INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY-DISTANCE LEARNING-ONLINE
EDUCATIONAL TASK FORCE

Charge

To (a) examine the state of the art in instructional technology, distance learning, and online education and (b) to recommend in priority order the actions that ASUJ should take to enhance instructional technology and distance learning.

Overarching Goal

To enhance instructional technology and distance learning at ASUJ

Intervention

Establish the Connect @ Astate (CAA) program to transform and enhance teaching and learning at ASUJ by adapting, creating, and integrating new and emerging information technologies for a variety of distance learning and online applications.

Definitions

Distance Learning: Modes of delivery in which students and professors are not in the same classroom; for example, compressed video, web-assisted, and online courses.

Compressed Video: A distance-learning mode in which the professor and students at various geographical sites are connected via interactive video/audio.

Online Course: A distance-learning course which is delivered entirely via the web. However, assessments may be accomplished via a proctor at a prescribed location.

Web-Assisted Course: A distance-learning course in which a portion of the course is delivered via the web and part of the course is delivered either in the traditional face-to-face mode and/or through compressed video.
Format

This decision packet is dedicated to the establishment of a program entitled Connect @ Astate and is divided into two sections that offer different perspectives: Section I consists of prioritized levels of effort (i.e. actions) while Section II consists of four program components (i.e. interventions) with their concomitant levels of effort. Even though the levels of effort and prioritization are the same for both sections, it is highly recommended that both sections be reviewed to obtain a holistic understanding of the Connect @ Astate Program. Selecting priorities in isolation and independently of one another might adversely affect the degree of effectiveness; in other words, some priorities are interdependent.
Section I: Prioritized Levels of Effort 1-12

Pages 4-16
PRIORITY 1

Develop and implement marketing strategies that connect target audiences with the Connect@Astate program.

Rationale

Marketing throughout the state and particularly in sites served by the ASU System should enhance awareness of ASUJ's distance-learning programs/offerings. For example, in Bald Knob many public school faculty members are unaware of programs available from ASUJ at Beebe. Conducting an on-going analysis of market potential is imperative to connect with target audiences.

Responsible Party

Director of University Relations
Regional Programs
ASUJ Office of Admissions
Graduate School
Associate-Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs and Research
Assistant Director for Web Services (ITS)

Timeline

By May 2008, a marketing plan will be implemented that focuses on ASUJ's distance-learning offerings.

Resources

TBA

Cost

TBA
PRIORITY 2

Streamline the enrollment process for distance-learning courses by creating a packaged web presence that incorporates the following:

- A three click registration and checkout procedure,
- Conditional enrollment status/distance-learning clearing house site that is engaging in its design and presents all ASUJ distance-learning offerings,
- One-step information harvesting page (i.e. who are you and how will you pay?),
- One page to collect necessary information which is then fed to back-end systems such as Banner, Directory Services, and Blackboard, and
- A minimized, standard tuition/fees schedule.

Rationale

Streamlining the course-registration process should enhance convenience and reduce complexity of the process and website navigation and thus minimize student frustration with finding and registering for distance-learning courses.

Responsible Parties

Director of Enterprise Application Services
Director of Admissions
Director of Advising Services
Registrar
Associate Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Research
Regional Programs
Chief Informational Officer
Assistant Director for Web Services

Timeline

By May 30, 2008, a three-click registration process will have been implemented.

Costs

No new costs

Assessments

Student and faculty satisfaction surveys administered during the fifth week of the fall 2008, spring 2009, and fall 2009 semesters by Associate Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Research
PRIORITY 3

Create the Office of Instructional Design to encompass the present operations of the CLT office and staff and to provide support and in-service activities regarding academic and pedagogical matters such as new course startup, custom technology solutions, instructional design, assessment/testing training, support for emerging technologies, and faculty development. To accomplish this mission will require four additional staff members and the reallocation of three graduate assistants. This support will be guided in part by performance indicators recommended by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education's Best Practices for Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs.

Rationale

Faculty members need support and in-service activities to adapt and migrate teaching materials to distance learning formats; for example, utilizing technologies and applications available through advanced networks such as National LambdaRail/Internet II, developing video content, synchronous broadcasts, assessment materials, testing software, etc. Such support allows faculty to concentrate on designing and delivering high quality online courses rather than spending effort on tasks that are more clerical and technical. CLT is presently not resourced and organized to meet these future support and development requests. A new OID could overcome both issues.

Timeline

By March 1, 2008, gain authorization for the new faculty/staff lines and seat a search committee to hire a Director of OID.
By August 15, 2008, hire a Director of Instructional Design.
By December 30, 2008, hire two Instructional Design Specialists, one staff member, and three graduate assistants.
By December 30, 2008, have office space available to house OID.

Approximate Additional Costs $294,464.00

Director of Instructional Design: Salary and Benefits=$90,464
Two Instructional Design Specialists: Salary and Benefits=$130,000
One staff member: Salary and Benefits=$29,000
Three graduate assistants: No additional cost due to reallocation
Office space: Unknown

Responsible Parties

Office of Academic Affairs
Current CLT Director
Representative from the Dean's Council
Representative from the Chair's Council
Director of Technical Services, ITS
Chief Information Officer
Assessment

By December 1, 2009, the Vice-Chancellor of Academic Affairs will develop a summative evaluation using data from a Faculty Satisfaction Survey and the Director of Instructional Design's year-end assessment of the extent to which and degree of efficiency with which the OID is fulfilling its mission. The survey and assessments will in part be based on indicators recommended by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education's Best Practices for Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs.

www.neasc.org/cihe/best_practices_electronically_offered_degree.htm
PRIORITY 4

Enhance via IT Services the technical and application support services for National LambdaRail/Internet 2, Blackboard, standard software/hardware, enrollment issues, A/V support, etc. by adding two additional support staff to meet instructional technology support needs. This support will be guided in part by performance indicators recommended by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education’s Best Practices for Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs. www.neasc.org/cihe/best_practices_electronically_offered_degree.htm

Rationale

Faculty members need support to adapt and migrate teaching materials to distance-learning formats; IT Services will support tools used by faculty in designing and delivering high quality distance and online educational courses.

Timeline

By December 30, 2008, complete the hiring of two additional support personnel in the central instructional technology support organization.

By January 1, 2009, complete implementation of the OID to assume all academic/pedagogical support functions, thus allowing IT Services to assume technical support services for production technology used by faculty.

Approximate Additional Costs

Computer Support Specialist III (2) - $82383.92

Responsible Parties

Office of Academic Affairs
Current CLT Director
Representative from the Dean’s Council
Representative from the Chair’s Council
Dean of Regional Programs
Chief Information Officer

Assessment

By December 1, 2009, the Vice-Chancellor of Academic Affairs will develop a summative evaluation using formative data from a Faculty Satisfaction Survey and the Director of Instructional Design’s year-end assessment of the extent to which and degree of efficiency with which the IT this particular aspect of support. This assessment will be guided in part by performance indicators recommended by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education’s Best Practices for Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs.
PRIORITY 5

Develop student pre-enrollment support system that addresses the following:

- Is on-line learning for you? (Assessment tool to help students determine probability for successful online learning),
- Technical Requirements (Outline technical requirements such as broadband connection),
- Knowledge Requirements (Help the students determine what technology skills are necessary to succeed),
- What to expect/how it works (Outline the course, hours expected, perhaps video demonstration and tutorial),
- Guidelines to succeed (Study guidelines for online learning success),
- Enrollment checklist (Provide student with checklist for enrolling in course),
- Required online tutorial for taking distance learning courses and accessing student support systems at no additional charge to the student.),
- Guidelines to Support (on-line, CV), and
- Pre-enrollment criteria.

Rationale

Focusing efforts on pre-enrollment will ensure that students are prepared to succeed using the online mode of distance learning. Post-enrollment support services for students involved in distance education, online learning, and instructional technology will enable students to obtain equitable levels of support as students in traditional courses.

Responsible Parties

Director of Admissions
Director of OID
Director, Advising Center
Faculty Advisor of the Year
Regional Programs
Director of Technical Services

Timeline

By June 30, 2008, implement the pre-enrollment support elements to assist students enrolling in fall 2008.

Costs

No additional costs

Assessment

Student Satisfaction Survey administered at the end of each semester
Unit Assessment by Director of the Advising Center, inclusive of a frequency count of usage
Frequency count of students who matriculate to ASU after participating in online and/or CVN courses
PRIORITY 6

Implement a student post-enrollment support system that addresses the following:
- Live Chat Helpline 24/7 via phone and online through central helpdesk,
- Online tutoring and related support technologies, and
- Advisement.

Rationale

Post-enrollment support services for students involved in distance education, online learning, and instructional technology will enable students to obtain equitable levels of support as students in traditional courses.

Responsible Parties

Director of Admissions
Director of OID
Director, Advising Center
Faculty Advisor of the Year
Dean of Regional Programs
Chief Information Officer

Timeline

By June 30, 2008, the post-enrollment support system elements will be implemented to assist students enrolling in fall 2008.

Costs

To be determined

Assessment

Student Satisfaction Survey administered at the end of fall 2008, spring 2009, and fall 2009
Unit Assessment, inclusive of usage frequency count, by Director of the Advising Center
Frequency count of students who matriculate to ASU after participating in distance-learning courses
PRIORITY 7

Provide via OID faculty in-service activities regarding best practices for distance learning delivery based in part on *Online Cl@ssroom: Ideas for Effective Online Instruction*.

