2014 – 15 LPC Annual Distance Education Report

July 28, 2015

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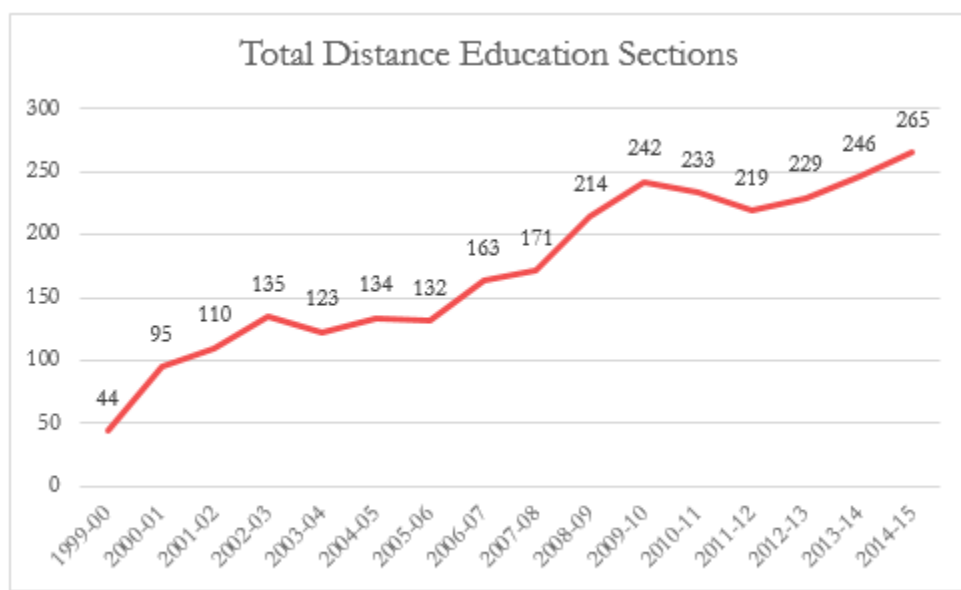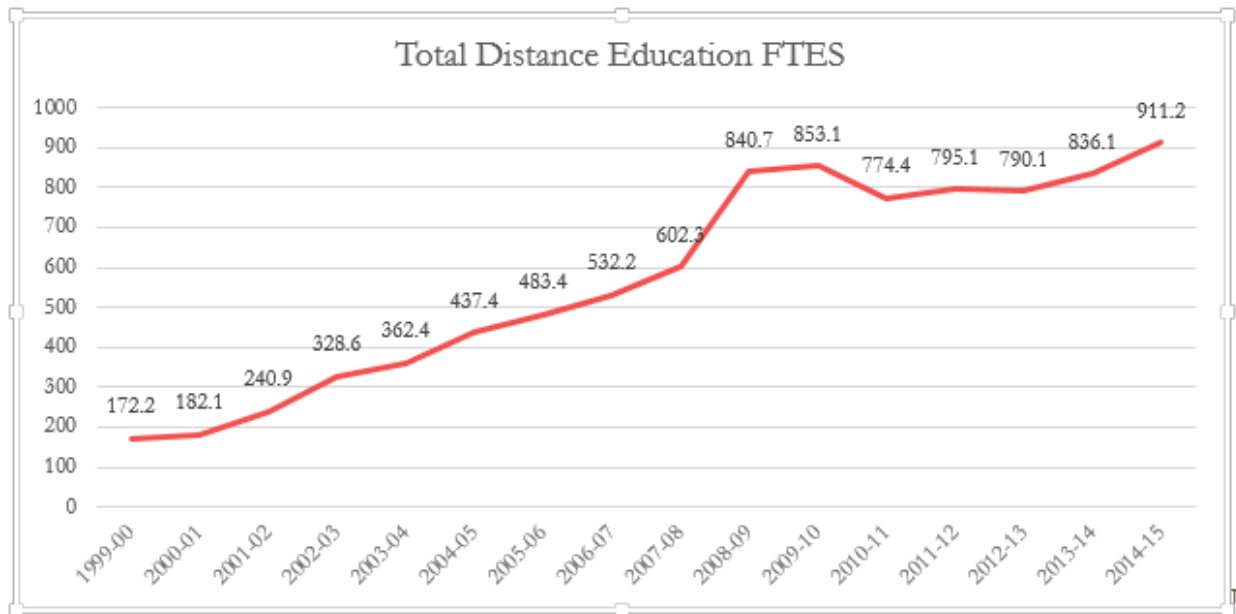
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Introduction

