Preface

The information in the following chapters has been designed for university or college teachers who are or will become involved with online education. The emphasis is on teachers, because they are working in the front lines of online education. *You* throughout the text refers to *teachers*. However, administrators, course designers, technical specialists, and other institutional personnel should find the book useful. In particular, administrators should read the final chapter, which covers topics relevant to current and future success with an institution's online curricula.

Curriculum planning is an ongoing, often arduous activity, and envisioning the way that courses effectively fit together into programs within one or many disciplines is challenging. Teachers often are more likely to be involved with the planning or revision of individual courses, which will become important touchstones within the curriculum. Planning information for creating a new course or updating a course currently offered online should help teachers develop more effective materials to use with a wide variety of learners.

Once a course is in place, teachers may need additional guidance about using the tools required to access the information from a course Web site, as well as to work with learners in real time or at their own pace. Finally, keeping the online course current is as important as starting it off right, and information about working with administrators in particular is critical for getting what teachers need to advance professionally and to keep online education on track academically. Curriculum and course planning and development are both pedagogical and technological activities for universities and colleges. As the academic realm is forced to

change at a rapid pace, the development and dissemination of information electronically become even more important.

Administrators, course designers, and others who work within the framework of a university, college, or other academic institution can use this information to learn how to work with teachers more effectively and to further the effectiveness of online education. Online teachers cannot work effectively if they do not have support from other faculty members and administrators. All levels of administration must work well together and share a coherent, cohesive vision for planning the direction that online activities will take, and administrators must be aware of the special pressures and concerns shared by online educators.

Although administrators and information designers may initially plan an online program, teachers are needed to develop viable ideas about what is required in a course and how the information should be structured. Teachers who work with learners daily understand the needs of their target audience and the language, graphic information, activities, and assignments that will work most effectively with these students. Teachers and administrators should gather feedback from learners to guide the development processes of individual courses and an entire curriculum. Although teachers may or may not have the technical expertise to implement an instructional design, they should be actively involved in developing course structures and materials.

As well, because online courses will be facilitated by teachers, they should help determine which tools are most effective and how practical a course site is for learners and other educators. Teachers will keep track of the glitches that occur among site users and the difficulty or ease with which learners work with the textual and graphical information provided at or linked to the course Web site. They will hear the praise or complaints about the course—not only from learners, but from colleagues. Therefore, teachers must be actively involved in the design and facilitation stages.

Many administrators began their careers in academia as teachers and gradually moved away from the daily rigors of teaching to focus on the institution's larger missions, such as recruiting learners, marketing courses and programs to generate interest in them, hiring and retaining faculty, and writing and updating a strategic plan. These activities fall within the broader scope of making the online programs within an academic institu-

tion worthy of respect. They make sure that online programs are able to achieve accreditation by recognized educational entities, as well as remain viable in the marketplace.

Simply by the nature of administration and the volume of the workload, administrators may eventually lose touch with the day-to-day practices of teaching and the needs of teachers and learners. However, teachers should at least be consulted as a curriculum or even a course is being developed or evaluated. Working with teachers to ensure high-quality academic programs that are relevant to learners is crucial for an online program's success. Making sure that teachers also have incentives and support is equally important; teachers must be given the time and assistance so that they can keep up with trends in online education and remain effective online educators. Administrators must work closely with teachers throughout the ongoing process of developing courses and curricula.

What You Should Already Know

If you are reading this book, you (or key members of your institution) should already be familiar with online education and have decided that you need a new online course or program. The basic curriculum is probably in place, but you need to decide whether it should be offered online in addition to on site, or if only certain courses need to be provided to an online audience. You understand how a new online course will supplement or modify the existing curriculum.

The focus of this book is not to help you decide *if* online education is the right choice. The emphasis is on how you can continue to improve personal performance in the online classroom and to ensure that the classes offer high-quality instruction through a variety of electronic media currently available across the Internet. It is designed to help you consider your response to the changing nature of online education and to be aware of recurring issues that affect teachers' and learners' performance and retention. If your institution already has taken the plunge and is planning to develop an online curriculum for a new program or modify an existing online set of programs or courses, the information in this book helps you go beyond the basics.

The Wide Variety of Vendors of Educational Information

Even within a traditional academic institution, the variety of course offerings and ways that learners can access educational information may be staggering. You may find that the nature of your academic setting is changing rapidly; you may teach on site one time and in a Web-enhanced classroom or purely via the Internet during the next term.

Some online institutions operate through an electronic campus with few, if any, physical buildings. Other academic institutions may be newer offshoots of the traditional campus model, where learners can visit a physical campus for on-site classes, as well as participate in online courses offered by the school. Developing an online curriculum can encompass both on-site and online courses together or online courses only, whichever is determined appropriate for that particular institution and the types and levels of instruction it offers.

However, online education is offered by other providers, too. Many businesses, companies, and individuals also develop online courses. Like any other educational offering, the quality of instruction, the cost of the education, and the quality of course materials vary among online providers. Businesses operate differently from academic institutions, which deal with issues like accreditation and tenure, and may focus more on e-learning or e-training than broader degree preparation.

For-profit companies, such as booksellers, market non-credit, personal interest classes. Entrepreneurial businesses may specialize in self-help courses ranging from filing taxes to growing an herbal garden. Individuals who want to share their knowledge about a particular subject—for a fee or free—develop online courses for the Internet public. Just about anyone today can provide information online, much of it deemed "educational." The number and types of training and academic programs increase with the popularity and growth of the Internet in general and online education specifically. For the public, *online education* may have very different definitions from those that can pertain to your institution's course offerings.