Rationale

To develop and continually enhance distance-learning delivery modes, faculty members need a focused, relevant, and sustained in-service development program. These professional development opportunities will assist faculty in learning and applying current and future best practices in their efforts to ensure that distance-learning delivery modes are effective and rigorous. *Online Cl@ssroom: Ideas for Effective Online Instruction* offers monthly articles on best practices for online delivery applications.

Timeline

Starting with 2008, by December 30, annually OID will have developed an in-service plan for distance learning best practices for the ensuing calendar year.

Costs

$2000.00 annually

Responsible Party

OID/Faculty Fellows

Assessment

Faculty satisfaction surveys administered after each in-service activity
Create partnerships to expand compressed video facilities through the ASU Education Renewal Zone partners. The ASU ERZ partners with CV equipment currently include:

1. Brinkley High School (Brinkley School District)
2. Hughes High School (Hughes School District) x 2
3. Mildred Jackson Elementary School (Hughes School District)
4. Jonesboro High School (Jonesboro School District) x 2
5. Manila High School (Manila School District)
6. Palestine/Wheatley High School (Palestine/Wheatley School District)
7. Central High School (Helena/West Helena School District)
8. Wynne High School (Wynne School District)
9. Crowley’s Ridge Education Service Cooperative x 2
10. Northeast Arkansas Education Service Cooperative x 3
11. Great River’s Education Service Cooperative x 2

Rationale

The ERZ public schools and educational cooperatives in the ASUJ ERZ district already have compatible CVN equipped facilities. Utilizing these facilities expands ASUJ’s distance-learning capacity; for example, weekend courses and current credit courses.

Timeline

Have MOUs with ERZ partners by May 30, 2008

Responsible Party

ASUJ Region Programs
ASU Education Renewal Zone Office

Resources

Sending and receiving site facilitators, facilities, and security

Cost

Approximately $20,000 per year for all sites

Assessment

By August 2009, ASUJ will have increased the utilization of compressed video by fifty percent over the fall 2007 usage.
PRIORITY 9

Add an on-line advising component to the current Student Advising Center (SAC).

Rationale

Distance-learning students require the same advising services as on-site students.

Responsible Parties

Director of the Student Advising Center
Associate Vice-chancellor of Academic Affairs and Research

Timeline

By May 30, 2008, implement online advising via the Student Advising Center.

Costs

Reallocation of current resources in SAC

Assessment

Student and faculty satisfaction surveys administered during the fifth week of the fall 2008, spring 2009, and fall 2009 semesters by Director of Student Advising Services
Frequency count of student users
PRIORITY 10

Create a flexible schedule for use of compressed video network facilities to accommodate web-assisted courses as well as weekend and night schedules.

Rationale

Expanding the use of current compressed video equipment in outreach areas could complement other delivery methods such as web-assisted courses. However, offering a more flexible schedule for CVN usage will be necessary. For example, a web-assisted class might need a CVN room for four or five times during a semester. A joint effort between CVN directors and department chairs in scheduling these classes would produce a greater and more efficient utilization of CVN resources.

Timeline

Schedule to be implemented during the fall 2008 semester

Responsible Party

ASUJ Regional Programs
Department Chairs

Resources

Facilitators
Scheduling software

Costs

$500.00 plus costs noted in Priority 8

Assessment

Number of course offerings to ERZ partner institutions
Number of blended courses using CV/web assisted
Number of week-end courses
Surveys of student and faculty satisfaction
Frequency count of students who matriculate to ASU after participating in online and/or CVN courses
PRIORITY 11

Conduct a CVN continuous-presence pilot program.

Rationale

Presently, a teacher using CVN can see only one distant site at a time during a multi-site conference. Video at a site engages through sound activation. Continuous-presence technology allows all sites to be viewed simultaneously and is not, therefore, dependent on sound activation. This technology enhances the teacher's monitoring of and interaction with multiple sites. A pilot program allows evaluation of the technology to assist in making purchasing decisions.

Responsible Party

ASUJ CVN staff
ATT
Arkansas Department of Information Systems (DIS)
Assistant Director for Communication Services (ITS)

Timeline

Spring 2008 semester

Resources

Utilize current resources within ASU CVN. The Arkansas Department of Information Services and ATT will provide continuous presence technology during pilot program.

Costs

No cost during pilot program

Assessment

Faculty and student satisfaction surveys
CVN staff summative assessment of the continuous-presence feasibility based on pilot program data
PRIORITY 12

Upgrade equipment in thirteen compressed video network classrooms throughout the ASU System by replacing big screen televisions with ceiling mounted projectors and wall mounted audio systems.

Rationale

Students watch video broadcasts through the CV network on two 50 inch televisions: One screen is the local signal; one screen is the remote signal. Audio is broadcast through the speakers of those 50 inch television screens. TV screens reflect glare from overhead lights and windows and audio quality is minimal. In addition, ceiling projection systems allow for greater screen space on the walls and/or screens that enhance visuals coming directly from computers.

Responsible Party

Compressed video staff
Facilities management

Timeline

By May, 2010, equipment upgrades in the thirteen CVN classrooms will have been completed.

Resources

Each of the thirteen CVN classrooms should have two projectors with ceiling mounts, projection surfaces/screens, and speakers with mounts.

Costs

$52,000 ($4,000 per CVN room)

Assessment

Faculty and student satisfaction surveys
Section II: Program Components 1-4

Pages 18-33
ASUJ will intensify marketing of distance-learning offerings.

PRIORITY 1

Level of Effort 1 of 1

Develop and implement marketing strategies that connect target audiences with the Connect@Astate Program.

Rationale

Marketing throughout the state and particularly in sites served by the ASU System should enhance awareness of ASUJ’s distance-learning programs/offersings. For example, in Bald Knob many public school faculty members are unaware of programs available from ASUJ at Beebe. Conducting an on-going analysis of market potential is imperative to connect with target audiences.

Responsible Party

Director of University Relations
Regional Programs
ASUJ Office of Admissions
Graduate School
Associate-Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs and Research
Assistant Director for Web Services (ITS)

Timeline

By May 2008, a marketing plan will be implemented that focuses on ASUJ’s distance-learning offerings.

Resources

TBA

Cost

TBA
ASUJ will intensify faculty support via a new Office of Instructional Design (OID) and IT Services to assist with facilitating distance educational offerings.

**Faculty Support Level of Effort 1 of 3**

**PRIORITY 3**

The OID will encompass the present operations of the CLT office and staff. In addition, the office will provide support and in-service activities regarding academic and pedagogical matters such as new course startup, custom technology solutions, instructional design, assessment/testing training, support for emerging technologies, and faculty development. To accomplish this mission will require four additional staff members and the reallocation of three graduate assistants. This support will be guided in part by performance indicators recommended by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education's Best Practices for Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs.

**Rationale**

Faculty members need support and in-service activities to adapt and migrate teaching materials to distance learning formats; for example, utilizing technologies and applications available through advanced networks such as National LambdaRail/Internet II, developing video content, synchronous broadcasts, assessment materials, testing software, etc. Such support allows faculty to concentrate on designing and delivering high quality online courses rather than spending effort on tasks that are more clerical and technical. CLT is presently not resourced and organized to meet these future support and development requests. A new OID could overcome both issues.

**Timeline**

By March 1, 2008, gain authorization for the new faculty/staff lines and seat a search committee to hire a Director of OID.

By August 15, 2008, hire a Director of Instructional Design.

By December 30, 2008, hire two Instructional Design Specialists, one staff member, and three graduate assistants.

By December 30, 2008, have office space available to house OID.

**Approximate Additional Costs $294,464.00**

- Director of Instructional Design: Salary and Benefits=$90,464
- Two Instructional Design Specialists: Salary and Benefits=$130,000
- One staff member: Salary and Benefits=$29,000
- Three graduate assistants: No additional cost due to reallocation
- Office space: Unknown

**Responsible Parties**
Office of Academic Affairs  
Current CLT Director  
Representative from the Dean’s Council  
Representative from the Chair’s Council  
Director of Technical Services, ITS  
Chief Information Officer  

Assessment  

By December 7, 2009, the Vice-Chancellor of Academic Affairs will develop a summative evaluation using data from a Faculty Satisfaction Survey and the Director of Instructional Design’s year-end assessment of the extent to which and degree of efficiency with which the OID is fulfilling its mission. The survey and assessments will in part be based on indicators recommended by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education’s Best Practices for Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs.  
www.neasc.org/cihe/best_practices_electronically_offered_degree.htm
Faculty Support Level of Effort 2 of 3

PRIORITY 7

OID will provide faculty in-service activities regarding best practices for distance learning delivery based in part on Online CI@ssroom: Ideas for Effective Online Instruction.

Rationale

To develop and continually enhance distance-learning delivery modes, faculty members need a focused, relevant, and sustained in-service development program. These professional development opportunities will assist faculty in learning and applying current and future best practices in their efforts to ensure that distance-learning delivery modes are effective and rigorous. Online CI@ssroom: Ideas for Effective Online Instruction offers monthly articles on best practices for online delivery applications.

