Distance Education Strategic Plan

2013-2014 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, 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: In the fall 2013 semester, 55 sections of 43 courses were offered via the distance learning modality with 34 sections offered fully on-line and 21 offered in the hybrid format, which includes both hybrid and web-assisted formats. There was a total enrollment in distance learning courses in the fall 2013 semester of 1,638 (10.8% of total census enrollment) with 1104 of these enrollments in on-line sections and 534 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 2013 semester were taught by 37 faculty – 15 full-time and 22 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. 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 2013, 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.

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. 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.   This self-assessment is available on the District's Distance Education Gateway and a link is provided in WebSchedule with each online course listing.

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 or not 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

- 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
- 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.
- There is no College-defined vision for the growth of distance education

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 support of this vision, our major goals last year focused on developing faculty and courses. Significant strides were made on many of the goals and objectives in the strategic plan from last year.

Goal #1: In our effort to broaden distance education course offerings to meet the needs of Cañada students, we continue to monitor closely the number of sections of online and hybrid courses and the enrollment in these sections.

The Deans has worked hard to recruit faculty to teach online courses in areas where there is student interest. This activity resulted in a significant increase in online offerings in the summer of 2013 and significant increase in enrollment for the summer session.

We have developed a survey tool used with our online students to determine their course taking behavior and what courses they are looking for in the distance education format.   Contrary to our beliefs, our summer students were 95% students from within the district and they are mostly interested in GE transfer courses. They feel that frequent faculty contact is the #1 support that leads to their success in distance education courses.

Objective #3 under this goal was to develop a process and plan for determining if out-of-state students are enrolling in our on-line courses. No automated process has been developed. To date, each semester a researcher is asked to search for non-CA students enrolled in online classes, then each identified student is researched further to see if they are out-of-state. We have only had 1 out-of-state student since this process has been followed – spring 2013. This student, from Pennsylvania, found an engineering class he needed on the CA Virtual College website.

Goal #2: We continue to develop a community of well-trained DE faculty members by offering training and support for all faculty and staff. Most of this training is done by our instructional designer. Over the past 2 years, we have doubled the number of adjunct faculty teaching distance education. Faculty are encouraged to attend DE conferences and to share their experiences, but this past year only the instructional designer attended a conference.

We continue to work with and through the district DEAC to coordinate faculty development through STOT training. It has been difficult to get the district personnel behind encouraging faculty to obtain training through @One. Each fall we update the Distance Education Handbook and send it electronically to all faculty teaching in the distance education format. We have also developed a checklist, currently under district-wide review, to use as professional development each semester for faculty accepting distance education courses.

Goal #3: Developing assessment for faculty teaching distance education and for assessment of the courses themselves is an ongoing process. We have been able to have courses submitted to the curriculum committee be reviewed by the instructional designer for adherence to the best practices in distance education. The instructional designer has worked with the Performance Evaluation Task Force to contribute ideas for the development of evaluation tools for distance education. It remains an on-going task of the research office to track success and retention in online and hybrid courses compared to traditional courses.

Goal #4: Efforts to increase student awareness, retention, and success is also an on-going process.   The district IT staff has agreed to add a link to the readiness assessment for each course listed as an online course in WebSchedule.

OCEN 100 - Oceanography at Cañada College for Fall 2013 (**CRN** : 92153)
This course is offered online and it is recommended you complete a short self–assessment to ensure readiness before taking an online course.
http://www.smccd.edu/degateway/self_assessment.php

Skyline has developed an introductory module to be inserted into every online course Moodle shell and they have agreed to share this module. We are reviewing the module and our advisory committee will determine whether to include this for Cañada College courses.

We are experimenting with course and section descriptions to see if we can improve student understanding of the requirements for on-line learning. We continue to monitor use of the online orientation, online counseling services, online library services, etc. to ensure access for our students.

There was district-wide discussion of the development of an "online bill of rights/code of conduct" and a transparent grievance/appeals process for on-line students, but the status of this is uncertain. Kim Lopez investigated the student services offered by other colleges with robust distance education programs and, together with Jane Rice, the distance education website has been updated. The VP of Student Services continues to be engaged in on-going discussions about student services for distance education students.

Goals for the 2013-14 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.

Goal #1: Broaden distance education course offerings to meet the needs of Cañada students
Objective 1.1: Determine the overarching goals of the College in terms of distance education.
Objective 1.2: Continue to monitor online 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 1.3: Continue to survey our students to determine which students are looking for on-line education and which courses they would be taking

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: Update and share the Distance Education Handbook with faculty

Objective 2.5: Finalize and implement the faculty checklist for distance education assignments

Objective 2.6: Develop plan to fund distance education training and the instructional designer once funding from Measure G ends.

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

Objective 4.1: Continue to routinely assess and review the performance of students in online compared to face-to-face classes.

Objective 4.2: Continue to monitor services to students enrolled in distance education to ensure access to services

Objective 4.3: Recruit and train a cadre of student tutors for online tutoring with an emphasis on writing and math.

Objective 4.4: Assess the usage and effectiveness of online tutoring