

Distance Education/On-Line Task Force Final Report – July 26, 2007

There has been considerable interest voiced by individuals in academic units all across the University of Kansas campus in the delivery of distance education courses and programs. The U.S. Department of Education reports that in the 2000-2001 school year, 89% of public 4-year institutions offered distance education courses with an estimated 2,876,000 enrollments in college-level distance education programs. This number is nearly double the enrollment in 1995 and it is clear that enrollments have increased at a steady pace since 2001. Sadly, KU is behind many of its peers in the use of distance technology for delivery of courses and programs.

The Distance Education/On-Line Task Force met over the course of the spring semester and the summer and offers the following recommendations. Background information on the Task Force, its charge, the definition we employ, and identified internal barriers at KU appear in the attached Appendix.

Recommendations: Underlying most all of the complicating factors is money. Faculty incentives, course development, technical support, and other concerns all require additional resources. Considering this, we offer the following vision/recommendations.

Vision: KU will support the development and delivery of distance education courses and programs for targeted student markets and program areas identified by the College and Professional Schools

Specific Recommendations:

1. Revenue Distribution – since revenue is central to all other recommendations, it is clear that there must be some sort of distribution system so tuition dollars and/or fees generated by Distance Courses are at least partially returned to the delivering School/College (who then can determine the split with the academic department). Since few units are ready to divert faculty time to develop distance programs without additional resources, some vehicle for revenue distribution is necessary. Additionally, there likely will be needs for localized technology support for both course development and implementation of distance courses. Revenue can be generated for these purposes by offering distance courses through Continuing Education and/or returning tuition dollars directly to the delivering units. Specific revenue distribution recommendations include:
 - a. All courses and programs to be delivered to audiences beyond Lawrence and Edwards campuses should go through Continuing Education. A revenue distribution model will be created where a portion of the funds goes directly to the delivering College/School, a portion to Continuing Education, and a small percentage to the Office of the Provost (5% of the funds). The revenue distribution model will allow for variation of revenue distribution based on the specific services rendered by Continuing Education (e.g. marketing, registration, ordering books, etc.)

- b. Development funds are needed to support departments and programs interested in creating on-line and distance programs. We appreciate that each interested School/College should have access to initial seed money in order to support his work. We suggest two models for initial development funding based on the intended audience:
 - i. For new courses to be delivered to Lawrence and Edwards campus students, the Provost Office should create a fund to support new program development for faculty. We recommend an initial fund of \$250,000 to be available to faculty in grants of up to \$7,500 to cover the cost of course buy-outs, technology needs, etc. A form will be created through the Office of the Senior Vice-Provost for Academic Affairs that will include a detailed budget, an analysis of the likely student market for the course, and written approvals from the department chair and Dean. The Senior Vice-Provost Office will determine criteria for proposal review.
 - ii. For new courses or programs to be delivered to new audiences of students and those outside the Lawrence and Edwards markets, the funding for new course/program development will be generated by returning 50% of all tuition revenue to the delivering College/School the first time any course is delivered. The remaining 50% of the revenue would be split according to the revenue distribution model established with Continuing Education (see “a” above). The second time any course is delivered, and all times after that, the revenue distribution will be distributed based on the model developed with Continuing Education for 100% of the funds.
- c. On-going revenues are needed to support course delivery/updates and continued new program development. Deans will need to generate a development fund to support on-site technical support and the preparation of new and emerging programs. We recommend that the tuition for all distance courses be set at the resident tuition rate, and delivering departments/Schools/College establish a per credit hour technology fee for cost recovery, ongoing program support, and future program/course development. All revenue from this technology fee would revert to the delivering College/School for distribution to departments.

2. Getting started – We recognize that certain departments and programs are more likely to move into delivery of distance courses. We recommend beginning with faculty in selected units on campus who are already committed or willing to commit the time to prepare courses and programs. This will cut down on initial costs and allow the university to build a cadre of “champions” to share experiences with their peers. Specific recommendations include:
- a. Have Deans of each School/College identify specific departments interested in developing and delivering on-line classes/programs. No School/College or departments should be required to do this.