Timeline

Starting with 2008, by December 30, annually OID will have developed an in-service plan for distance learning best practices for the ensuing calendar year.

Costs

$2000.00 annually

Responsible Party

OID/Faculty Fellows

Assessment

Faculty satisfaction surveys administered after each in-service activity
Faculty Support Level of Effort 3 of 3

PRIORITY 4

IT Services will enhance technical and application support services for National LambdaRail/Internet 2, Blackboard, standard software/hardware, enrollment issues, A/V support, etc. by adding two additional support staff to meet instructional technology support needs. This support will be guided in part by performance indicators recommended by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education's Best Practices for Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs.

www.neasc.org/cihe/best_practices_electronically_offered_degree.htm

Rationale

Faculty members need support to adapt and migrate teaching materials to distance-learning formats; IT Services will support tools used by faculty in designing and delivering high quality distance and online educational courses.

Timeline

By December 30, 2008, complete the hiring of two additional support personnel in the central instructional technology support organization.

By January 1, 2009, complete implementation of the OID to assume all academic/pedagogical support functions, thus allowing IT Services to assume technical support services for production technology used by faculty.

Approximate Additional Costs

Computer Support Specialist III (2) - $82383.92

Responsible Parties

Office of Academic Affairs
Current CLT Director
Representative from the Dean’s Council
Representative from the Chair’s Council
Dean of Regional Programs
Chief Information Officer

Assessment

By December 1, 2009, the Vice-Chancellor of Academic Affairs will develop a summative evaluation using data from a Faculty Satisfaction Survey and the Director of Instructional Design’s year-end assessment of the extent to which and degree of efficiency with which the IT this particular aspect of support. This assessment will be guided in part by performance indicators recommended by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education’s Best Practices for Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs.
ASUJ will intensify student distance-learning support by developing mechanisms for pre-enrollment, enrollment, and post-enrollment support.

**Student Support Level of Effort 1 of 4**

**PRIORITY 5**

Develop student pre-enrollment support system that addresses the following:

- Is on-line learning for you? (Assessment tool to help students determine probability for successful online learning),
- Technical Requirements (Outline technical requirements such as broadband connection),
- Knowledge Requirements (Help the students determine what technology skills are necessary to succeed),
- What to expect/How it works (Outline the course, hours expected, perhaps video demonstration and tutorial),
- Guidelines to succeed (Study guidelines for online learning success),
- Enrollment checklist (Provide student with checklist for enrolling in course),
- Required online tutorial for taking distance learning courses and accessing student support systems at no additional charge to the student.),
- Guidelines to Support (on-line, CV), and
- Pre-enrollment criteria.

**Rationale**

Focusing efforts on pre-enrollment will ensure that students are prepared to succeed using the online mode of distance learning. Post-enrollment support services for students involved in distance education, online learning, and instructional technology will enable students to obtain equitable levels of support as students in traditional courses.

**Responsible Parties**

Director of Admissions
Director of OID
Director, Advising Center
Faculty Advisor of the Year
Regional Programs
Director of Technical Services

**Timeline**

By June 30, 2008, implement the pre-enrollment support elements to assist students enrolling in fall 2008.

**Costs**

No additional costs
Assessment

Student Satisfaction Survey administered at the end of each semester
Unit Assessment by Director of the Advising Center, inclusive of a frequency count of usage
Frequency count of students who matriculate to ASU after participating in online and/or CVN courses
Streamline the enrollment process for distance-learning courses by creating a packaged web presence that incorporates the following:

- A three click registration and checkout procedure,
- Conditional enrollment status,
- Distance education clearing house site that is engaging in its design: presents all ASU has to offer in distance and online learning,
- One-step information harvesting page (i.e. who are you and how will you pay?),
- One page to collect necessary information which is then fed to back-end systems such as Banner, Directory Services, and Blackboard, and
- A minimized, standard tuition/fees schedule.

Rationale

Streamlining the course-registration process should enhance convenience and reduce complexity of the process and website navigation and thus minimize student frustration with finding and registering for distance learning and on-line learning courses.

Responsible Parties

Director of Enterprise Application Services
Director of Admissions
Director of Advising Services
Registrar
Associate Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Research
Regional Programs
Chief Informational Officer
Assistant Director for Web Services

Timeline

By May 30, 2008, a three-click registration process will have been implemented.

Costs

No new costs
Assessments

Student and faculty satisfaction surveys administered during the fifth week of the fall 2008, spring 2009, and fall 2009 semesters by Associate Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Research
Student Support Level of Effort 3 of 4

PRIORITY 6

Implement a student post-enrollment support system that addresses the following:
- Live Chat Helpline 24/7 via phone and online through central helpdesk,
- Online tutoring and related support technologies, and
- Advisement

Rationale

Post-enrollment support services for students involved in distance education, online learning, and instructional technology will enable students to obtain equitable levels of support as students in traditional courses.

Responsible Parties

Director of Admissions
Director of OID
Director, Advising Center
Faculty Advisor of the Year
Dean of Regional Programs
Chief Information Officer

Timeline

By June 30, 2008, the post-enrollment support system elements will be implemented to assist students enrolling in fall 2008.

Costs

To be determined

Assessment

Student Satisfaction Survey administered at the end of fall 2008, spring 2009, and fall 2009
Unit Assessment, inclusive of usage frequency count, by Director of the Advising Center
Frequency count of students who matriculate to ASU after participating in distance-learning courses
Student Support Level of Effort 4 of 4

PRIORITY 9

Add online advising component to the current Student Advising Center (SAC)

Rationale

Distance-learning students require the same services as on-site students

Responsible Parties

Director of the Student Advising Center
Associate Vice-chancellor of Academic Affairs and Research

Timeline

By May 30, 2008, implement online advising via the Student Advising Center.

Costs

Reallocation of current resources in SAC

Assessment

Student and faculty satisfaction surveys administered during the fifth week of the fall 2008, spring 2009, and fall 2009 semesters by Director of Student Advising Services
Frequency count of student users
Enhance utilization of compressed video through partnerships, flexible schedules for CVN utilization, and equipment updates.

Create partnerships to expand compressed video facilities through the ASU Education Renewal Zone partners. The ASU ERZ partners with CV equipment currently include:

1. Brinkley High School (Brinkley School District)
2. Hughes High School (Hughes School District) x 2
3. Mildred Jackson Elementary School (Hughes School District)
4. Jonesboro High School (Jonesboro School District) x 2
5. Manila High School (Manila School District)
6. Palestine/Wheatley High School (Palestine/Wheatley School District)
7. Central High School (Helena/West Helena School District)
8. Wynne High School (Wynne School District)
9. Crowley’s Ridge Education Service Cooperative x 2
10. Northeast Arkansas Education Service Cooperative x 3
11. Great River’s Education Service Cooperative x 2

Rationale

The ERZ public schools and educational cooperatives in the ASU ERZ district already have compatible CVN equipped facilities. Utilizing these facilities expands ASUJ’s distance-learning capacity; for example, weekend courses and current credit courses.

Timeline

Have MOUs with ERZ partners by May 30, 2008

Responsible Party

ASUJ Region Programs
ASU Education Renewal Zone Office

Resources

Sending and receiving site facilitators, facilities, and security

Cost

Approximately $20,000 per year for all sites
Assessment

By August 2009, ASUJ will have increased the utilization of compressed video by fifty percent over the fall 2007 usage.
PRIORITY 10

Create a flexible schedule for use of compressed video network facilities to accommodate web-assisted courses as well as weekend and night schedules.

Rationale

Expanding the use of current compressed video equipment in outreach areas could complement other delivery methods such as web-assisted courses. However, offering a more flexible schedule for CVN usage will be necessary. For example, a web-assisted class might need a CVN room for four or five times during a semester. A joint effort between CVN directors and department chairs in scheduling these classes would produce a greater and more efficient utilization of CVN resources.

Timeline

Schedule to be implemented during the fall 2008 semester

Responsible Party

ASUJ Regional Programs
Department Chairs

Resources

Facilitators
Scheduling software

Costs

$500.00 plus costs noted in Level of Effort 1 above

Assessment

Number of course offerings to ERZ partner institutions
Number of blended courses using CV/web assisted
Number of week-end courses
Surveys of student and faculty satisfaction
Frequency count of students who matriculate to ASU after participating in online and/or CVN courses
CVN Level of Effort 3 of 4

PRIORITY 11

Conduct a continuous-presence pilot program.

Rationale

Presently, a teacher using CVN can see only one distant site at a time during a multisite conference. Video at a site engages through sound activation. Continuous-presence technology allows all sites to be viewed simultaneously and is not, therefore, dependent on sound activation. This technology enhances the teacher’s monitoring of and interaction with multiple sites. A pilot program allows evaluation of the technology to assist in making purchasing decisions.

Timeline

Spring 2008 semester

Responsible Party

ASU J CVN staff
ATT
Arkansas Department of Information Systems (DIS)
Assistant Director for Communication Services (ITS)

Resources

Utilize current resources within ASU CVN. The Arkansas Department of Information Services and ATT will provide continuous presence technology during pilot program.

Costs

No cost during pilot program

Assessment

Faculty and student satisfaction surveys
CVN staff summative assessment of the continuous-presence feasibility based on data from the pilot program
CVN Level of Effort 4 of 4

PRIORITY 12

Upgrade equipment in thirteen compressed video network classrooms throughout the ASU System by replacing big screen televisions with ceiling mounted projectors and wall mounted audio systems.