Las Positas College is pleased to present its annual Distance Education (DE) report for the 2014-15 academic year. This report attempts to give a comprehensive review of DE activities, data, and important issues that affect the LPC community. While reading it, keep in mind that the ultimate goal of the DE program is to provide high-quality instruction, while also supporting students, enhancing learning, and allowing students the opportunity to attain their educational goals in a flexible format that works best for them. The information in this report is used for making key decisions in the future.

Distance Ed and Blackboard Statistics

During 2014-15, total DE sections (265), total online sections (224), enrollment (8,210), WSCH (25,713), and FTES (911.2) in LPC Distance Education courses were at their highest levels since the college began offering Internet-based instruction during the 1999-2000 academic year. One explanation for the record totals was that as the college sought to meet its enrollment goals for the Fall 2014 semester, it increased the number of DE sections.

Total Distance Education Sections

Total Distance Education FTES

Since LPC uses Blackboard for online, hybrid, and web-enhanced courses, statistics are available for total Blackboard usage. During the past academic year, the following Blackboard records were set: total sections (1,247), enrollments in total sections (35,912), enrollment for hybrid DE sections (894), number of hybrid non-DE sections (32), and number of web-enhanced sections (950).

A further breakdown of the numbers show that the 265 DE sections made up 13% of the total number of sections offered at LPC for the year, and the 1,247 sections using Blackboard made up 62% of the total sections.

Distance Education statistics (1999-00 through 2014-15)

Category	99-00	00-01	01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07
Total sections	44	95	110	135	123	134	132	163
Total disciplines	12	13	14	17	15	20	26	25
Enrollment	1,746	2,196	2,571	3,405	3,369	4,366	4,744	4,991
WSCH	5,291	5,580	7,236	9,816	10,931	13,288	14,732	16,202
FTES	172.2	182.1	240.9	328.6	362.4	437.4	483.4	532.2
Online sections	8	65	89	124	123	134	132	163
Hybrid sections	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Telecourse sections	34	30	21	12	0	0	0	0
Videoconf. sections	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0

Distance Education statistics (1999-00 through 2014-15) continued

Catagery	07-08	08-09	09-10	10-11	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15
Total sections	171	214	242	233	219	229	246	265
Total disciplines	26	29	30	31	30	30	30	30
Enrollment	5,669	6,795	7,851	7,119	6,914	7,080	7,288	8,210
WSCH	18,253	25,539	25,991	23,606	24,309	24,224	25,713	27,945
FTES	602.3	840.7	853.1	774.4	795.1	790.1	836.1	911.2
Online sections	157	176	205	198	188	188	198	224
Hybrid sections	14	38	37	35	31	41	48	41
Telecourse sections	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Videoconf. sections	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Blackboard usage statistics (2003-04 through 2014-15)*

Catagery	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10	10-11	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15
Total sections	168	307	383	559	706	1,055	1,195	1,115	1,081	1,091	1,216	1,247
Enrlmt for total sections	4,426	8,618	11,361	16,094	18,958	26,143	32,295	31,553	31,838	32,225	34,942	35,912
Online course sections	116**	134	132	163	157	176	205	198	188	188	198	224
Enrlmt for online course sections	3,338	4,366	4,744	4,991	5,338	6,053	7,105	6,485	6,233	6,335	6,475	7,316
Hybrid course sections (DE)	0	0	0	0	14	38	37	35	31	41	48	41
Enrlmt for hybrid sections (DE)	0	0	0	0	331	742	746	634	681	745	813	894
Hybrid course sections (non-DE)***	0	0	0	8	9	14	17	32	25	24	29	32
Enrlmt for hybrid sections (non-DE)	0	0	0	158	158	323	486	875	680	677	723	823
Web-enhanced sections	52	173	251	388	526	827	930	853	837	838	939	950
Enrlmt for web-enhanced sections	1,088	4,252	6,617	10,945	13,131	19,025	23,958	23,559	24,244	24,468	26,931	26,879

*The CLPCCD began using Blackboard in Summer 2003.

