Quality Control of Online Learning: From Design to Student Services

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College Overview

- Founded in 1966 as a branch campus of Manchester Community College and became an independent college in 1968.
- South central part of Connecticut, servicing 18 surrounding towns.
- 4th smallest college among the 12 community colleges in Connecticut.
- 2500 full and part-time students (credit)
- 21 degree programs – Associate Degree
- 24 certificate programs
- Students’ average age: 27.5
Student Characteristics

- Adult learners
- Work and study
- Difficulty attending scheduled classes on campus

Distance Learning

- Take credit courses at their convenience time
- Speed up the degree seeking process
Distance Learning: Past to Present

- First fully online Biology class in Fall 2000.
- Spring of 2001: two online classes, 48 seats
  - Art History and Financial Accounting
- Fall 2008, 34 online courses, 858 seats
  - Accounting, Anthropology, Biology, Business, Communication, Computers, Early Childhood Education, Economics, English, Geography, History, Mathematics, Philosophy, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology
Nature of Online Classes

- Course Management System: Blackboard Vista 8
- Fully online credit courses
  - 24/7 access, anytime, anywhere
- Member of the Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium (CTDLC)
  - Server administration
  - Help Desk: Technical support for students and faculty
- 550 students (21%) taking at least one online class in Fall 2008.
Characteristics of Online Students

- Fall 2008
  - Female: 72%
  - Male: 28%
  - Traditional: 44%
  - Non-Traditional: 56%
  - Service Area: 73%
  - Non-Service Area: 27%
## Grade Comparison – Spring 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>Online</th>
<th>On-Ground</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A, A-</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-, B, B+</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-, C, C+</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-, D, D+</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F, I, N, W</td>
<td>31.9%</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Staff Supporting Online Learning

- Director of Distance Learning, full time-permanent, 70%
  - Design online classes
  - Train faculty teaching online
  - Technical assistance for online faculty and online students
  - On-campus orientation
- Educational Technology Specialist, full time, 60%
  - Academic advising for online students
  - Online student registration
  - Technical assistance for online faculty and online students
  - On-campus orientations
- Distance Learning Assistants
  - 2 assistants, each work 15 hours/week
    - Office administrative tasks
    - Assist development of online classes
# Growth: Online Classes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>Number of Classes</th>
<th>Number of Seats</th>
<th>Total Seats</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Average Per Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall '01</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5607</td>
<td>0.46%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring '02</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>5333</td>
<td>0.88%</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall '02</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>6152</td>
<td>3.14%</td>
<td>19.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring '03</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>5622</td>
<td>4.29%</td>
<td>21.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall '03</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>6187</td>
<td>3.90%</td>
<td>21.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring '04</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>5711</td>
<td>4.48%</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall '04</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>408</td>
<td>6472</td>
<td>6.30%</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring '05</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>5939</td>
<td>6.94%</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall '05</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>385</td>
<td>6339</td>
<td>6.07%</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring '06</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>479</td>
<td>6154</td>
<td>7.78%</td>
<td>22.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall '06</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>537</td>
<td>6738</td>
<td>7.97%</td>
<td>22.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring '07</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>651</td>
<td>6346</td>
<td>10.26%</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall '07</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>723</td>
<td>7279</td>
<td>9.93%</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring '08</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>789</td>
<td>6606</td>
<td>11.94%</td>
<td>23.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall '08</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>858</td>
<td>7358</td>
<td>11.61%</td>
<td>25.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Growth: Online Classes

Semesters

Number of Seats

Fall '01
Spring '02
Fall '02
Spring '03
Fall '03
Spring '04
Fall '04
Spring '05
Fall '05
Spring '06
Fall '06
Spring '07
Fall '07
Spring '08
Fall '08

Growth: Online Classes

Fall 2005
Growth: Online Classes

Fall 2005
Quality Control
Quality Control of Online Learning

Online Course Development Guideline

Course Proposal

Course Development

Teaching

Student Services

Evaluation

Started in Fall 2005 On-going
Quality Control: Online Course Development Guideline

- Development of the classes
  - Guideline for Developing Online Classes
    [www.mxcc.commnet.edu/distance/proposal/proposal.html](http://www.mxcc.commnet.edu/distance/proposal/proposal.html)
  - Nine months prior to the first day of class.
    - Online class proposal
    - Approval process: program coordinator, chair, director of distance learning, Dean of Learning and Student Development.
    - The approved classes can be put on schedule.
  - Three months prior to the first day of class
    - Professors work with Distance Learning staff to develop the course.
    - Professors receive basic training for online teaching pedagogy while working with Distance Learning staff.
  - Two weeks prior to the first day of class
    - Evaluate the course based on the course evaluation criteria.
Quality Control: Proposal Process

