

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Santa Monica Community College District

INFORMATION

September 6, 2012

MAJOR ITEMS OF BUSINESS**INFORMATION ITEM H**

SUBJECT: **SANTA MONICA COLLEGE DISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAM
2011-2012 UPDATE**

SUBMITTED BY: Superintendent/President

SUMMARY: With over 23,000 course enrollment seats, Distance Education represented close to 12% of the total credit enrollment for the 2011-12 academic year. In addition, 30% of our credit students enrolled in at least one Distance Education course last year. The Distance Education program continues to be a growing technology-based environment that presents new challenges each year while striving to meet the needs of all users as creatively, efficiently and effectively as possible. The District continues to work with the distance education course management system Pearson (eCollege) to support a growing community of student and faculty users of online education.

See detailed report in Appendix B.

APPENDIX B: SANTA MONICA COLLEGE DISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAM 2011-2012 REPORT

The Santa Monica College Distance Education (DE) Program continues to support the needs of busy students by providing them with options for flexible class schedules as they juggle jobs and family obligations while continuing to pursue their educational goals. Given campus classroom constraints and schedule creation challenges, the online classes also provide the District with a nimble solution to adding additional classes if necessary without having to consider the logistics of classroom availability and room conflict databases. Easing campus and neighborhood congestion and helping to eliminate parking problems has also been an advantage.

Statewide Trends

According to the most recent California Community College Chancellor's office report* on Distance Education, "in 1995/96 DE course sessions represented only 0.63 percent of all course sessions; today they have grown to represent 9.06 percent of all course sessions". To further emphasize these growth trends, the Chancellor's office report mentions that "for DE credit sessions, in 2005/2006 campuses offered 21,407 credit sessions, representing 4.69 percent of total traditional education credit sessions. In 2009/2010, DE sessions increased by 93 percent to represent 9.06 percent of all educational sessions offered".

The California Virtual Campus (www.cvc.edu) is a website which is a project funded by the California Community College Chancellor's Office and provides online course and program information for higher education. This website now has 18,973 online classes listed in their database and a total of 167 California-based institutions which offer online classes and programs. This includes data not only for the California Community Colleges but also four-year institutions, continuing education and extension programs (i.e. certificates, etc.) online. Below is a sampling of offerings which has been posted to the cvc.edu website by each institution. It should be noted that the CVC website is used as a resource for students who are shopping for online classes and is a website we refer students to when they are unable to find open/available classes at Santa Monica College.

Institution	Number of DE Classes	Number of Programs
Chapman University	276	10
Coastline Community College	248	40
El Camino Community College	61	0
Glendale Community College	44	0
Mt. San Antonio College	41	0
Long Beach City College	140	0
Mt. San Jacinto College	251	0
National University	1,881	120
Pasadena Community College	64	0
Palomar Community College	479	0
Rio Hondo Community College	56	1
Riverside Community College	108	0
San Diego Miramar Comm. College	258	21
Santa Barbara Community College	175	7
Santa Monica College	250	15
Stanford School of Engineering	197	26
UCLA Extension	276	10
USC	161	46
West L.A. Community College	242	1

*Chancellor's Office DE report website:

<http://extranet.cccco.edu/Portals/1/AA/DE/FinalDE2011Report.pdf>

Santa Monica College Trends

While sections and enrollments mirror District trends including course reductions, demand for online classes remains high. During the 2011-2012 year, 725 online classes were offered, 57 of which were hybrids. This reflects a drop of 54 classes from the previous year when the District offered 779 sections, 54 of which were hybrids. This decrease in class offerings from the previous year is reflected in a drop in seats and FTES earned. According to a report authored by Hannah Alford from the SMC Office of Institutional Research (including the data in tables 1-6 below) “approximately 12% of all credit course enrollments are in distance education courses. A large majority of the distance education enrollments are in online courses (versus hybrids)” and “in the main terms (fall and spring), approximately 22% of credit students were enrolled in at least one distance education course during the terms and about 30% of credit students enrolled in at least one distance education course during the entire year.” The average percentage of Distance Education classes vs. non DE classes among the California Community Colleges is 10.4%. Coastline CC leads the pack attributing 68.8% of their enrollments as DE. Palo Verde comes in second with 46.9% of their classes flagged as DE.