Rationale

Students watch video broadcasts through the CV network on two 50 inch televisions: One screen is the local signal; one screen is the remote signal. Audio is broadcast through the speakers of those 50 inch television screens. TV screens reflect glare from overhead lights and windows and audio quality is minimal. In addition, ceiling projection systems allow for greater screen space on the walls and/or screens that enhance visuals coming directly from computers.

Responsible Party

Compressed video staff
Facilities management

Resources

Each of the thirteen CVN classrooms should have two projectors with ceiling mounts, projection surfaces/screens, and speakers with mounts.

Costs

$52,000 ($4,000 per CVN room)

Assessment

Faculty and student satisfaction surveys
Introduction
These Best Practices have been developed by the eight regional accrediting commissions in response to the emergence of technologically mediated instruction offered at a distance as an important component of higher education. Expressing in detail what currently constitutes best practice in distance education they seek to address concerns that regional accreditation standards are not relevant to the new distributed learning environments, especially when those environments are experienced by off-campus students. The Best Practices, however, are not new evaluative criteria. Rather they explicate how the well-established essentials of institutional quality found in regional accreditation standards are applicable to the emergent forms of learning; much of the detail of their content would find application any learning environment. Taken together those essentials reflect the values which the regional commissions foster among their affiliated colleges and universities:

- that education is best experienced within a community of learning where competent professionals are actively and cooperatively involved with creating, providing, and improving the instructional program;
- that learning is dynamic and interactive, regardless of the setting in which it occurs;
- that instructional programs leading to degrees having integrity are organized around substantive and coherent curricula which define expected learning outcomes;
- that institutions accept the obligation to address student needs related to, and to provide the resources necessary for, their academic success;
- that institutions are responsible for the education provided in their name;
- that institutions undertake the assessment and improvement of their quality, giving particular emphasis to student learning;
- that institutions voluntarily subject themselves to peer review.

These Best Practices are meant to assist institutions in planning distance education activities and to provide a self-assessment framework for those already involved. For the regional accrediting associations they constitute a common understanding of those elements which reflect quality distance education programming. As such they are intended to inform and facilitate the evaluation policies and processes of each region.

Developed to reflect current best practice in electronically offered programming, these Best Practices were initially drafted by the Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications (www.wiche.edu/telecom/), an organization recognized for its substantial expertise in this field. Given the rapid pace of change in distance education, these Best Practices are necessarily a work in progress. They will be subject to periodic review by the regionals, individually and collectively, who welcome comments and suggestions for their improvement.

Overview to the Best Practices
These Best Practices are divided into five separate components, each of which addresses a
particular area of institutional activity relevant to distance education. They are:

1. Institutional Context and Commitment
2. Curriculum and Instruction
3. Faculty Support
4. Student Support
5. Evaluation and Assessment.

Each component begins with a general statement followed by individual numbered paragraphs addressing specific matters describing those elements essential to quality distance education programming. These in turn are followed by protocols in the form of questions designed to assist in determining the existence of those elements when reviewing either internally or externally distance education activities.

* Commission on Higher Education, Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools; Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, New England Association of Schools and Colleges; Commission on Technical and Career Institutions, New England Association of Schools and Colleges; Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, North Central Association of Colleges and Schools; Commission on Colleges, The Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges; Commission on Colleges, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools; Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges; Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities, Western Association of Schools and Colleges.

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The Best Practices and Protocols

1. Institutional Context and Commitment

Electronically offered programs both support and extend the roles of educational institutions. Increasingly they are integral to academic organization, with growing implications for institutional infrastructure.

1a. In its content, purposes, organization, and enrollment history if applicable, the program is consistent with the institution’s role and mission.

- What is the evidence that the program is consistent with the role and mission of the institution including its goals with regard to student access?
- Is the institution fulfilling its stated role as it offers the program to students at a distance, or is the role being changed?

1b. It is recognized that a healthy institution’s purposes change over time. The institution is aware of accreditation requirements and complies with them. Each accrediting commission has established definitions of what activities constitute a substantive change that will trigger prior review and approval processes. The appropriate accreditation commission should be notified and consulted whether an electronically
offered program represents a major change. The offering of distributed programs can affect the institution’s educational goals, intended student population, curriculum, modes or venue of instruction, and can thus have an impact on both the institution and its accreditation status.

- Does the program represent a change to the institution’s stated mission and objectives?
- Does the program take the college or university beyond its “institutional boundaries,” e.g., students to be served, geographic service area, locus of instruction, curriculum to be offered, or comparable formally stated definitions of institutional purpose?
- Is the change truly significant?

1c. The institution’s budgets and policy statements reflect its commitment to the students for whom its electronically offered programs are designed.

- How is the student assured that the program will be sustained long enough for the cohort to complete it?
- How are electronically offered programs included in the institution’s overall budget structure?
- What are the institution’s policies concerning the establishment, organization, funding, and management of electronically offered programs? Do they reflect ongoing commitment to such programs? (See also item 1e below.)

1d. The institution assures adequacy of technical and physical plant facilities including appropriate staffing and technical assistance, to support its electronically offered programs.

- Do technical and physical plant facilities accommodate the curricular commitments reviewed below, e.g., instructor and student interaction (2e), and appropriateness to the curriculum (2a)?
- Whether facilities are provided directly by the institution or through contractual arrangements, what are the provisions for reliability, privacy, safety and security?
- Does the institution’s budget plan provide for appropriate updating of the technologies employed?
- Is the staffing structure appropriate (and fully qualified) to support the programs now operational and envisioned in the near term?

1e. The internal organizational structure which enables the development, coordination, support, and oversight of electronically offered programs will vary from institution to institution. Ordinarily, however, this will include capability to:

- Facilitate the associated instructional and technical support relationships.
- Provide (or draw upon) the required information technologies and related support services.
- Develop and implement a marketing plan that takes into account the target student population, the technologies available, and the factors required to

http://www.neasc.org/cihe/best_practices_electronically_offered_degree.htm
meet institutional goals.

- Provide training and support to participating instructors and students.
- Assure compliance with copyright law.
- Contract for products and outsourced services.
- Assess and assign priorities to potential future projects.
- Assure that electronically offered programs and courses meet institution-wide standards, both to provide consistent quality and to provide a coherent framework for students who may enroll in both electronically offered and traditional on-campus courses.
- Maintain appropriate academic oversight.
- Maintain consistency with the institution's academic planning and oversight functions, to assure congruence with the institution's mission and allocation of required resources.
- Assure the integrity of student work and faculty instruction.

Organizational structure varies greatly, but it is fundamental to the success of an institution's programs. The points above can be evaluated by variations of the following procedure and inquiries:

- Is there a clear, well-understood process by which an electronically offered program evolves from conception to administrative authorization to implementation? How is the need for the program determined? How is it assigned a priority among the other potential programs? Has the development of the program incorporated appropriate internal consultation and integration with existing planning efforts?
- Track the history of a representative project from idea through implementation, noting the links among the participants including those responsible for curriculum, those responsible for deciding to offer the program electronically, those responsible for program/course design, those responsible for the technologies applied, those responsible for faculty and student support, those responsible for marketing, those responsible for legal issues, those responsible for budgeting, those responsible for administrative and student services, and those responsible for program evaluation. Does this review reveal a coherent set of relationships?
- In the institution's organizational documentation, is there a clear and integral relationship between those responsible for electronically offered programs and the mainstream academic structure?
- How is the organizational structure reflected in the institution's overall budget?
- How are the integrity, reliability, and security of outsourced services assured?
- Are training and technical support programs considered adequate by those for whom they are intended?
- What are the policies and procedures concerning compliance with copyright law?
- How does program evaluation relate to this organizational and decision-making structure?

In its articulation and transfer policies the institution judges courses and programs on their learning outcomes, and the resources brought to bear for their achievement, not on modes of delivery.

- What are the institution's policies concerning articulation and transfer? What are decisions regarding transfer of academic credit based upon?
- Is the institution's policy internally consistent in its handling of articulation and transfer issues, or do different divisions have different policies and procedures?

1g. The institution strives to assure a consistent and coherent technical framework for students and faculty. When a change in technologies is necessary, it is introduced in a way that minimizes the impact on students and faculty.

- When a student or instructor proceeds from one course or program to another, is it necessary to learn another software program or set of technical procedures?
- When new software or systems are adopted, what programs/processes are used to acquaint instructors and students with them?

1h. The institution provides students with reasonable technical support for each educational technology hardware, software, and delivery system required in a program.

- Is a help desk function realistically available to students during hours when it is likely to be needed?
- Is help available for all hardware, software, and delivery systems specified by the institution as required for the program?
- Does the help desk involve person-to-person contact for the student? By what means, e.g., email, phone, fax?
- Is there a well-designed FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) service, online and/or by phone menu or on-demand fax?

1i. The selection of technologies is based on appropriateness for the students and the curriculum. It is recognized that availability, cost, and other issues are often involved, but program documentation should include specific consideration of the match between technology and program.

