manual

Are any of the lead measures identified above lacking assessment instruments?

No

Does the department request help to develop these instruments?

No

Lag Measure of Success:

- An updated department manual

Person Responsible:

Director of Distance Education

Other

It ensures that the documentation of department practices and procedures supports the actual practices and procedures.

Which strategic goal does this initiative address?

Goal 5: Strengthen Organizational Effectiveness

Improve Accessibility of College Online Courses

Is this part of a multiyear initiative?

Yes

Specific Action Steps to be Taken:

The following steps will be taken to improve accessibility in online courses:

- Select accessibility tools for faculty training purposes.
- Create a best practice checklist on accessibility as a guideline for faculty.
- Create an accessibility resources and tools page in Canvas.
- Develop an accessibility training schedule that aligns with current faculty training, such as Lunch-n-Learn and Flex Day training.
- Train faculty in accessibility tools.

Lead Measure of Success:

- # of faculty trained on the accessibility tools
- # of courses using accessibility tools

Are any of the lead measures identified above lacking assessment instruments?

No

Does the department request help to develop these instruments?

No

Lag Measure of Success:

- % of accessible course content within Canvas

Person Responsible:

Director of Distance Education

It addresses a gap in student equity

Which strategic goal does this initiative address?

Goal 2: Advance Student Equity Measures

Develop Canvas Learning Tools Interoperability (LTI) Apps for the College

Is this part of a multiyear initiative?

Yes

Specific Action Steps to be Taken:

The department will take the following steps to develop Canvas LTI apps for the college:

- Train the Educational Media Specialist in LTI development.
- Research and assess the types of Canvas LTI applications that would be most useful to the college.
- Find server space for the college's LTIs.
- Decide on the first two LTIs to be developed by the college.
- Develop the LTIs.
- Test the LTIs.
- Launch the LTIs.

Lead Measure of Success:

- Introduce two Canvas LTIs developed by the college

Are any of the lead measures identified above lacking assessment instruments?

No

Does the department request help to develop these instruments?

No

Lag Measure of Success:

- # of engagement activities per student per week count (e.g. discussion, attendance, quizzes, etc.)

Person Responsible:

Director of Distance Education and Educational Media Specialist

It addresses a gap in outcomes assessment

Which strategic goal does this initiative address?

Goal 1: Maximize Student Success

Resource Needs

Facilities

N/A

Information Technology

The department is requesting funding to purchase a Canvas integrated accessibility tool that allows faculty to self-audit their online course content and resolve accessibility issues directly in Canvas.

Marketing

The Distance Education Department would like to adopt several marketing strategies to increase online course enrollment in academic year 2018-19, including ad purchases in military magazines and on Google and Facebook.

Professional Development

The department would like to present at a distance education conference. The budget request is for the travel and attendance of two presenters.

Additionally, the department would like to request funds for Instructional Tech Council (ITC) memberships. This professional organization provides webinars that would benefit faculty in online course development. The topics of the webinars include copyright, ADA compliance, instructional technologies, assessment, and online pedagogies.

The department would also like to request an annual budget to support summer training for faculty teaching their first online courses, which was recommended by the PTEC committee and approved by the Academic Senate.

Staffing Requests Not Already Listed In Unit Plans

1000 Category - Certificated Positions

N/A

Location:

Justification:

2000 Category - Classified Staff

Educational Media Design Specialist

Location:

CC Online

Salary Grade:

Duties are Being Reviewed

Number of Months:

Duties are Being Reviewed

Number of Hours per Week:

Duties are Being Reviewed

Salary Amount:

Duties are Being Reviewed

Justification:

The department has requested a review of the Educational Media Design Specialist position for additional duties. It is currently being reviewed by the Human Resources department. The specialist is still performing many of the duties in his current job description, but the level of programming skills required has increased and the duties have expanded due to the department's need to use programming to enhance Canvas features. The current Educational Media Design Specialist is proficient in computer programming, which is why the department would like his position to be reviewed for additional duties.

Someone with programming skills is desirable for this position due to the college's goal of developing its own Canvas Learning Tools Interoperability (LTI) apps. LTI allows third-party applications to be integrated into the Canvas platform to enhance the learning experience, increase student engagement, or provide analytical reports on student activities. Developing in-house LTIs to integrate with Canvas would enable the college to create comprehensive analytical reports that are currently not available through Canvas or third-party vendors without additional fees.

With the change in job description to allow the Educational Media Design Specialist to develop LTIs, the college would be able to develop many more customizable applications that could enhance student experience, communication, and engagement.