- Nine months prior to the first day of class.
  - Work with distance learning staff to develop the online course proposal.
    - Justification on offering an existing on-ground course in online format.
    - Teaching methods, assessments, technology to be used.
    - Background in online teaching or use of technology in teaching.
    - Availability of receiving training and working with Distance Learning staff.
    - Availability of meeting online students in-person on request.
  - Submit the online course proposal with signatures of program coordinator and department chair to Distance Learning.
  - Director of Distance Learning review the proposal, if approved, the proposal is sent to the Dean of Student Learning and Development.
  - After the proposal is approved by the Dean of Student Learning and Development, the course is authorized to be on schedule.
Benefits of Course Proposal

- An online course is well planned.
  - Teaching methods, assessments, technology, etc.
- Professor’s technological and online teaching background are known.
  - Distance Learning staff knows what training is needed for the potential online professor and the amount of time needed to assist the professor in development of an online course.
- Professor’s availability for training, design, and student assistance are known.
  - Prevention from hiring unqualified professors who are not available in training and designing phase as well as teaching.
- Use of copyright protected materials are determined.
  - Access code based e-pack or software. Write instruction for students, special letters to students...
  - Digital video, scanned pictures, audio recording, etc.
Quality Control: Design Pedagogy

- Rich learning context: lecture notes, resources from professor and textbook Publisher
- Active participation: Students participate in weekly discussions on thought-provoking, open-ended questions.
- Multiple assessments: class participation, quizzes, tests, projects, research paper, etc.
- Ease of use of the interface
- Consistent interface layout

Examples
Technology Tools

- Blackboard Vista 8
  - Syllabus
  - Notes and Files: Learning Modules
  - Communications: Announcements, Mail, Discussion Board, Chat
  - Assignments: Assignments drop boxes
  - Exams: Assessments
  - E-packs: notes, outlines, summary, question banks, videos, animations, etc.
Quality Control: Teaching

- Faculty: [Effective Online Teaching Guideline](#)
  - Train faculty how to teach effectively online
    - One-on-one training
  - Online resources
    - [www.mxcc.commnet.edu/distance/faculty.shtml](http://www.mxcc.commnet.edu/distance/faculty.shtml)
    - Blackboard Vista Faculty Orientation and Resources (My Blackboard page)
  - Professional development
    - Workshops, seminars, Conferences
  - iTeach in Blackboard Vista – piloting phase, designed by Teach & Learn Team in the system.
  - During the semester, based on students’ feedback, we constantly revise the course.
  - All online faculty are required to provide face-to-face assistance upon student request.
Quality Control: Online Student Services

- Potential Online Students
  - Receive same services as on-ground students
- Current Students:
  - On-campus advising
  - Online Advising: Blackboard Vista
- New students
  - Online Admission
  - Online Registration: current students
    - Special procedure for new online students
- Financial Aid
  - Financial aid could be used for online courses.
  - Apply financial aid received from home institution to the courses at our college.
Quality Control: Student Services

- Registered Online Students
  - Required: Take Online Orientation to get started
    - www.mxcc.commnet.edu/distance/start.shtml
  - On-campus orientation for first-time online learners.
  - Resolving technical problems – Help Desk and Distance Learning office
  - Online library databases
- E-tutoring:
  - www.etutoring.org
  - Math, Accounting, Writing, Chemistry, Biology, etc.
- On-campus tutoring
  - Learning Center
  - Academic Support in Business.
- Virtual Campus: Blackboard Vista
Quality Control: Evaluation

- Evaluation of Online Learning
  - On-going evaluation
    - Department chairs are granted “auditor” access to online classes
  - In the end of the semester
    - Online Course Evaluation from the CTDLC
  - Evaluation results are sent to individual professors and department chairs.
  - Revise online classes based on the student evaluation.
Current Issues

- Technology Stability
  - Blackboard server has unplanned downtimes.
- Student Performance
  - Readiness of online learners
  - 5% more online students received N than on-ground students
- Support
  - Faculty and Student assistance: more support hours
  - Advanced technology
- Faculty
  - Incentives of teaching online
  - Evaluation
    - A low response rate for student evaluation
    - Discussion on which evaluation form should be used
    - How online faculty evaluation by the department chair needs to be done.
Questions/Answers