Chapter I

Developing Distance Learning Programs: Applied Learnings and Thoughts

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Abstract

This chapter examines the processes associated with developing new distance learning programs at post-secondary academic institutions that have not previously ventured into the world of online learning. Although the majority of the topics discussed are readily applicable across a wide range of academic subjects, a new distance learning program in business technology serves to illustrate the relevant concepts. Through an exploration of students’ thoughts about the opportunities and concerns involved with online learning, plus a brief overview of distance learning efforts starting with one-way, non-interactive communications and moving toward today’s fast-paced interactive courserooms and multimedia capabilities, organizational challenges and potential trouble spots for new online academic programs are identified and discussed. The knowledge gained from this first-hand experience, combined with an ongoing dialog
with online student learners and other university stakeholders, provides a strong foundation on which to build and successfully implement new distance learning programs for undergraduates at the university level.

Introduction

Developing a vibrant and progressive distance learning program at the undergraduate level, where none has existed before, requires a multi-faceted effort accompanied by university-wide coordination. The process tasks center on understanding the needs and wants of the student customer base, the talents and expectations of the faculty who will participate in the program, and the financial resources and/or academic requirements of the university and/or accreditation agencies. Whether accomplished by a small university-wide nucleus of dedicated faculty members or by an individual department operating as a highly-focused team, each process task is critically important to both the initial and the ongoing success of a new academic offering, especially one as complex as a distance learning program.

The impetus for developing this chapter was the author’s championship of exactly this process, while developing a new distance learning program in Business Technology (BTE) offered through the branch campuses of Miami University in Middletown and Hamilton, Ohio. Due to a strong tie with the electronic communications, transactions and e-commerce practices already active in today’s marketplace, business technology courses are particularly well suited for incorporation into an online learning environment. Over the last three years and continuing as an ongoing supporter, the author has assumed a leadership role in this very new and very non-traditional educational effort at Miami University. This effort includes all aspects of curriculum design, program logistics and university-wide support and approval for online learning. According to the literature, the opportunities and challenges noted here, while ultimately used to frame the current Miami University effort, are generally indicative of the depth of institutional embrace, peppered with strong pockets of resistance, to online learning found in many undergraduate institutions that are considering the inclusion of a distance learning program (in its entirety) or as a partial component within their current list of course offerings.
Reflections on Designing for Learning: Ten Ideas from Ten Studies from Ten Years of Work in a University in Hong Kong
www.igi-global.com/article/reflections-on-designing-for-learning/106816?camid=4v1a

Mapping the Doctorate: A Longitudinal Study of PhD Students and their Supervisors
Camille B. Kandiko Howson and Ian Kinchin (2014). Teaching Cases Collection (pp. 446-465).
www.igi-global.com/chapter/mapping-the-doctorate/107147?camid=4v1a