- How were the technologies chosen for this institution's programs?
- Are the technologies judged to be appropriate (or inappropriate) to the program(s) in which they are used?
- Are the intended students likely to find their technology costs reasonable?
- What provisions have been made to assure a robust and secure technical infrastructure, providing maximum reliability for students and faculty?
- Given the rapid pace of change in modern information technology, what policies or procedures are in place to keep the infrastructure reasonably up-to-date?

1j. The institution seeks to understand the legal and regulatory requirements of the jurisdictions in which it operates, e.g., requirements for service to those with disabilities, copyright law, state and national requirements for institutions offering educational programs, international restrictions such as export of sensitive information or technologies, etc.

- Does institutional documentation indicate an awareness of these requirements and that it has made an appropriate response to them?

2. Curriculum and Instruction

Methods change, but standards of quality endure. The important issues are not technical but curriculum-driven and pedagogical. Decisions about such matters are made by qualified professionals and focus on learning outcomes for an increasingly diverse student population.

2a. As with all curriculum development and review, the institution assures that each program of study results in collegiate level learning outcomes appropriate to the rigor and breadth of the degree or certificate awarded by the institution, that the electronically offered degree or certificate program is coherent and complete, and that such programs leading to undergraduate degrees include general education requirements.

- What process resulted in the decision to offer the program?
- By what process was the program developed? Were academically qualified persons responsible for curricular decisions?
- How were “learning outcomes appropriate to the rigor and breadth of the degree or certificate awarded” established? Does the program design involve the demonstration of such skills as analysis, comprehension, communication, and effective research?
- Is the program “coherent and complete?”
- Are related instructional materials appropriate and readily accessible to students?

2b. Academically qualified persons participate fully in the decisions concerning program curricula and program oversight. It is recognized that traditional faculty roles may be unbundled and/or supplemented as electronically offered programs are developed and presented, but the substance of the program, including its presentation, management, and assessment are the responsibility of people with appropriate academic qualifications.

- What were the academic qualifications of those responsible for curricular decisions, assessment, and program oversight?
- What are the academic qualifications of those presenting and managing the program?
- If the principal instructor is assisted by tutors or student mentors, what are their qualifications?
- Are these qualifications considered appropriate to the responsibilities of these persons?

2c. In designing an electronically offered degree or certificate program, the institution provides a coherent plan for the student to access all courses necessary to complete the program, or clearly notifies students of requirements not included in the electronic offering. Hybrid programs or courses, mixing electronic and on-campus elements, are designed to assure that all students have access to appropriate services. (See also 2d below, concerning program elements from consortia or contract services.)

- How are students notified of program requirements?
- If the institution relies on other providers to offer program-related courses, what is the process by which students learn of these courses?

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• Is the total program realistically available to students for whom it is intended? For example, is the chosen technology likely to be accessible by the target student population? Can target students meet the parameters of program scheduling?

**2d.** Although important elements of a program may be supplied by consortial partners or outsourced to other organizations, including contractors who may not be accredited, the responsibility for performance remains with the institution awarding the degree or certificate. It is the institution in which the student is enrolled, not its suppliers or partners, that has a contract with the student. Therefore, the criteria for selecting consortial partners and contractors, and the means to monitor and evaluate their work, are important aspects of the program plan. In considering consortial agreements, attention is given to issues such as assuring that enhancing service to students is a primary consideration and that incentives do not compromise the integrity of the institution or of the educational program. Consideration is also given to the effect of administrative arrangements and cost-sharing on an institution’s decision-making regarding curriculum.

Current examples of consortial and contractual relationships include:

- Faculty qualifications and support.
- Course material:
  - Courses or course elements acquired or licensed from other institutions.
  - Courses or course elements provided by partner institutions in a consortium.
  - Curricular elements from recognized industry sources, e.g., Microsoft or Novell certification programs.
  - Commercially produced course materials ranging from textbooks to packaged courses or course elements.
- Course management and delivery:
  - WebCT, Blackboard, College, etc.
- Library-related services:
  - Remote access to library services, resources, and policies.
  - Provision of library resources and services, e.g., online reference services, document delivery, print resources, etc.
- Bookstore services.
- Services providing information to students concerning the institution and its programs and courses.
- Technical services:
  - Server capacity.
  - Technical support services, including help desk services for students and faculty.
- Administrative services:
  - Registration, student records, etc.
- Services related to advising, counseling, or tutoring.
- Online payment arrangements.
- Student privacy considerations.

Evaluation of contract services and consortial arrangements requires a review of pertinent formal agreements. Note, for example:
- Are performance expectations defined in contracts and agreements? Are conditions for contract termination defined?
- Are there adequate quality control and curriculum oversight provisions in agreements concerning courseware?
- Are there appropriate system reliability and emergency backup guarantees in agreements concerning technology services?
- What are the provisions for protection of confidentiality and privacy in services involving personal information?
- What are the assurances concerning qualifications and training of persons involved in contact with students? These services may range from help desk to tutoring or counseling.
- Consortial agreements introduce additional elements to be evaluated:
  - How are curriculum-related decisions made by the consortium, noting the requirement that "Academically qualified persons participate fully in the decisions regarding program curricula and program oversight?"
  - Is the institution fully engaged in the consortial process, recognizing the decision-making responsibilities of shared ownership?
  - What are the financial arrangements among the parties to the consortial agreement? What are the implications of these arrangements for institutional participation and management?
  - What entity awards the certificates and degrees resulting from the consortial program?
  - What articulation and transfer arrangements are applicable to courses offered via the consortium?
  - Did these arrangements involve specific curricular decisions by the academic structures of the participating institutions? Were they prescribed in a state or system decision?
  - To what extent are the administrative and student services arrangements of the consortium focused on the practical requirements of the student?

2e. The importance of appropriate interaction (synchronous or asynchronous) between instructor and students and among students is reflected in the design of the program and its courses, and in the technical facilities and services provided.

- What provisions for instructor-student and student-student interaction are included in the program/course design and the course syllabus? How is appropriate interaction assured?
- Is instructor response to student assignments timely? Does it appear to be appropriately responsive?
- What technologies are used for program interaction (e.g., email, telephone office hours, phone conferences, voicemail, fax, chat rooms, Web-based discussions, computer conferences and threaded discussions, etc.)?
- How successful is the program's interactive component, as indicated by student and instructor surveys, comments, or other measures?

3. Faculty Support

As indicated above, faculty roles are becoming increasingly diverse and reorganized. For example, the same person may not perform both the tasks of course development and direct instruction to students. Regardless of who performs which of these tasks, important issues are involved.

3a. In the development of an electronically offered program, the institution and its participating faculty have a considered issues of workload, compensation, ownership of intellectual property resulting from the program, and the implications of program participation for the faculty member's professional evaluation processes. This mutual understanding is based on policies and agreements adopted by the parties.
3b. The institution provides an ongoing program of appropriate technical, design, and production support for participating faculty members.

- What support services are available to those responsible for preparing courses or programs to be offered electronically? What support services are available to those faculty members responsible for working directly with students?
- Do participating faculty members consider these services to be appropriate and adequate?
- Does the staff include qualified instructional designers? If so, do they have an appropriate role in program and course development?

3c. The institution provides to those responsible for program development the orientation and training to help them become proficient in the uses of the program’s technologies, including potential changes in course design and management.

- What orientation and training programs are available? Are there opportunities for ongoing professional development?
- Is adequate attention paid to pedagogical changes made possible and desirable when information technologies are employed?
- Given the staff available to support electronically offered programs, are the potential changes in course design and management realistically feasible?
- Do those involved consider these orientation and training programs to be appropriate and adequate?

3d. The institution provides to those responsible for working directly with students the orientation and training to help them become proficient in the uses of the technologies for these purposes, including strategies for effective interaction.

- What orientation and training programs are available? Are there opportunities for ongoing professional development? Do those involved consider these orientation and training programs to be appropriate and adequate?

4. Student Support

Colleges and universities have learned that the twenty-first century student is different, both demographically and geographically, from students of previous generations. These differences affect everything from admissions policy to library services. Reaching these students, and serving them appropriately, are major challenges to today’s institutions.

4a. The institution has a commitment — administrative, financial, and technical — to continuation of the program for a period sufficient to enable all admitted students to complete a degree or certificate in a publicized timeframe.
Best Practices for Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs

- Do course and program schedules reflect an appropriate commitment to the program’s students?
- Do budget, faculty, and facilities assignments support that commitment?

4b. Prior to admitting a student to the program, the institution:

- Ascertainment by a review of pertinent records and/or personal review that the student is qualified by prior education or equivalent experience to be admitted to that program, including in the case of international students, English language skills.
- Informs the prospective student concerning required access to technologies used in the program.
- Informs the prospective student concerning technical competence required of students in the program.
- Informs the prospective student concerning estimated or average program costs (including costs of information access) and associated payment and refund policies.
- Informs the prospective student concerning curriculum design and the timeframe in which courses are offered, and assists the student in understanding the nature of the learning objectives.
- Informs the prospective student of library and other learning services available to support learning and the skills necessary to access them.
- Informs the prospective student concerning the full array of other support services available from the institution.
- Informs the prospective student about arrangements for interaction with the faculty and fellow students.
- Assists the prospective student in understanding independent learning expectations as well as the nature and potential challenges of learning in the program’s technology-based environment.
- Informs the prospective student about the estimated time for program completion.