Table 1: Course Enrollments (Seats) by Course Type

2010-2011				2011-2012			
Online	Hybrid	Total DE	DE % of Total Credit Enrollments	Online	Hybrid	Total DE	DE % of Total Credit Enrollments
23850	1642	25524	12.1%	22037	1523	23560	11.8%

Table 2: Online/Hybrid FTES by Term

Term	2010-2011	2011-2012
Summer	548.069	362.9276
Fall	1073.084	1038.385
Winter	235.735	192.6686
Spring	1125.105	1054.884
Total	2981.992	2648.865

*FTES calculated by dividing the sum of total hours for all enrollment records by 525

An interesting finding from the Office of Institutional Research report is the gender and age differences between our online and traditional non-DE students. Females have higher enrollments in online classes vs. males for the online classes.

Table 3: Breakdown by Gender

Gender	Distance Ed	Non-Distance Ed
Female	57.6%	52.6%
Male	42.4%	47.4%

Table 4: Breakdown by Age Group

Age Group	Distance Education	Non-Distance Education
19 and younger	19.0%	36.5%
20-24	42.8%	36.4%
25-29	16.7%	11.2%
30-39	13.5%	8.7%
40-49	5.4%	3.9%
50 and older	2.7%	3.4%

Table 5: Distance Education Student by Ethnicity/Race

Ethnicity/Race	DE Count	DE Percentage	Non-DE Count	Non-DE Percentage
Asian/Pacific Islander	3064	23.9%	4396	14.7%
Black	1202	9.4%	3071	10.3%
Hispanic	3039	23.7%	10837	36.2%
Native Am/Alaskan	30	0.2%	75	0.3%
Multi-races	485	3.8%	1051	3.5%
White	4346	33.9%	9079	30.3%
Unreported	636	5.0%	1423	4.8%
Total	12802	100.0%	29932	100.0%

Data provided by the SMC Office of Institutional Research – Reporting year: 2011-2012. Numbers are for unique/individual students over a 12-month cycle

The table below is a breakdown of fall 2011 student success and retention data and was provided of the SMC Office of Institutional Research and focuses on the differences between statewide and District trends for both categories. The District continues to improve both retention and success rates for online students with each year.

Table 6: Student Retention and Success

Student Outcomes	Statewide DE	SMC DE	SMC Non DE
Retention	78.15%	81.63%	85.68%
Success	58.36%	66.34%	69.09%

In spite of overall course reductions District-wide, six new online classes debuted this past year many of which satisfied our global citizenship initiative, career and technical education, certificate critical or grant-based projects. The table below lists the new to online classes which debuted this past year.

Course Number/Title	Units	Semester First Offered
Business 81 - Transportation Management	3	Summer 2011
Computer Science 73 - Computer Security Concepts	3	Spring 2012
Geography 8/Urban Studies 8 - Introduction To Urban Studies	3	Spring 2012
Graphic Design 65 - Web Design	3	Fall 2011
Interior Architectural Design 38 - Advance Computer Aided Design and Drafting	3	Spring 2012
Office Technology 31 - Legal Terms and Transcription	3	Spring 2012

With the six new classes launched this past year, there are now a total 216 classes which have been converted for online delivery since the Distance Education Program began in 1998.

The table below is a sample listing the total number of individual classes, by department, which have been converted for online delivery to date. All but four of the twenty-five departments/programs have offered at least one class as an online or hybrid. Of those “non-participating” departments, the curriculum committee has approved classes to be converted in the future (i.e. History of Dance). The departments with the highest number of courses support a very high volume of certificate track and career tech education classes. Many of the other offerings below meet the general education requirements which are very high demand among our online classes and support global citizenship initiatives and also basic skills (English 21A & English 21B).

Department	Total Number of Courses Converted
Life Science	10 Courses Converted
CSIS	50 Courses Converted
History	9 Courses Converted
Kinesiology & Athletics	1 Course Converted
Art (Art History)	9 Courses Converted
Communications	8 Courses Converted
Dance	Non-Participant
Earth Science	3 Courses Converted
Math	Non-Participant
Psychology	3 Courses Converted
Design Technology	17 Courses Converted
Counseling	1 Course Converted (Counseling 20)
Photo/Fashion	1 Course Converted
Cosmetology	Non-Participant
Education	2 Courses Converted
Music	1 Course Converted (Music Appreciation)
Physical Science	4 Courses Converted
Early Childhood Education	11 Courses Converted
ESL	9 Courses Converted
Theater Arts	Non-Participant
Philosophy/Social Science	10 Courses Converted
English	13 Courses Converted
Modern Language	1 Course Converted (Spanish)
Accounting/Business	38 Courses Converted
Health Sciences	8 Courses Converted

Course Management System/Platform (Pearson eCollege) User Data, Metrics & Facts

Of the 23,560 online/hybrid seats used this past year, all but 1,792 were hosted on the SMCOnline (Pearson eCollege) platform. The other "self-hosted" course enrollments can be attributed primarily to our Music 32 Music Appreciation course which relies heavily on students purchasing a content rich music CD and runs through a proprietary platform. For the 21,768 enrollments which are hosted by eCollege, students and faculty users had full access to the Pearson eCollege 24/7/365 helpdesk support (phone, live-chat and email) and faculty had access to the eCollege iSupport team which provides course design and pedagogical support Monday-Saturday by email and toll-free phone.