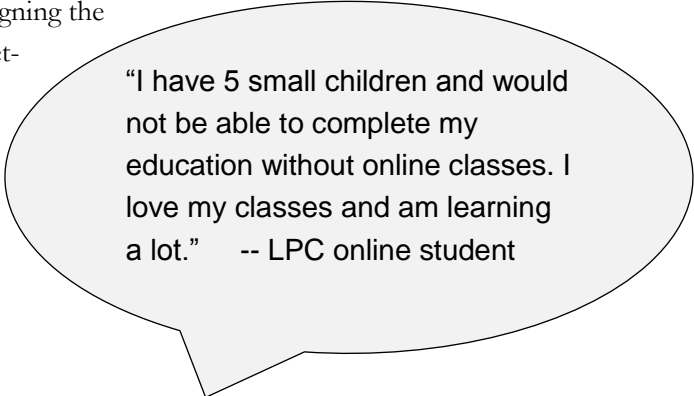**Seven online course sections did not use Blackboard.
***Hybrids that do not meet for 51 percent or more at a distance are not reported as DE classes.

For a holistic picture of Distance Education in California, the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office provided the following statistics in June 2015:

- Over 29 percent of all California community college students will take a class offered through DE this year, up from 12.5 percent in 2005-2006.
- Of all courses offered at California's community colleges, 18.1 percent are offered through DE, and it is estimated that nearly 60 percent of all courses have some online component.
- Of the 2.1 million students enrolled in the 2013-2014 academic year, 654,344 took at least one DE course.
- The average course load of all California community college students in 2013-2014 was 12 units. The average course load of students who enrolled in DE courses was 15 units.
- DE more than doubled from 21,414 sessions in 2005-2006 to 43,545 in 2013-2014.
- Two age categories—18- to 19-year-olds and 20- to -24-year olds—accounted for 57 percent of those enrolled in DE courses in 2013-2014.

Blackboard

The big news from Blackboard is that it will be completely redesigning the interface of its course management system. Dubbed Ultra, this yet-to-be-released version will also be made available on a software-as-a-service model. The new model will allow clients to have the latest features delivered automatically, as opposed to waiting for specific releases. To make the transition easier for users, Blackboard will give instructors the option to choose to use the more familiar interface until they are ready to switch to Ultra.

"I have 5 small children and would not be able to complete my education without online classes. I love my classes and am learning a lot."   -- LPC online student

In the meantime, LPC and Chabot will continue to use version 9.1 of Blackboard. After the Fall 2014 semester, the district's Blackboard system was upgraded to the April 2014 release of 9.1. Major features and enhancements of this release included: anonymous and delegated grading by instructors, anti-plagiarism checking that was incorporated into assignments created with the Assignments tool, the Blackboard Grader App that allows for grading of assignments on mobile devices, and Student Preview, which gives instructors a student view.

Online Education Initiative

The California Community Colleges' Online Education Initiative (OEI) is entering its third, and perhaps most critical, year. This is the project for which the governor earmarked $56.9 million over five years to help ensure that more students obtain degrees and/or transfer to four-year colleges in a timely manner by using online solutions. A major accomplishment of the OEI during 2014-15 was the selection of Canvas as its common course management system. All of the accomplishments during the year are too numerous to detail in this report, but here is a sampling:

- Quality course standards were developed and adopted.
- Online learner readiness tools were developed and piloted.
- Online tutoring platform was selected.
- Underprepared students' support activities began.
- The California Virtual Campus online catalog was redesigned.

Much of the OEI's work is ongoing, including the following:

- Creating reciprocity agreements and policies for the course exchange. The exchange is a feature of the OEI that will allow students from any college to enroll in online courses at any other college.
- Developing a network of trained online counselors from within the CCC system to provide quality career counseling, education counseling, and advising.
- Embedding support resources within courses.
- Forming an in-person statewide proctoring network, while also seeking a digital proctoring solution.
- Partnering with the Council of Chief Librarians to leverage existing CCC online library services.
- Developing professional development opportunities, including the launching of an online clearinghouse.