To evaluate this important component of admission and retention, it is appropriate to pursue the following:

- How do potential students learn about the electronically offered program? Is the information provided sufficient, fair, and accurate?
- How are students informed about technology requirements and required technical competence?
- How are students informed about costs and administrative arrangements?
- What information and/or advice do students receive about the nature of learning and the personal discipline required in an anytime/anywhere environment?
- What criteria are used to determine the student's eligibility for admission to the program?
- What steps are taken to retain students in the program?
- What is the history of student retention in this program?

4c. The institution recognizes that appropriate services must be available for students of electronically offered programs, using the working assumption that these students will

not be physically present on campus. With variations for specific situations and programs, these services, which are possibly coordinated, may include:

- Accurate and timely information about the institution, its programs, courses, costs, and related policies and requirements.
- Pre-registration advising.
- Application for admission.
- Placement testing.
- Enrollment/registration in programs and courses.
- Financial aid, including information about policies and limitations, information about available scholarships, processing of applications, and administration of financial aid and scholarship awards.
- Secure payment arrangements.
- Academic advising.
- Timely intervention regarding student progress.
- Tutoring.
- Career counseling and placement.
- Academic progress information, such as degree completion audits.
- Library resources appropriate to the program, including, reference and research assistance; remote access to databases, online journals and full-text resources; document delivery services; library user and information literacy instruction, reserve materials; and institutional agreements with local libraries.
- Training in information literacy including research techniques.
- Bookstore services: ordering, secure payment, and prompt delivery of books, course packs, course-related supplies and materials, and institutional memorabilia.
- Ongoing technical support, preferably offered during evenings and weekends as well as normal institutional working hours.
- Referrals for student learning differences, physical challenges, and personal counseling.
- Access to grievance procedures.

Within the context of the program, the requirements of the program’s students, and the type of institution, review each of the services and procedures listed above from the standpoint of a student for whom access to the campus is not feasible.

- Are the institution’s policies and procedures appropriate and adequate from the standpoint of the distant student?
- If not all appropriate resources are routinely available at a distance, what arrangements has the institution made to provide them to distant students?
- Are these services perceived by distant students to be adequate and appropriate?
- Are these services perceived to be adequate and appropriate by those responsible for providing them? What modifications or improvements are planned?

4d. The institution recognizes that a sense of community is important to the success of many students, and that an ongoing, long-term relationship is beneficial to both student and institution. The design and administration of the program takes this factor into account as appropriate, through such actions as encouraging study groups, providing student directories (with the permission of those listed), including off-campus students

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in institutional publications and events, including these students in definitions of the academic community through such mechanisms as student government representation, invitations to campus events including graduation ceremonies, and similar strategies of inclusion.

- What strategies and practices are implemented by this institution to involve distant students as part of an academic community? By their statements and actions, do administrators and participating faculty members communicate a belief that a sense of academic community is important?
- How are the learning needs of students enrolled in electronically offered programs identified, addresses, and linked to educational objectives and learning outcomes, particularly within the context of the institution's definition of itself as a learning community.
- Do representative students feel that they are part of a community, or that they are entirely on their own?

5. Evaluation and Assessment

Both the assessment of student achievement and evaluation of the overall program take on added importance as new techniques evolve. For example, in asynchronous programs the element of seat time is essentially removed from the equation. For these reasons, the institution conducts sustained, evidence-based and participatory inquiry as to whether distance learning programs are achieving objectives. The results of such inquiry are used to guide curriculum design and delivery, pedagogy, and educational processes, and may affect future policy and budgets perhaps have implications for the institution's roles and mission.

5a. As a component of the institution's overall assessment activities, documented assessment of student achievement is conducted in each course and at the completion of the program, by comparing student performance to the intended learning outcomes.

- How does the institution review the effectiveness of its distance education programs to assure alignment with institutional priorities and educational objectives?
- How does evaluated student performance compare to intended learning outcomes?
- How is student performance evaluated?
- How are assessment activities related to distance learning integrated into the institution's broader program of assessment?

5b. When examinations are employed (paper, online, demonstrations of competency, etc.), they take place in circumstances that include firm student identification. The institution otherwise seeks to assure the integrity of student work.

- If proctoring is used, what are the procedures for selecting proctors, establishing student identity, assuring security of test instruments, administering the examinations, and assuring secure and prompt evaluation?
- If other methods are used to identify those who take the examination, how is identification firmly established? How are the conditions of the examination (security, time limits, etc.)
controlled?
- Does the institution have in place effective policies and procedures to assure the integrity of student work?

**5c.** Documented procedures assure that security of personal information is protected in the conduct of assessments and evaluations and in the dissemination of results.

- What procedures assure the security of personal information?
- How is personal information protected while providing appropriate dissemination of the evaluation results?

**5d.** Overall program effectiveness is determined by such measures as:

- The extent to which student learning matches intended outcomes, including for degree programs both the goals of general education and the objectives of the major.
- The extent to which student intent is met.
- Student retention rates, including variations over time.
- Student satisfaction, as measured by regular surveys.
- Faculty satisfaction, as measured by regular surveys and by formal and informal peer review processes.
- The extent to which access is provided to students not previously served.
- Measures of the extent to which library and learning resources are used appropriately by the program’s students.
- Measures of student competence in fundamental skills such as communication, comprehension, and analysis.
- Cost effectiveness of the program to its students, as compared to campus-based alternatives.

Although not all of these measures will be applicable equally at every institution, appropriate evidence is generally available through:

- Evaluations of student performance (see 5a above).
- Review of student work and archive of student activities, if maintained, in the course of program reviews.
- Results from students’ routine end-of-course and program evaluations.
- Student surveys of overall satisfaction with the experience of electronically offered programs; surveys reflecting student cost trade-offs experienced as they pursued the program.
- Faculty surveys, peer reviews of programs, and discussion groups.
- Documentation concerning access provided to students not previously served, through a combination of enrollment records and student surveys.
- Usage records concerning use of library and learning resources, and instructor assignments that require such usage.
- Assessment of students’ fundamental skills in communication, comprehension, and analysis. How have the institution’s usual measures of these skills been adapted to assess distant students?
- Documentation of the institution’s analyses that relate costs to goals of the program.

5e. The institution conducts a program of continual self-evaluation directed toward program improvement, targeting more effective uses of technology to improve pedagogy, advances in student achievement of intended outcomes, improved retention rates, effective use of resources, and demonstrated improvements in the institution’s service to its internal and external constituencies. The program and its results are reflected in the institution’s ongoing self-evaluation process and are used to inform the further plans of the institution and those responsible for its academic programs.

- How is the institution’s ongoing program of assessment and improvement developed and conducted?
- Does it cover the essential categories of improved learning outcomes, retention, use of resources, and service to core constituencies?
- Does the program appropriately involve academically qualified persons?
- What is the institution’s mechanisms for review and revision of existing programs and courses?
- How does program evaluation affect institutional planning?
- What constituencies are actively involved in the ongoing process of planning for improvement?
- Has the process had measurable results to date?

5f. Institutional evaluation of electronically offered programs takes place in the context of the regular evaluation of all academic programs.

- What are the administrative and procedural links between the evaluation of electronically offered programs and the ongoing evaluation of all academic programs?
- How are the respective characteristics of campus-based and electronically offered programs taken into account?
The success of an online course depends greatly on how actively engaged students are with the instructor, with their classmates, with the content, with technology, and with course management tools. Interactivity in any teaching and learning context involves students responding to information, seeking instructors’ feedback, reflecting on the feedback, and acting to appropriately tailor personal learning experience.

In many cases, effects of interaction in an online environment can be richer than in face-to-face situations, since students can critically evaluate their understanding of the content by sharing their knowledge and experiences in discussion questions and postings.

Engaging activities for online courses are designed to be relevant to the content, associated with course objectives and outcomes, require active involvement from students, increase retention, and be fun and rewarding. Simply clicking a link, or uploading a file, is just the first step toward other experiences of interactive learning.

Here are some of my methods and examples in creating engaging activities for online courses.

1. Syllabus quiz
   To reinforce policies, deadlines, expectations, projects, etc., specified in the syllabus, I have created a syllabus quiz to test students’ understanding of course outcomes, to stress their responsibilities, and to communicate my expectations. It has to be completed within the first week of the course and students need a 100 percent score.

2. Interview report
   Most online students are working adults with very busy and demanding schedules. They tend to work at their own pace and in isolation. To reduce loneliness and to increase their awareness of the learning community, I use the discussion board not only for them to introduce each other as a get-to-know-you activity in the first week, but also to have them interview each other on the topics and report back to the discussion board. This offers a vivid description of what each student has learned from his or her interview partner. Students find this activity helpful because it gives them another opportunity to interact with each another.

3. Feedback survey
   When the course is one-third of

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Blogs or Discussion Boards?

Blogs and discussion boards both provide opportunities for interaction in online courses, but there are instances when one is more appropriate than the other, says Matt Crosslin, instructional designer at the University of Texas at Arlington's Center for Distance Education.

Blogs are typically organized in reverse-chronological order and focus on the most recent input, whereas discussion boards focus on the feedback to an initial prompt.

Blog entries are typically longer than discussion board prompts and can include multimedia. These blog entries are excellent places to complement the content in the rest of the course by providing current information on a topic culled from the Web.