To provide an idea of traffic, volume and scalability, last year, the SMC MIS Department reported that there are approximately 8,700 Corsair Connect logins daily during non-peak periods (non-enrollment season) most of which are attributed to students accessing their online, hybrid or eCompanion course shells. Below is a thumbnail sketch of enrollments, user data and volume for platform usage.

2011-2012 Enrollments (by seat) - Classes Hosted on Pearson/eCollege

Term	Online Classes	Hybrids	eCompanion
Summer 2011	2610	24	7218
Fall 2011	8344	560	41015
Winter 2012	1533	113	6063
Spring 2012	7842	742	47141
Totals	20329	1439	101437

The eCollege helpdesk receives nearly 4,000 contacts from our District and this number reflects students, faculty and the DE campus administrators.

Helpdesk Contact Data

Highest number of contacts in a single month: October @ 385 contacts

Lowest number of contacts in a single month: December @ 122 contacts (half month = prior to winter break)

Helpdesk Contacts by Media

60% Phone

29% Email

11% Live Chat

Busiest Day for Users: Monday 17.71% (other Pearson/eCollege clients average is 16.60%)

Slowest Day for Users: Saturday 10.20% (other Pearson/eCollege clients average is 10.47%)

Busiest Hour for SMC Users: 10:00 p.m. (900+ unique users with a total of 32,000 minutes)

Slowest Hour for SMC Users: 5:00 a.m. (50+ unique users with a total 3,000 minutes)

11,800 unique Santa Monica College users logged into the SMCOnline (Pearson eCollege) platform in a single day and the average user session length for an online student was 110 minutes.

Santa Monica College CMS Platform (eCollege) Usage and Load 2010-2012*

Metric	2010	2011	2012	2012 Relative to eCollege Total
Unique Users (high in one day)	10,154	11,291	11,800	1.65%
Usage Minutes (high in one day)	803,292	889,891	946,065	1.26%
Average Usage Minutes per Day	402,958	458,572	477,589	0.85%
% of Active Enrollments Logging In Average Per Day (Online Course)	50%	53%	42%	21%
Average Session Length in Minutes (Online Course)	110	111	110	115

*2012 Report Snapshot period was 1/1/2012-4/18/2012

Distance Education Program & Department Current Projects, Challenges and Solutions

During this past year, several important national, statewide and District issues came to the forefront some of which are detailed below. Tackling these issues with a department staffed by four people who manage thousands of users always invites a creative and team approach. One challenge was to find a creative way to more effectively reach out to our faculty group, so the DE Department launched a quarterly newsletter this past fall highlighting current topics and concerns impacting the distance education community. Topics included building student communities in the online classroom to curb cheating, reminding faculty about the various support services which are available to online faculty for creative course building and improvements, Distance Education student financial aid fraud, and featured articles from faculty contributors on their best practice and classroom management tips.

Distance Education Student Financial Aid Fraud

Challenge: Last fall, the topic of a new type of online student fraud was hitting newswire services and educational periodicals. Bringing this issue to the forefront was an NPR piece <http://www.npr.org/2011/10/05/141070032/thieves-scam-aid-from-online-education-sites> and a warning from the Department of Education which provided a spotlight on an emerging problem. With the growth of distance learning, so has a new way for "students" to exploit DE in order to reap benefits from financial aid.

Solution: The DE department messaged all online faculty about this troubling new trend and reminded them about their obligation and the importance of keeping their rosters clean and dropping no activity and low activity students and ensure students are substantively participating.

The DE department also presented this issue to the DE Committee for its guidance on a solution and also invited both the Dean of Enrollment Services and Associate Dean of Financial Aid to meet with the DE Committee to explore options on how to abate this trend on our campus. As an ongoing project, the DE Committee has been working on crafting a "best practices" recommendation tip sheet to be made available to all online faculty.

This project is still pending and the document on best practices for substantive student participation is in the very early stages of being drafted.