The OEI's potential was examined recently in the Public Policy Institute of California's June 2015 report titled "Successful Online Courses in California's Community Colleges":

> *New online learning technologies are shifting the debate from a zero-sum comparison of the merits of online versus face-to-face instruction to something more valuable: a discussion on how best to integrate new teaching methods into the educational process. The California Community College System's Online Education Initiative is an important start. If it is successful, it will be a model that other states can follow to build their higher-education online learning programs. (Page 18)*

Since the OEI was conceived, Scott Vigallon has kept the college's DE Committee, Technology Committee, and the District Technology Coordinating Committee abreast of its developments. Over the past academic year, he has also presented to the LPC Academic Senate and the District Educational Support Services Committee. In addition, along with DE Committee co-chair Richard Dry, he informed the college community about the OEI during the Dec. 5 Town Meeting. Following that meeting, OEI Executive Director Pat James addressed faculty during a breakout session, giving more information about the initiative and answering questions. Representatives from Instructure, the company that licenses the Canvas course management system, and LSI, the company that offers online tutoring for the OEI, addressed the LPC DE Committee.

The District Technology Coordinating Committee took the first step towards making a decision on whether or not to join the OEI by making the following recommendation to Chancellor Jackson: "The Technology Coordinating Committee recommends that the Chancellor create a task force to explore, investigate, and research the Online Education Initiative and make a recommendation to the Chancellor about which aspects of the OEI—if any—are appropriate for CLPCCD participation." The task force was approved by the Chancellor and will begin in Fall 2015. It will include representatives from a variety of affected constituencies

across the district and will prepare a partial report at the end of the semester, followed by a full report by the end of the Spring 2016 semester. The reports will go to the Chancellor, who will make the final decision.

DE Scholarship Award

Thanks to funding by the Associated Students of Las Positas College, LPC was able to institute a Distance Education Scholarship Award for the first time ever. The college's DE Committee developed the criteria for the award and chose the winner. The committee decided to ask DE instructors to nominate outstanding students based on the following criteria: 1) frequent, early, thoughtful and supportive posts; 2) outstanding quality of work; 3) initiative; 4) leadership qualities; 5) balancing multiple commitments; 6) punctuality with assignment submissions; 7) improving the course experience for others; 8) actively building online community; 9) uses resources well; 10) course must have 5 or fewer on-campus meetings.

Damon Alcorn, a student in CIS adjunct instructor Angie Vani's CIS 9992 class, was chosen as the inaugural winner. Damon received a $250 scholarship and was given the award at the annual End-of-Year Student Recognition Ceremony.

Retention and Success Rates

For the fifth consecutive year, LPC set a milestone in its retention rates for Distance Education students. In Summer 2014, the success rate of 69% was the highest rate ever at LPC for a Summer term. The previous high rate was 68% set in Summer 2013 and equaled in Summer 2014. For Fall 2014, the success rate of 59% equaled the rate from Fall 2013, and the retention rate of 77% increased by 2 percentage points from the previous year. However, the Spring 2015 rates of 62% success and 77% retention dipped from the previous year's rates of 65% and 81%, respectively.

Complete rates are below for 2014-2015. For comparison purposes, figures for 2013-15 are also provided.

Category	DE	Non-DE	DE	Non-DE	DE	Non-DE
Success	69%	82%	59%	71%	62%	73%
Retention	84%	89%	77%	85%	77%	86%

Comparison rates are below 2013-2014.

Category	DE	Non-DE	DE	Non-DE	DE	Non-DE
Success	68%	82%	59%	72%	65%	74%
Retention	85%	89%	75%	85%	81%	87%

When DE success and retention rates are obtained from the college's Office of Institutional Research, they are discussed by the DE committee. The committee is also given a review of the measures already in place to improve the rates and is asked for any new ideas. Among the ideas the past year are implementing the new online orientation for the Student Success and Support Programs (3SP) that includes information on how to be a successful online learner, publicizing the committee's recommendations on adding DE students into classes, and reiterating to instructors about the students' preference of using video in online courses.

DE success and retention rates dating to Fall 1999 can be found at http://bit.ly/1deijvz.

