Principles of Accreditation and Effective Distance Learning

Strategies in Creating and Sustaining a Distance Learning Culture in a University Environment

Purpose

▪ This presentation contends the use of existing principles of accreditation, and effective e-learning strategies can be utilized in developing and sustaining an effective e-learning culture at the University level.

▪ Institutions that choose distance learning courses as a method of content delivery for their learning population can not do so in a vacuum. There are a number of learning management systems, and course design methodologies in the e-learning realm.
Distance Education Guidelines

- Commission on College of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools distance education policy states that courses must comply with the Principles of Accreditation.
- Based on its pilot program, one university addressed the relevant areas
Accreditation Areas

- Curriculum and Instruction
- Library and Learning resources
- Student Services
- Facilities and Finances
Curriculum and Instruction (C&I)

- Programs and courses provide for timely and appropriate interaction between students and faculty
- Institutional Alternatives
  - Use of multi-featured Learning Management System (LMS)
  - Discussion board
  - Frequent feedback
  - Challenging assignments
  - Group work
Curriculum and Instruction

- “Faculty assumes responsibility for and exercises oversight of distance education, ensuring both the rigor of programs and the quality of instruction”

- Institutional Alternatives
  - Frequent evaluation
  - Faculty Development Coordination
  - Implementation of self-evaluation via evaluation matrix
  - Frequent and varied training for faculty
  - Resources provided; cartridge support, Respondus, Impatica
Curriculum and Instruction

- “There is currency of materials, programs, and courses”
- Institutional Alternatives
  - Software purchases for support of programs
  - Review of courses by lead faculty, subject matter experts, and Instructional Designers
  - Currency of updates and maintenance of site programs
  - Review of support material for courses on-line. (cartridge support)
Curriculum and Instruction

- “Policies are clear concerning ownership of materials, faculty compensation, copyright issues, and the use of revenue derived from the creation and production of software, telecourses and other media products”

- Institutional Development
  - Policies developed
  - Cartridge support packages to minimize problems
  - Distance Education policies detailed in Appropriate Documents
Curriculum and Instruction

- “Faculty Support Services are appropriate and specifically related to distance education”
- “Faculty who teach in distance education courses receive appropriate training
- Institutional Alternatives
  - Workshops and training conducted
  - Blended course seminars conducted as alternative
  - Self-paced instructor and student tutorials developed
  - Hands on training/issue discussion w/program administrator
  - Incorporation of -24/7 SUPPORT for students and faculty
Curriculum and Instruction

- “Admission and recruitment policies and decisions take into account the capability of students to succeed in distance education programs”

- Institutional Alternatives
  - Briefing information
  - Selection criteria established
  - On-line introduction class for new students
  - Distance Learning page
Curriculum and Instruction

- “Integrity of work” - integrity of student work and the credibility of degrees and credits are assured
- Institutional Evaluation
  - Term evaluation
  - Evaluation matrix instituted for quality control of courses
  - Variety of assessment measures utilized
  - Software and platform capability exploited
Curriculum and Instruction

- “Comparability of distance education programs to campus-based education programs and courses is ensured by evaluation of educational effectiveness, assessments of learning outcomes, student retention, and student satisfaction”

- **Institutional Alternatives**
  - Evaluation each term
  - Course rigor comparable
  - Student satisfied
  - Enrollment figures steady
  - Students want more classes.
Library and Learning Resources

- “Students have access to and can effectively use appropriate library resources”
- “Course requirements ensure that students make appropriate use of learning resources”
- “Access is provided to laboratories, facilities, and equipment appropriate to the courses or programs.”
Library and Learning Resources

- Computer resources available
- Student email addresses provided by University
- Library resources available over the Internet
- Support site provided-Institutional or Contracted
  - Interactive chat
  - Knowledge base
  - 24/7 telephone support for
    - Students
    - Instructors
Student Services

- “Adequate access to range of services appropriate to support programs”

- Institutional Alternatives
  - Online registration
  - Procedures established for taking on-line and blended courses
  - Internet Course page with relevant information
  - Course listing
  - Blackboard information/Login
  - Textbook sales online
  - 24/7 Support for Students/Faculty
Student Services

- Complaint resolution, availability of information, and technical assistance”
- Institutional Alternatives
  - Extensive coordination w/other campus sites
  - Separate Director for distance education
  - Distance Education web-page
  - Separate schedule published
  - Procedural information disseminated
  - Students briefed as users
  - Tutorial class or Orientation established
Facilities and Finance

- “Equipment and Technical Expertise”
- Institutional Alternatives
  - 24/7 managed contact center-Institutional or Contract
  - Created to address instructor/student support issues for LMS clients
  - Designed to provide customer with a comprehensive contact center to support academic and technology initiatives
Facilities and Finance

- “Planning, Budgeting, and Policy”
- Institutional Alternatives
  - Annual Schedule developed for internet courses
  - Budget programmed for managed growth
  - Future Issues
    - Contract support continuance
    - LMS Version Upgrades under consideration
    - Managed growth of program
Facilities and Finance

- **Institutional Alternatives**
  - Managed growth of active courses on server
  - Includes
    - active users in system
    - instructors
    - Total users on system
  - Managed growth
  - Separate director and staff for distance learning
    - Administrative Staff
    - Instructional Designer and Trainer
    - Director-Systems Administrator
Comparison with Effective Strategies

- Blackboard/NEA Study still holds validity
- Exploitation of Learning Management System (LMS) capability and landmark study still valid a decade later
Blackboard/NEA Benchmarks

- Institutional
- Course Development
- Teaching/Learning
- Course Structure
- Student Support
- Faculty Support
- Evaluation-Assessment
Benchmarks-Compared with Principles of Accreditation

- Institutional
  - Facilities and Finances
  - Library and Learning Resources
- Course Development
  - Curriculum and Instruction
- Teaching/Learning
  - Curriculum and Instruction
- Course Structure
  - Curriculum and Instruction
- Student Support
  - Student Services
- Faculty Support
  - Curriculum and Instruction
- Evaluation-Assessment
  - Curriculum and Instruction

- Curriculum and Instruction
- Library and Learning resources
- Student Services
- Facilities and Finances
Conclusions

- A robust e-learning culture requires
  - A place for distance learning in the University’s mission statement
  - Adherence to the principles of accreditation and University standards for all disciplines taught
  - Adherence to solid standards for courses and programs to include researched standards for distance learning as promulgated in the Blackboard/NEA study
  - Constant reinforcement of program standards.
References

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- Signorile, F. (2007). *Issues Paper-Effective Content Delivery* Campbell University Internal Communication addressed to the Associate Dean of Extended Campus Education