Academic Senate Recommendation

Title: Recommendations for the Future of DE at SMC
Author/Committee: Distance Education Committee
Senate Executive Endorsement Date (1ˢᵗ Read): 14 March 2023 (unanimous)
Senate Endorsement Date (1ˢᵗ Read): 21 March 2023 (unanimous)
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A. AIMS AND CONTEXT

Aims
These recommendations aim to
- foster a campus culture that considers and cultivates an accessible, equitable, and high-quality experience for online teaching and learning
- improve student learning and success through equitable online education
- become a model of equitable online education that other community colleges can follow, and
- help SMC remain competitive in a changing educational landscape.

The Role of Distance Education in Student Success
It is predicted that by 2025 most students will take a significant portion of their classes online. Research also indicates that Black, Latinx, and low-income community college students who take some of their courses online increase their likelihood of success.

Distance Education Offerings at SMC (Fall 2022)

- 85% of SMC students took at least one DE class
- 54% of SMC students took only DE classes
- 51% of SMC classes are online-only
- 60% of SMC classes have an online component (online-only + hybrid)
- 12,126 students studied online-only compared to 3,336 on-ground only, with 6,935 taking some DE classes and some on-ground classes

Implications

The educational landscape has shifted to include more online learning. SMC students' online experience is, and will continue to be, just as important as their on-campus experience. Over half of our current courses are fully online or have an online component and students will continue to learn at least partially online as we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic. In any given semester, we must assume that at least some students will be studying completely at a distance.

Therefore, we need to focus attention and resources on providing high-quality education to online students, offering them all of the educational and support services that on-ground students enjoy, and ensuring that faculty and staff are prepared to teach and otherwise serve students online.

The scholarly literature and sector best practice documents provide clear indications of how to support online education.

Evidence-based Approaches to Creating Equitable Online Educational Experiences
1. Pedagogically sound and accessible course design
2. Ongoing professional development for faculty
3. Community creation beyond the classroom
4. Student support services

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

To improve pedagogically sound and accessible course design, provide ongoing professional development for faculty

1. Reinstate, compensate, train, support, and advertise faculty peer distance education mentors to support faculty in real time with issues related to Canvas and online teaching, including supporting instructors who do not currently use Canvas.

2. Improve accessibility of online classes by providing more support for faculty, including training; live captioning (e.g. otter.ai); and expert resources (e.g. instructional designers with accessibility expertise, PD day workshops, and visiting speakers).

3. Complete the process for joining the CVC Consortium as a Teaching College and invest in professional development to prepare classes to be offered on the course exchange. Continue to invest in local Peer Online Course Review as a professional development activity separate from badging for the exchange.

4. Strategically align all professional development initiatives at SMC; assume online teaching as part of faculty professional development. Ensure a clear pathway of professional development and ongoing training for online teaching.

5. Support the effective and widespread use of Canvas for both online and campus-based classes by providing education, training, and support for instructors, starting with inquiring about and removing barriers to Canvas use.

To create community beyond the classroom

6. Create and advertise more online community-building and support events for students studying at a distance (e.g. motivation days, extracurricular events, graduation, etc.)

Student support services

7. Ensure all student support services are available to students studying only online or who find it difficult to visit campus outside of class times.

8. Create easier pathways and communication for students looking to complete study mostly or completely online, including course offerings, spaces, and support for online learning.

9. Campus infrastructure to support online learning (e.g. appropriate spaces for accessing synchronous online classes or meetings, creating videos, etc.)