LPC uses the Class-Web DE acknowledgements page as another tool to analyze retention. The Class-Web DE acknowledgements page asks students to acknowledge that they: a) have access to the requisite technology for taking a DE class, b) possess basic technology skills, c) understand that DE classes require as much time as on-campus classes, d) will be completing and turning in their own work, and e) will abide by the district's student conduct and due process policy. Gathering these statistics allows LPC to determine how many students are receiving this important information. This data can also be used as evidence for accreditation. Thanks to District ITS, here are the findings for Fall 2014 and Spring 2015:

1. Total unduplicate count of students currently enrolled including dropped = 6,186
2. Total unduplicate count of students currently enrolled only not including dropped = 3,946
3. Total students who agreed to DE agreement form from #1 = 3,056
4. Total students who agreed to DE agreement form from #2 = 2,111
5. Of the total in #1, how many dropped with an NGR and how many dropped with a W? NGR = 1,832, W = 1,357
6. Of the total students who agreed to the DE agreement form (#3), how many dropped? And of those students who dropped, how many did so with an NGR and how many with a W? (NGR = 1,459, W = 670)

Online Tutoring

Once again, the college offered online tutoring for Writing and Math to students at a distance. The Writing tutoring, officially called Ask an English Tutor, is conducted by full-time and adjunct English instructors working through the Reading and Writing Center. This asynchronous tutoring is available to students in all disciplines. Math tutoring is also asynchronous and is conducted by student tutors from the Tutorial Center. Both Writing and Math online tutoring are available during the Fall and Spring semesters.

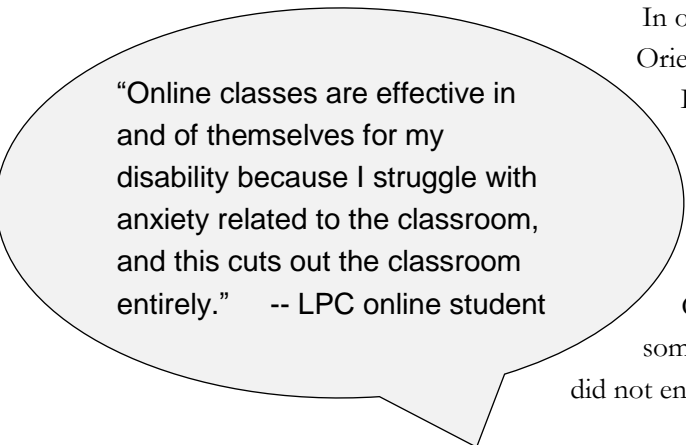Here are the statistics for Writing tutoring last year:

- 107 total students served
- 140 total papers reviewed
- 24 students in classes served multiple times

- 3 students enrolled in 2 courses served
- 99 students retained
- 90 students had success
- Grades received: 39 A's, 27 B's, 15 C's, 3 D's, 3 F's, 5 W's, 9 P's, 2 NP, 1 Inc.

Here are the statistics for Math tutoring last year:

- 20 total students served
- 1 student served twice
- 16 students retained
- 12 students had success
- Grades received: 3 A's, 3 B's, 6 C's, 2 D's, 2 F's, 4 W's

Online Learning Orientations

"Online classes are effective in and of themselves for my disability because I struggle with anxiety related to the classroom, and this cuts out the classroom entirely."   -- LPC online student

In order to further measure the effectiveness of the Online Learning Orientations that are conducted at the beginning of each semester, LPC began tracking the students who attended both the on-campus and the online orientations. Thirty-six students attended the three orientations in Fall 2014, but we were only able to track 16 because many students who participated in the virtual orientation did not enter their names in the CCC Confer chat box, some students withdrew prior to Census, and some attended the orientations for informational purposes only and did not enroll in a DE course.

Of the 28 students we were able to track, 22 had success in at least one class (11 students took multiple classes) and 23 students were retained in at least one class. The students' grade breakdown was: 16 A's, 6 B's, 5 C's, 1 D, 4 F's, 6 W's, 1 P. These stats are being measured against the new student learning outcome: Students who complete online learning orientations will successfully complete an online course.

Online Counseling

In March 2015, LPC launched a new online counseling service. The service was created by counselor Gabriela Discua and was modeled after Chabot's. It uses SARS to track student usage and to aggregate queries to one central location to make responding to them easier. Counselors will be able to log into SARS to pull out students' files and records in order to do research before answering queries. The service is to be used more for academic advising than personal counseling. Online counseling is asynchronous, so students' queries will be answered via email.

