Chapter 8

Developing an Online Presence:
Shifting the Focus From Quantity to Quality

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ABSTRACT

This chapter outlines the process developed at the University of Michigan – Dearborn (UM-Dearborn) to support the development, facilitation, and evaluation of online courses and programs. In addition to the step-by-step account of initiatives and actions, this chapter centers on the guiding principles of enhancing online course quality, investing in faculty support and innovation, and providing robust online support to students. Initiatives and strategies outlined in this chapter are undergirded by these principles and provide guidance to any higher education institution that has a limited and/or disparate catalog of online offerings and is committed to finding a pathway to a more robust array of online educational opportunities.
INTRODUCTION

This chapter intends to relate the experience of the University of Michigan-Dearborn (UM-Dearborn) as it developed a system of support for the development, facilitation and evaluation of online courses and programs. There is no shortage of case studies detailing how different institutions have transitioned from predominantly face-to-face programs to a more balanced portfolio of traditional, hybrid and online offerings. During these transitions, faculty resistance and skepticism are typically the largest obstacles institutions face when attempting to develop a more robust array of digital education programs (Allen, Seaman, Poulin, & Straut, 2016). This chapter provides a step-by-step account of initiatives and actions centered on the guiding principles undergirding our pathway and strategy for growing our undergraduate online and hybrid course offerings. The target audience for this chapter would be any higher education institution that has a limited and/or disparate catalog of online offerings and is committed to finding a pathway and a strategy to a more robust array of online educational opportunities.

BACKGROUND

UM-Dearborn is a regional campus of the University of Michigan located in southeastern Michigan, adjacent to the city of Detroit, with an enrollment of 9,339 students (2017-18 academic year). This student body consists of 7,141 undergraduates and 2,198 graduate students. The campus has a diverse population of nontraditional students and the majority of students commute to campus. There is a strong commitment to the region and state as evidenced by the fact that 96% of the student body is from the state of Michigan and 80% of the students remain in the area after graduation. The campus is comprised of four colleges that include the College of Business (COB), College of Arts, Sciences and Letters (CASL), College of Education, Health & Human Services (CEHHS) and College of Engineering and Computer Science (CECS). Each college, or academic unit, offers an array of undergraduate and graduate degree programs and students enrolled in these programs generally end up taking classes from more than one college in order to complete their degree requirements.

The State of Online Learning

Before looking at the state of online learning specifically on the UM-Dearborn campus, it is helpful to review this topic more broadly as it relates to higher education as a whole. The Online Report Card – Tracking Online Education in the United
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