Course Management Options

Project: The DE Department, along with the DE Committee, continues to discuss the most efficient way to assess our needs for our learning management system/course management system including our options and short and long-term goals.

Solution: This has been an ongoing focus and project for the Distance Education Department and Distance Education Committee. A suggestion made by the Distance Education Committee chair was to do a needs assessment by running small focus groups vs. a broader survey of all online faculty and students. The committee raised questions about the potential challenges with doing a needs assessment in this manner since focus groups can be challenging, time consuming and expensive to put into place. As has been the past practice, a more inclusive way to query users would be to create and launch a comprehensive user evaluation survey and offer all online faculty the chance to participate and have their voices "heard". The next phase would be to quantitatively and qualitatively assess those needs then move forward with exploring other CMS' and open source options.

The last faculty user survey which was created by the Distance Education Committee was launched in the spring of 2009. Much has changed in the area of online learning and technology over these past three and a half years so an updated faculty and student survey would seem to be in order. While technology evolves at a lightning pace and there are many new promising products and companies on the horizon for both open source and course managements systems, any migration will need to be well planned and carefully executed so it will be as minimally disruptive as possible to faculty and students and cost effective for the District.

Academic Integrity - Cheating and Impersonating

Challenge: Online faculty continue to be faced with the issue of ensuring the academic integrity of their online classrooms. While cheating takes place in both the online and traditional classrooms, there are special pedagogical practices which can be instituted to minimize cheating in online classes. There are several archived webinars available to our faculty who want to learn the best way to curb online cheating. Beyond course pedagogy there are other support networks and technological options available to provide a multi-pronged approach in curbing cheating and impersonating.

Solution: While some disciplines seem to more easily identify plagiarism (i.e. English essay-based classes), the SMC Disciplinarian's office and Honor Council have recently proven to be a great ally to the DE community. To open a discussion on faculty options and support networks on campus, the DE Department invited Deyna Hearn and Esau Tovar to attend a Distance Education Committee meeting to dialogue on what faculty should do in terms of procedure. To that end, several faculty have asked students who they suspect of cheating and impersonating to come to campus or meet via Skype for a discussion. If the Disciplinarian and Honor Council determine academic cheating or other troubling behaviors have been committed, these students are now managed in a very focused and efficient manner. DE faculty have recently commented on how pleased they are to have such wonderful campus allies and that this ongoing discussion and search for solutions has been helpful. It is the hope of the Distance Ed. Dept. and faculty that once the news that consequences will be put into place for academic lapses, such behavior will be curbed. The Distance Education department continues to support online faculty with resources and creative ways to minimize opportunities for student academic dishonesty on a course building and pedagogical level. Many of the faculty training webinars which have been hosted by this department focus on solid course design and other best practices which can be implemented to narrow opportunities for students cheating and impersonation.

Online Course Quality: Faculty Training and Support

Challenge: The Distance Education Committee continues to work on finding a solution to meet the training needs and assess the readiness of online faculty. Many scenarios have been explored including investigating how other California Community Colleges have gone about defining readiness, certifying their faculty and how to implement the best practices recommendations which were created years ago by a subcommittee of the Distance Education committee.

Solution: Supporting faculty in their training needs continues to be ongoing challenge primarily how to find the most ideal venue to reach the highest number of faculty.

The most convenient methodology seems to be via live webinar which has a secondary gain of being captured and saved as an archive. These webinars are led by the eCollege Academic Training Institute and these expenses are covered under our service credit portion of our contract.

This past winter term faculty were invited to attend three eCollege hosted webinars on the topics of "Universal Design", "Designing Effective Online Assessment" and "Design and Implementation Strategies to Promote Academic Integrity."

To date, the DE department has run over a dozen faculty training webinars all of which are now available to all faculty on demand, 24/7/365 for viewing.

Flex day has also been a viable way to meet with and train faculty since these events are campus-wide. Last spring the Distance Education Department hosted a flex day session focused on how to train faculty on how to use the new faculty duper tool. The session was well attended and the tool itself is slowly being embraced by faculty who wish to be able to move their own content forward from semester to semester.

Summary

The Distance Education program, supported by a department of four staff (Multimedia Specialist, Senior Student Services Specialist, Student Services Specialist and Associate Dean), continues to work with the District and our course management system (eCollege) in trying to support a growing community of student and faculty users. Online education is a rapidly changing technology-based environment and an exciting and dynamic one at that. In spite of ongoing and new challenges each year, including a troubling fiscal forecast, we continue to strive to meet the needs of all users as creatively, efficiently and effectively as possible.