To help promote the service to DE students, a link to the new Online Counseling web page was added to the Online Learning web site. In addition, information about online counseling was submitted through the DE advertisement that goes into the printed class schedule, and information was inputted into each of the three model Blackboard templates that faculty can use when setting up new courses. Faculty will be reminded about online counseling in emails at the end of each semester and the beginning of the next one.

LPC Survey Results

Student Survey

The annual DE Student Satisfaction Survey was completed in December, and like previous years, results were positive. When asked to rate their level of satisfaction with different components of online learning, the 245 students who completed the survey were mostly satisfied or very satisfied in all areas. This included the DE program as a whole (78%), overall course quality (73%) and overall course satisfaction (76%).

When asked if they would take another DE course from LPC, 81 percent indicated that they would (10 percent had no opinion). Students also indicated (66 percent) that they learned about the same in their DE classes than they would have in an on-campus class. Interestingly, 17 percent said they learned more in their DE classes, and 17 percent said they learned less.

Students indicated a desire for online academic advising, and this was met by the Online Counseling service that was launched a few months later. Students also indicated a desire for more mobile learning, so in addition to the regular faculty workshop on optimizing content for mobile delivery, instructors were sent information and instructions on how to do this in Blackboard.

Students voiced other opinions in the comments section of the survey. Positive comments centered on the instructor's performance. This included the helpfulness of the instructor and how communicative and encouraging he or she is. The comments also included how well the instructor organized and structured the class and how timely his or her feedback was after assignments. Negative comments also centered on the instructor's performance. Some students felt that their instructors were not communicative, did not give timely feedback, built disorganized courses, and did not update their courses with current content.

Complete DE Student Satisfaction Survey results can be found at http://bit.ly/1e3UCXy.

Faculty Survey

Twenty-seven instructors completed the survey, which included a mixture of items such as satisfaction, training needs, teaching preferences, web accessibility, the use of online educational resources, and student learning outcomes. As with the student survey results, the DE Committee reviewed and discussed the faculty results. Two topics, DE accreditation requirements and optimizing content for mobile delivery, were identified as future training topics. They were actually offered as part of the Spring 2015 Teaching and Learning Center series of workshops. Also, the committee wanted online resources on the Staff Development site publicized more. All three were noted in an email sent to Blackboard instructors in late January.
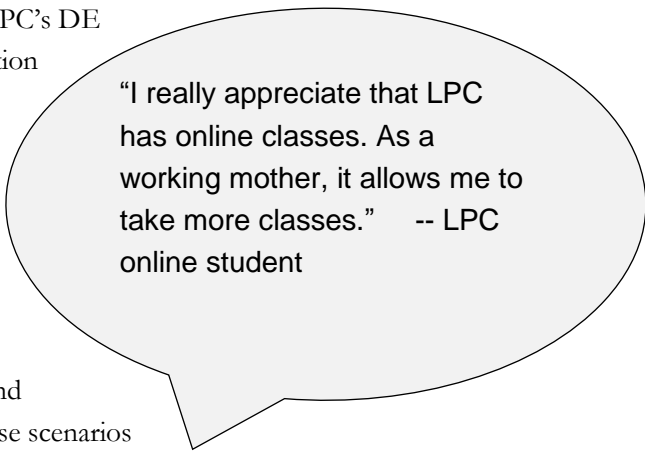
Complete DE Faculty Survey results can be found at http://bit.ly/1J5ZvdG.

Library Resources

Late in the academic year, the LPC library launched two new online services, live chat and online room reservations. The reservation system allows students to reserve a study room in the recently renovated library. According to Frances Hui, the library's representative on the DE Committee, the system is working well, and the rooms seem to be popular with students. The live chat is intended to mimic an exchange with a reference librarian. The goal is to have it available all hours that the library is open. During the chat, links and attachments can be sent. For example, a student can send the actual class assignment so the librarian can better help the student with his research needs. A transcript of the chat can be sent to the student at the end of the session.