"When you've got five, six, or ten paragraphs of initial stuff to comment on versus one question, it does give the students a lot more to base their response on," Crosslin says.

Often the prompt for commenting on blogs is simply a comment button. With discussion boards, since there is usually just a short introduction, the prompts tend to be more specific. "A discussion board can have a broader range of questions, more than just 'what are your comments?'" Crosslin says.

Pros and cons of blogs

As with all tools, there are positive and negative aspects of blogs in an online course.

According to Crosslin, blogs have the following pros:

- Blog platforms have tools that enable live chat and the viewing of content by date or topic.

Crosslin cites the following cons:

- Most course management systems do not feature blogs, and so blogs are often hosted by external websites, which brings up the issue of support and ownership.
- One downside of keeping one's course up to date is that there are fewer opportunities to proofread this content before posting it.

Advice for using blogs

Crosslin offers the following advice for those considering using blogs in their online courses:

- Use blogs for a specific pedagogical purpose.
- Don't duplicate content from the main part of the course.
- Provide a rubric to help students know what is expected of them.
- If possible, host the blog within the course management system so you won't have to depend on an external host.

Uses for discussion boards

Discussion boards will continue to have a place in the online classroom. Crosslin says, "Some instructors just want the questions up there and the student responses. That's their focus. I still think there's a great use for discussion boards, especially for feedback forums, to ask questions. If you don't have a news or announcement function, a discussion board can be a great place to put news and announcements, and students can ask questions if they need clarification."

Contact Matt Crosslin at matt@edugeekjournal.com.
The instructional structure is based on the ADDIE Model (Analyze, Design, Develop, Implement, and Evaluate). The overall goal and learning objectives are both developed and managed based on the instructional strategy.

- An evaluation process is designed and conducted to determine the effectiveness of the course in terms of the students' abilities to achieve the course objectives. Based on these determinations, the course is revised to be more effective and engaging for a new group of students.

2. Develop an engaging online course syllabus

Engaging online courses require an engaging course syllabus, one that:

- is comprehensive and hyperlinked
- presents detailed guidelines of the course information, learning objectives, assignments, requirements, teaching methodologies, documentations, and course-related resources
- provides hyperlinks to the websites that students may need to refer to before or as the course starts, including websites of the bookstore, the online library, the electronic learning management system, supplemental materials and course-related resources, the help desk, and the instructor's professional homepage (if applicable).

An engaging syllabus will help you make a good first impression, chart the course's roadmap, and set the rules of engagement. The course syllabus helps online students overcome the fear of the unknown and provides them with the security they need by teaching them upfront what to expect and how to plan for it.

3. Develop interactive instruction

Look for ways to develop an interactive instructional delivery mode that attracts students' attention and engages them further in the course materials. The following are some of these ways:

- Computer-Based Training (CBT): You can develop Computer-Based Training for the course instruction and post it on the course website using authoring system tools such as Trainersoft or ToolBook. These software programs enable you to develop interactive course instruction with no programming required. Also, they allow you to integrate into the course instruction all types of multimedia. With CBT, students can gain new knowledge independently and go through some drill-and-practice activities that encourage their participation and allow them to check on their learning. Also, students can receive instant feedback that informs them of the knowledge of response (KOR) on a particular practice question or activity. However, CBT and Web-based instruction with a variety of multimedia files requires large electronic space on the Web and, therefore, instructors need to be aware of the space available for their course shells on the Web.

- Synchronous class sessions: Synchronous sessions bring online students closer together and put them in direct contact with the instructor. Also, you can use some other Web technologies to post audio or video files of a live lecture, discussion, or an interview with a professional. These technologies may include PresenterPlus, a synchronized media tool that works interchangeably with Blackboard and other E-LMS programs and supports streaming formats of various media players such as...
If You Build It (or Link to It), Can They Use It?

By Patti Shank, PhD, CPT

In the last few articles, I have discussed using media in online courses and how to overcome numerous obstacles to getting the right kinds of media for your online courses. This month, I’ll finish the series by discussing some learner-centered obstacles that need to be considered so the media elements you build or link to will have the desired impact.

Media benefits

Media, such as pictures, charts, animations, audio, and video, have natural characteristics that can be exploited to help learners learn and think critically about the content being taught. For example, video programs dramatizing historical events can help learners analyze factors that may have led to these events. Computer animations of human body processes, such as digestion, help medical students “see” body processes so they can think more critically about digestive conditions.

In online courses, where text (in books, articles, or on the screen) is often the primary content delivery mode, media can make the content come alive. Imagine designing an online course in which one of the course modules is about the history of the Internet. You might provide a text-based timeline of the events leading up to the Internet as we know it today.

Media obstacles

There are some common learner-centered limitations that need to be considered when using media in your online courses. Two of the biggest are access (which makes viewing and interacting with media possible or not) and the lack of reliability of outside links.

Got access?

You may build it, but learners may not be able to access it. Bandwidth, or the amount of data that can fit through the connection between the server and the user (learner) at one time, can be a real problem. The more media you use and the more bandwidth these media elements require, the more potential hassles there are. Learners may need to wait for high-bandwidth media data such as video to download and if they are trying to fit coursework into an already hectic life, waiting a long time may be extremely frustrating or even a deal breaker.

In most cases, learners need fast Internet connections (such as DSL, cable mode, or T1 access) to view and interact with online media. Some learners may have fast connections at work but not at home. Some are unable to listen to audio at work, though, because they either do not have a sound card or are unable to use headphones (so they can listen without annoying everyone around them). And they may be unable to download needed media players (for example, QuickTime or Flash) because of their company’s IT restrictions.

When learners do not have fast Internet access at work and at home, online learning capacity is diminished. Work and family schedules are often hectic and the ability to jump into schoolwork from anywhere is often critical to online learners’ success.

To do: Do a reality check on the technology requirements for using the media you want to produce or link to. Select media that most learners can use. (But it’s usually unwise to take a “lowest common denominator” approach.) Start a discussion about whether the technology requirements are adequate. For example, should fast access at work and home as well as the ability to download and use new players as they become available be required? Help learners determine if they have adequate access to be successful and help them think about how to get additional, adequate access. (For example, many libraries and some fast-food restaurants, coffee shops, and laundromats provide free access.)

Got links?

One of the recommendations I made in a previous article was to overcome costs and development time by linking to existing media on the Internet. I stand by that advice, but you should expect that some of the links you select will not work when learners try to use them. Some will be down because of server problems, and others will have changed URLs as organizations update their websites. And others will simply vanish. Check all the links before your course materials go live, but remember that some of the links that you checked yesterday may be problematic today. That’s just the way it is.

Another problem with linking to existing media on other sites is that some online instructors provide too many resource links. A long list of
Asynchronous discussion forums:

- Thoughtful discussions can encourage students to interact with each other academically and help build a community. Weekly discussions that are supplemental to the textbook materials, open-ended questions that promote students' learning and foster their critical thinking, interactive topic debates, and concise discussion guidelines and precise discussion rubrics, have been found to be an effective approach in achieving the desired learning outcomes (Aisami, 2007).

- Collaborative instructional activities: Collaboration among students provides students with the social presence they need to establish trust, build confidence, and develop the required online learning attitude and self-discipline. Having students work together in groups to undertake a course project and/or any other course instructional activities requires students’ frequent communication, prompt collaboration, and active participation in the discussion and decision making. Clear goals of the required collaborative activity, concise guidelines of the rules of engagement, and homogeneity among group members have been found to optimize interaction and maximize students’ performance in achieving the desired instructional goals. In general, collaboration allows online students to do more together than they could alone (Aisami, 2007). With all the positive potential outcomes from successful information and knowledge sharing expected from an optimal collaboration, it is easy to forget that such peer-to-peer exchange depends on time, effort, and trust among peers. Sharing may not occur when there is competition for scarce resources, where knowledge is power, or where time is so short that engagement with peers is outside the bounds of possibility (Caroline Haythornthwaite, 2006).

4. Build an attractive and inviting course website

The social isolation that exists in online courses may not disappear entirely in spite of the continuous advancements in Web technology. It may, however, be reduced by increasing the level of social interaction and engagement of online courses (Aisami, 2006). The following are some of the features that can help you build attractive and inviting course websites:

- Video announcement: Prepare a video announcement and post it on the course website. It makes a big difference for online students to see and hear their instructor introduce the course personally, present navigation instructions, and verbally explain the course requirements, objectives, and assignments.

- Students’ homepages: Online students can use the CMS homepage function to build their individual homepages. This gives students the opportunity to see each other’s pictures and read about each other’s backgrounds.

- Class photo album: You can coordinate the efforts with your students to use the Microsoft PowerPoint Album function to create an online class album that includes the instructor’s and students’ photos.

- Class group picture: Use the Photoshop, Paint, or any other photo editing program to group the individual pictures of the students to create a group picture of the class.

- iMail: The iMail feature of Blackboard is a communication tool that allows students to send and receive email messages internally within the course website without a need for any external email address or an Internet service provider. This feature encourages students to visit the course website frequently to check their feedback messages and communicate with the instructor and with each other.

- Course calendar: A course calendar that charts the course assignments week by week and explains what to do is helpful in increasing students’ participation and interaction.

