
Professional Development for Distance Education

The College offers specific professional development for faculty and staff who support students learning at a distance. One of the goals of the College's Distance Education Program is to support student success by training and supporting faculty readiness to use online instructional resources. To this end, the Distance Education Program serves all faculty who provide distance education, hybrid class instructors, and eCompanion users. In addition, the program ensures ADA 508 compliance of the College's online course offerings, encouraging instructors to use Universal Design principles to make sure that all online classes, hybrid class information, and eCompanion shells are accessible to all students.

The Distance Education Department serves the faculty needs by presenting webinars on pertinent topics such as "From On-ground to eCompanion," "Creativity in the Classroom," "Assessing and Enhancing Online Courses," "Combating Online Cheating," and numerous one-hour sessions on how to use the newest eCollege faculty tool that has been added to the faculty suite. On-campus trainings are offered throughout the school year and on institutional flex days. Between 50 to 100 faculty participate every year in the trainings offered.

As of 2014, there are 217 online course instructors. Approximately 130 faculty rotate into teaching courses each year. All eCollege faculty users have online resources on the Distance Education website, including a self-paced tutorial with the content based on everything needed to build and teach an online class. When there is a new release of an online platform, the Distance Education Program provides a webinar for training. In addition, the College offers a mentor program for instructors who are teaching online for the first time. This program was developed to augment the resources used by new faculty who are developing online or hybrid courses who may also be navigating the tutorials or attending the on-ground trainings for new online instructors. It is a face-to-face, individualized program with the new online faculty member and an experienced online instructor who helps the faculty members build their classes. It takes up to 30 hours to assist each individual faculty member, so the College provides a stipend to the faculty mentor to compensate for this time.

New professional development initiatives developed and implemented by the Distance Education Program include oversight of eCompanion and the Faculty Readiness Pilot. Greater calibration of distance education offerings will now be possible since all online instruction will be centralized in one place. This will enable the office to support faculty across programs in a more consistent manner. With regard to the Faculty Readiness Pilot, Santa Monica College offered 30 seats for faculty in a structured environment to receive basic information on constructing online classes. They received instruction in online pedagogy, technology, accessibility, Universal Design, copyright, and other topics. The training addressed both teaching and learning needs. The completion rate for this pilot training was 70%, an unusually high retention rate for distance education trainings. The program is still under development, as there is a pending transition from eCollege to Canvas.