Enhanced Learning Environment Standards

At the behest of the District Technology Coordinating Committee, LPC's DE Committee played a role in developing standards for the implementation of classroom technologies that can be used for distance education purposes. These technologies include web conferencing, point-to-point video (videoconferencing), and lecture capture, and they are being planned for use in the new classroom building that will be constructed in the near future. Steve Gunderson, LPC's senior instructional network systems specialist, created a draft of the standards for the committee to review. Over the course of a month, committee members discussed the draft before providing feedback and offering modified language. The standards are to be used after use-case scenarios performed by faculty. Here they are:

"I really appreciate that LPC has online classes. As a working mother, it allows me to take more classes."   -- LPC online student

1. The technology must be supportable by the technology staff by the time of implementation.
2. The technology must be easy to use by faculty and cannot be overly complex.
3. The technology must enhance the student and instructor experience.
4. The technology must include support for items identified through use-case scenarios (updated after review of scenarios).
5. The technology standards must be easily duplicated across the institution.

Other Notable Achievements

Other achievements during the 2014-15 academic year included:

- During the academic year, 284 instructors used Blackboard to teach either online, hybrid, or web-enhanced courses. Sixty-eight instructors taught DE courses.

- Three new DE courses were launched: Business 1A (Financial Accounting), Business 53 (Business Correspondence), and Marketing 64 (Introduction to Advertising).

- Seven new courses were approved for DE by the Curriculum Committee: English 19A (Las Positas Literary Anthology A), Mass Communications 19A (Las Positas Literary Anthology A), English 32 (U.S. Women's Literature), Anthropology 3 (Social/Cultural Anthropology), Anthropology 12 (Magic/Religion/Witchcraft/Healing), Business 43 (Professional Communications), and Math 50 (Core Intermediate Algebra).

- Five faculty members completed the Online Course Development Program, which trains instructors new to online learning how to design, develop, and teach an online course. Those five are: Ashley Odell (Psychology-Counseling), Robin Polokoff (Nutrition), Diana Cefalo (Music), Marsha Vernoga (Nutrition), and Elizabeth Vitalis (Biology).

- Fifty-three instructors completed the Integrating the Internet Into Instruction (Four I's) program, which trains them in Blackboard basics and allows them to use Blackboard to enhance their face-to-face courses. Thirty-six of those instructors completed their training online.

- As per the faculty contract, 24 DE instructors underwent official evaluations of instruction.

- LPC's Instructional Technology Student Support desk fielded 1,893 inquiries from students. Among this total, 891 inquiries were telephone calls, 342 were emails, and 660 were walk-ins.

- LPC continued its participation in the statewide DE Captioning Grant. The grant, administered by College of the Canyons, allows participating colleges to have videos in all courses that use a course management system (Blackboard) captioned by a vendor (LPC works with the vendor RapidText). Captioning work is paid for by the grant. In 2014-15, LPC had 87 videos captioned, bringing its 6-year total to 273.

- The LPC Online Learning home page continued to be one of the most viewed pages on the entire LPC web site. During the academic year, the Online Learning home page amassed 152,495 page views. The mobile version of the Online Learning site had 1,176 total page views.

- Section designations for DE and hybrid courses were changed, beginning with the Summer 2014 schedule. Here they are: DE1 = fully online, HD1 = DE hybrid (51% or more DE), HY1 = non-DE hybrid (50% or less DE), LO1 = late-start fully online, LD1 = late-start DE hybrid, LH1 = late-start non-DE hybrid.

Future Tasks

With this Fall's launch of the task force that will investigate the Online Education Initiative and recommend whether or not to join it, the 2015-16 academic year should be highlighted by the dialog expected to occur district wide. The decision to join the OEI and transition to the Canvas course management system will mark

the district's most significant decision on online learning since it chose Blackboard as its CMS in 2003. Changing course management systems would affect not only online learning, but it would also affect such areas as Student Services, District ITS, student and faculty support, and even accreditation.

Speaking of accreditation, with the ACCJC's site visit scheduled for October, the DE program will finalize preparations by then. Actually, since the program incorporates accreditation requirements in its daily routine, preparations mainly focus on ensuring that DE instructors are meeting requirements in their classes. These requirements include academic integrity, web accessibility, and regular effective contact with students. LPC has provided all DE instructors with training and support on each of those topics.

And Finally…

Since delivering Distance Education to thousands of students is a collective effort, special thanks go to each of the LPC faculty members, classified employees, administrators, and District ITS workers who make it happen. In particular, Jeff Sperry, LPC's Instructional Technology Support Specialist who works in the Teaching and Learning Center, has been instrumental to the success of the program.

Thank you for your time.

Scott Vigallon
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