These basic differences in philosophy or purpose among creators of online courses may affect the number and type of programs that your institution offers. The spectrum of the types of online courses, their costs,

projected outcomes (e.g., a degree, certification, or personal enjoyment), quality, and accessibility broadly spans many businesses and academic institutions worldwide. Part of your job is to help define what *online education* means for your institution and to decide what types of interaction are appropriate for people who come to your programs for educational experiences.

Fee structures, technology, and even the definition of what an online course is or should be point out some differences among educational programs or classes. Your institution must decide where its course offerings fit among all those offered by competitors. Not only the quality of education, but the way it has been designed and its purposes are the result of differing concepts of effective online learning. You, and members of your academic institution, must agree on what exactly will be provided and how online education fits with your particular college's or university's mission.

The technology needed to present online courses or programs also differs among vendors. Not all online classes have to use the latest gadgets or multimedia designs to be effective. Technology changes, some would say progresses, rapidly, and certainly there are higher-tech classes than those described in this book. No doubt the amount of technology and the availability of non-print-based media mean that online classes need to keep being upgraded.

However, many worthwhile programs rely primarily on e-mail and other text-only forms of information and communication. The lower-tech applications, simply because that's where many programs are and where many potential learners start out, are described in the application sections of this book, although the design and teaching principles apply both to low-tech or high-tech online classrooms.

Completely automated programs are not included in this discussion. The human touch, as provided by teachers/facilitators, administrators, staff, and mentors, is important for the success of most online curricula in academic settings. Teacher/student relationships are therefore recommended and emphasized in each chapter. Determining how much technology is needed to meet the needs of learners and the demands of a specific subject is also an important part of developing successful online programs.

How much information is truly electronic, how students interact with teachers and other learners, and how the courses are set up depend on the individual definition of *online education*. By the time you finish using this book, you should be familiar with several possible definitions and should be able to define *online education* for your institutional situation. You also should have a clearer vision of what is needed to develop an online course and to facilitate an online class—tasks that are part of the larger activities required for developing an online curriculum.

The Structure of This Book

Faculty who are interested in developing a curriculum that can be tailored to meet accreditation standards or can be designed based on educational pedagogy should find the following chapters informative and practical. Teachers building an online curriculum can use this information to design classes or entire programs for specific clientele. For example, the methods of teaching young students and the requirements for public elementary and secondary education differ from those for teaching in private institutions or post-secondary programs, but they have in common the principles of working online. Teachers from all types of institutions should be able to apply the ideas in the following chapters to their specific work environments.

The book has been organized into three sections of three chapters each. Activities associated with curriculum planning through evaluation and change fall within three primary tasks:

1. Developing the curriculum
2. Implementing the curriculum
3. Maintaining the curriculum

Each of these tasks is discussed within a separate section.

The first section explains how to *develop* the curriculum. Part 1 consists of Chapter 1. Facilitating the Online Curriculum, Chapter 2. Adding a Course to the Curriculum, and Chapter 3. Updating and Developing Course Materials. These background chapters illustrate how to add new courses to an online curriculum and are especially well suited for new online teachers or teachers who significantly need to update an online curriculum.

Part 2 covers the ways to *implement* the curriculum through teaching online courses. This section is made up of Chapter 4. The Tools of the Trade, Chapter 5. The Daily Work of Teaching, and Chapter 6. The Aesthetics of Teaching. These chapters offer practical guidance for managing online classes and facilitating learning. They explain how to put the courses in place and work with learners regularly.

Part 3 describes how to *maintain* the courses for the curriculum to be competitive and relevant, and to attract and retain learners and teachers. In addition to teachers, administrators and course planners should find this section practical. This section consists of Chapter 7. Developing Support Networks, Chapter 8. Managing Programs and Faculty Concerns, and Chapter 9. Planning for the Future. Information to keep your curriculum fresh is highlighted in this section. Issues that have an impact on teacher training and retention also are featured.

Each part is prefaced with an overview. References are listed at the end of each chapter. An index of keywords highlights major concepts across the three sections, and a glossary summarizes the concepts and explains acronyms and abbreviations used throughout the book.

Some examples and lists include URLs/URIs and other information based on a university's or a publication's Web site. All information was available in late 2002.

Call for Action in Online Education

Online teaching can be highly rewarding and enjoyable, but much needs to be done to improve the online learning community and make education more accessible to students worldwide. Educators should look forward to the day when all teachers receive the same understanding, respect, and recognition, whether they teach purely online, on site, or through a combination of the two. Online education should not be second class, in quality or respectability. Perhaps this book will encourage more academicians to continue to improve online education and to share their love of teaching with more students through the Internet.

The state of online education is changing rapidly, and some educators rightly call it a revolution. Some issues to think about in developing an online curriculum are highlighted in the book, but by no means are definitive solutions proposed. The nature of online education should

continue to be debated within individual universities or colleges and across the broad spectrum of academia. Summaries of concerns and directions proposed by online educators are featured in this book, particularly in the last chapter.

In the interest of high-quality online education, and the variety of forms it currently takes, the debate must continue, and educators must respond more quickly to the challenges facing us. It is impossible to keep up with all the latest advancements, but as educators entrusted with the preparation of younger students and adult learners, we must become actively involved in the discussions about pedagogy, the nature of academic institutions, and the roles of teachers in the educational process.