- b. Have the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) and Instructional Design and Support (IDS) assemble faculty delivering on-line/distance education classes into a Professional Learning Community (PLC) to meet regularly to identify continued problems, areas for future development, and share experiences and expertise among themselves and with faculty across KU. Experts from the Edwards Instructional Development Department and Continuing Education should be part of the group.
3. Technical Support – Technical support has several components. There is the support needed by faculty to develop courses for delivery, and the KU infrastructure needs related to the technical needs on campus. We propose several recommendations:
 - a. Create an office on campus to provide instructional support for the development of on-line/distance education courses. Currently there is some instructional support available through IDS, Continuing Education, and Edwards. All KU services should be reviewed and a specific entity identified or a new office created for distance education support.
 - b. The Office of the Vice Provost for Information Services prepare a cost estimate of the possible additional infrastructure needs of implementing distance/on-line classes
4. Faculty Incentives – faculty are busy. Many have no interest in teaching on-line/distance education classes, and even if they do, they don't see any reward for doing so. We believe that certain tangible benefits will be necessary for faculty to participate aggressively in the development and delivery of on-line/distance education courses. Our recommendations include:
 - a. Care should be taken to insure that regular KU faculty are engaged in teaching of distance courses. Deans and department chairs are charged with insuring that the offering of distance courses doesn't become a vehicle for adding large numbers of Lecturers to teach distance classes.
 - b. Teaching of on-line/distance education courses should be considered positively in annual performance and P&T reviews as they add to a department's mission.
 - c. An array of incentives for faculty will be necessary to get them involved: altering workload for course development, benefits including extra travel, research support, opportunities for earning additional income, and departments will need to consider accepting scholarship on distance education as a legitimate part of research agendas. Any funding required for these activities should come from the revenue generated by the course technology fees established by the delivering department.
 - d. The opportunity for courses offered in flexible time windows would allow faculty members to redistribute teaching time into more focused periods.
5. Overcoming Internal Barriers – Admissions and other policies need to make the entire process of taking distance/on-line courses more user-friendly, and policies that make distance/on-line credit bearing courses less attractive than traditional classes should be reconsidered. Recommendations include:

- a. Work with the Registrar, Graduate Studies, and Admissions so admissions for distance/on-line courses as a non-degree student is quicker and easier than the current practices.
- b. Tuition for distance/on-line classes should be based on a model of resident tuition plus technology fees, and not be confused with other billing factors (e.g. the in-state, out-of-state distinction, degree/non-degree seeking, etc.).
- c. Relevant KU distance education policies should be compiled by the Provost's Office and shared with departments to clarify current options for faculty (e.g. seat time requirements, offering hybrid courses with partial face-to-face and partial online delivery, etc.).
- d. Processes for approving distance/on-line classes should be the same as for any other class offered by KU. Department, School/College and other administrative approvals should reflect the exact same processes as for other courses, and no additional approval steps should be required.

6. Students – Appropriate services should be available for distance students. For example, library representatives should be involved in course development to ensure that their resources are available. Financial aid, advising, and other services should be accessible as well. Departments can handle some of this, but campus wide coordinating efforts will be required.

- The office of the Vice Provost for Student Success should be charged with overseeing the coordination of KU services for distance students

APPENDIX

Charge:

This Task Force was called by Provost Richard Lariviere to explore components of distance education at KU and to offer a set of recommendations for aggressively moving forward. Simply stated, the charge was to explore the barriers and financial needs for transforming the current distance education practices at KU.

The Task Force was composed of 15 members representing central administration, academic units and other groups from across campus. Members included: Rick Ginsberg (chair), Kathleen McCluskey-Fawcett, Ken Audus, Steve Hedden, Bill Fuerst, Dan Bernstein, Denise Stephens, Joe Steinmetz, Linda Luckey, Jean Redeker, Fred Pawlicki, Diana Carlin, Nancy Burich, Mary Ellen Kondrat, Bob Clark. The Task Force broke into four sub-committees to prepare its work:

- Funding/Incentives (Bob Clark, Chair)
- Internal Barriers (Diana Carlin, Chair)
- Faculty Involvement/Acceptance (Dan Bernstein, Chair)
- Delivery/Technical Support (Ken Audus, Chair)

Background

Determining a cohesive set of recommendations regarding on-line and distance education proved more complicated than anticipated. Complications arise due to several inter-related issues:

- Delivery: there are different approaches to delivering on-line education – for example, on-line, video conferencing, text-based, some combination of technologies. Also, there are various configurations that may be employed – for example, synchronous vs. asynchronous, self-paced, etc.
- Definition: Due to the varying delivery approaches, distance education can have a variety of definitions. For our purposes, we define it as follows:
 - Definition: distance education at KU refers to courses where two thirds of content is delivered either on-line or through video or video-conferencing or other advanced technologies
- Audience: Should the focus be on developing courses and certificate or degree programs for current students, new students likely unable to attend KU in Lawrence or at the Edwards campus, or some combination of both? What types of needs assessment should be conducted to determine this?
- Pricing: What should tuition be for distance students? Typically in-state and out-of-state students are treated the same on most campuses. Should there be special fees for distance students?
- Organizational Structure: Should courses be administered through Continuing Education, through traditional campus structures, some new structure? What

would the administrative responsibilities be for students taking distance courses (e.g. enrollment, advertising, student support, etc)?

- Technical Support: Should course development and on-going support be provided locally at the department of School/College level, though existing structures in IDS, Continuing Education or Edwards? What sorts of upgrades are needed, if any, for campus wide technology that would logically be handled centrally through the Vice Provost for Information Services office?
- Revenue distribution: Delivering units will need money for course development, technical support, as well as incentives to get faculty involved. If on-line/distance courses are to be new ventures rather than replacing current courses, then additional faculty will be required.
- Internal Barriers: KU has a dizzying array of current policies regarding admissions processes, fees for courses, mediated course policy and others that affect what courses can count towards degrees. Additionally, policies and procedures related to course "seat time" requirements are unclear, and faculty are discouraged from developing innovative course structures as a result.