Quality Control of Online Learning: From Design to Student Services

Dr. Yi Guan-Raczkowski
Director of Distance Learning
Middlesex Community College
Middletown, Connecticut
Wednesday, April 16, 2008
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 some 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 class in 2000.
• Spring of 2001: two online classes, 48 seats
  • Art History and Financial Accounting
• Spring 2008, 34 online courses, 789 seats
  • Accounting, Anthropology, Biology, Business, Communication, Computers, Early Childhood Education, Economics, English, Geography, History, Mathematics, Philosophy, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology
<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>
</tbody>
</table>
Growth: Online Classes

Number of Seats

- Quality Control starting Fall 2005

Number of Classes

- Quality Control starting Fall 2005
Nature of Online Classes

- Course Management System: WebCT Vista 3.0
- Member of the Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium (CTDLC)
  - Server administration
  - Technical support for students and faculty
- Fully online credit courses
- 24/7 access
- Anytime, Anywhere
- 531 students (21.5%) taking at least one online class in Spring 08.
Characteristics of Online Students

- Spring 2008
  - Female: 72%
  - Male: 28%
  - Traditional: 51%
  - Non-Traditional: 49%
  - Service Area: 69%
  - Non-Service Area: 31%
Grade Comparison – Fall 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>Online</th>
<th>On-Ground</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A, A-</td>
<td>33.4%</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-, B, B+</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-, C, C+</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-, D, D+</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F, I, N, W</td>
<td>33.4%</td>
<td>28.1%</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-temporary, 80%**
  - Academic advising for online students
  - Online student registration
  - Technical assistance for online faculty and online students
  - On-campus orientations

- **Distance Learning Assistants**
  - 2, 20 hours/week each
  - Office administrative tasks
  - Assist development of online classes
Quality Control of Online Learning

- Course Proposal
- Course Development
- Teaching
- Student Services
- Evaluation

Started in Fall 2005
On-going
Quality Control: Proposal Process

- 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: Design Pedagogy

- Rich learning context: lecture notes, resources from professor and textbook Publisher
- Active participation: Student 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
- Simple technology
  - Examples
Technology Tools

- WebCT Vista 3.0
  - 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: Online Student Services

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

- Registered Online Students
  - Required: Take [Online Orientation](http://www.mxcc.commnet.edu/distance/start.shtml) to get started
  - On-campus orientation for first-time online learners.
  - Resolving technical problems – Help Desk and Distance Learning office
  - Online library databases

- E-tutoring: Math, Accounting, English.
  - [www.etutoring.org](http://www.etutoring.org)

- On-campus tutoring
  - Learning Center
  - Academic Support in Business.

Virtual Campus: WebCT Vista
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)
  - Professional development
    - Conferences, seminars
  - iTeach in WebCT Vista – newly designed by Teaching & Learning 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: Evaluation

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

- **Support staff**
  - More office hours
  - Faculty and Student assistance
  - Advanced technology

- **Student complaints on teaching pedagogy**
  - Feedback from professors

- **Faculty**
  - Incentives of teaching online
  - Formal training
  - 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