- Break room: You can also add a special discussion forum on the discussion board and call it “Break Room” for students to socialize by having some personal chats or by sharing personal experiences or social events.

References


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Bob Dylan said it best: "The times they are a-changin'.

The tradition of education has always dictated what we now know as faculty-centered instruction (FCI). Here, the teacher has the role of Lord of the Manor, holding the class together through lectures, designing assignments and tests, grading, and dictating what material was to be learned and when. The students have little to do on their own, waiting for what the instructor dictates and directs. But the educational process is constantly morphing, and one of the biggest changes in recent years has been student-centered instruction (SCI), where some of the learning burden is shifted to the student. Here, active learning experiences are substituted for lectures, students are held responsible for material not explicitly discussed in class, self-paced and/or cooperative (team) learning is used, and critical thinking becomes more important as students must solve open-ended problems that do not follow text models.

Many faculty, unwilling to give up their traditional FCI role, have balked at SCI. Yes, there is a myriad of challenges in implementing SCI into a brick-and-mortar classroom, but we are here discussing online instruction, and while difficulties remain in smoothly integrating SCI into online education, the distance learning classroom is an ideal environment in which to employ SCI. The following suggestions will help you make SCI a valuable and effortless teaching approach in your courses—and have you saying, “That’s cool!” to Dylan’s refrain:

**Write a Tom Sawyer-like whitewash the fence welcoming email.** In The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, Tom got others to whitewash the fence—a job he hated—by pretending that he was having a great time. Your sincere enthusiasm for SCI—without ever writing “SCI” or anything like it—can go a long way in getting your students excited about this approach to your course. You set the tone: never forget that.

**Be a constant presence for suggestions and insights.** Look at your role as that of the coordinator of a cooperative: give initial directions and guidance, but also constantly pop in to give kudos for good student postings, suggestions to help their learning, and applause for discussion or team postings that developed into long threads from one initial student’s thoughts. Also, always offer suggestions on improving writing. Be a bit self-deprecating at times. Be sure to point out the importance of supporting and thanking fellow classmates for ideas. All of this will go a long way in keeping students engaged and helping them to learn more.

**Post mini-lectures that translate into ultra important.** If I were to see lecture after lecture posted by a professor for reading, I’d sooner take out my eyes with a hot poker than read them. Lectures like this become so much blah-blah-blah, and students soon find it difficult to absorb all the information. But by posting mini-lectures (one to three paragraphs centered on one subject), the students will recognize these as important because of their infrequency, be more eager to read them, and will certainly absorb—and remember—their contents easier. (Hint: you might want to mention these in your welcoming email.)

**Offer an engaging variety of assigned and supplemental readings.** Textbooks, it seems, have, for the most part, remained stodgy in their writing styles; asking an online student to read large portions of these can result in the same problems as posting many long lectures. Choose your assigned readings—and how much to read—wisely. And also always offer a variety of supplemental readings that are engaging, interesting, and perhaps fun—the students won’t have to read them, but you can make them want to.

**Offer reality-based education approaches to material covered in class.** By stressing connections between what students learn from the assigned material and its use in the real world, you are telling students they must rely on their critical thinking, interacting with others in class, and further research to "fill in the blanks" of what they have not been implicitly taught. Hold them responsible for getting this information—but don’t punish them if they get it wrong; you want them to have “A-ha!” moments of learning, not “What’s the use of trying?” thoughts.

**Get students actively involved in the course.** By having students offer suggestions—readings, websites, poetry, theories, organizations, etc.—to enhance various portions of the course they become more invested in this cooperative of a class you are coordinating and guiding. The bonuses are that students will be learning in deeper layers of what the course initially offered, they have another internal **CONTINUED ON PAGE 7 >>**
links, to many learners, is a recipe for overload and anxiety before the first click. Learners need guidance and focus when using links and the media elements they may contain.

To do: Consider recommending a website download tool such as Web Whacker (www.bluesquirrel.com/products/webwhacker/) so learners can download online materials in case they become unavailable.

Caveat: The purpose of this tool is for students be able to view websites offline, not to be able to share these files with others. Ask the owner of the materials for permission if you want to share them and get advice from your legal department to make sure you are not infringing on copyright laws.

Find some really good outside resources, but don’t link to the universe. Annotate these links so learners know exactly what to expect (what they will see/hear/do, time needed, media players needed). Provide very clear instructions on what students should look for while using the media (for example, instruct them to observe how a graph changes over time as more data points are added) and what to do afterward (for example, answer discussion questions or write a position paper).

A good instructor helps learners make personal meaning out of the course content, activities, and interactions. Media can be very helpful toward this end, but first, the learner needs to be able to access and use the media without getting frustrated or overloaded.

Next month, I’ll begin a new series on ways to evaluate your online courses.

Patti Shank, PhD, CPT, is a widely recognized information and instructional designer, writer, and author who helps others build valuable information and instruction. She can be reached through her website, www.learningpeaks.com.

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Make teamwork an opportunity to call on individual talents.

Teamwork is always a challenge for online instructors (I’ve devoted one of my previous columns to it). But one very helpful and successful strategy for having students want to participate in a team is to ask each student to use his or her individual strengths and talents in bolstering the team effort and any team project that is required. The students get a chance to " strut their stuff" and the team as a whole benefits. And you should always have a solid presence in any team assignments.

A “secret” to successful SCI:

the weird, the unusual, the fun. By occasionally posting small tidbits—news reports, items from magazines or books, etc.—that are light but relate to your subject, the students become even more engaged in and enthusiastic about the course. (Also ask the students to make similar contributions.) These become nice counterweights to the drier, more serious components of the course.

Make it known that all grading is fair and individualized. Before students can raise the question of someone riding others’ efforts in teamwork, let the class know you grade the whole as a sum of its parts—but the laggards will not get the same grade as the achievers. And your grading approach should be clearly detailed in your welcoming email: students can refer to it and you can, if necessary, remind students to review it.

Know that students have a variety of learning styles. SCI is not a panacea; some students will, in fact, simply work better with an FCI approach. But the times they are, indeed, changing, and by placing more of the learning process on the students you offer students more options to explore and expand their own learning capabilities. Certainly, you will need to make adjustments in each course based on student difficulties with an SCI approach. And this individualized approach keeps you even more of a practicing SCI participant.

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REMEmBER: To grow a carrot, the farmer must give it fertilizer, water, and soil—but must allow for the carrot to grow and spread its own roots; only this way can the carrot find its path to the most nutrients to ensure the strongest growth.

Please let me hear from you, including sending along suggestions and information for future columns. You can always reach me at errol-craig@att.net. And, as always, with each of my columns I offer a sampling of whatever subject I’ve discussed. For this column, I’ll send you one of my welcoming emails I mentioned.

Errol Craig Sull has been teaching online courses for more than 12 years and has a national reputation in the subject, both writing and conducting workshops on it. He is currently putting the finishing touches on his next book—a collection of his online teaching activities titled Pebbles: A Most Unusual Approach to Very Effective Writing.
the way into the semester, students are required to complete an anonymous feedback survey, which asks them about how the class is running; the depth, length, and challenges of assignments; preferences in communication with the instructor; and the time they spend weekly in reading, completing assignments, and responding to discussion questions. This survey provides me with very important information about their levels of satisfaction and their expectations. It also serves as a self-check to me as an instructor. After hearing students’ voices, I will summarize the results, share them with the students, and make improvements.

4. Group projects
Can group projects be done successfully online? Yes, but success requires planning, time commitment, monitoring, and supporting. I usually spend two or three times more time during the group project period to check on the progress of each group. In order to have a quality experience in this activity, I need to have strong leadership in each group. Before setting up groups, I ask for volunteer group leaders who will guide the group, brainstorm ideas and topics for the group project, set up group chat sessions, communicate to group members on the process of the project, and finally combine individual presentations into one to represent the group. Once I have group leaders, I assign group members. Each group member has a specific role, and each has to submit a draft of the project to me to be graded. I constantly check with group leaders and provide them with my assistance and support. To motivate participation in a group project, I design it in such a way that half of the grade of the group project comes from peer evaluation. Each member has to anonymously evaluate the contribution and participation of each team member. I then tally the result. I find this method to be fair because every member gets a chance to evaluate his or her team members candidly. By working collaboratively in cyberspace, isolated students regard themselves as components of a cohesive group.

5. Elluminate Live or Wimba Live Classroom
I use Elluminate Live and Wimba Live Classroom, where students and I can “talk” via microphone or headset and “see” one another via webcam. I create a name puzzle with their first names and have them find their names on the Whiteboard/eBoard. I ask them to import their pictures onto Whiteboard/eBoard and have them tell stories so we can “see” and “visit” each other across the nation and around the world. I also use desktop application sharing to demonstrate step-by-step instructions in understanding a particular assignment, tutoring them and troubleshooting their problems in completing the assignment.

6. Peer review/critiques
After developing their own websites as one of the assignments, students are asked to post their URLs in the discussion board. To encourage sharing and learning, I have students critique each other’s websites with the guidelines provided. They get a chance to visit classmates’ websites, share their ideas and thoughts with the class, praise and encourage their classmates’ good work, learn from each other, and, as a result, make improvements on their own websites.

7. Sharing research findings
Many times we have students search the Web for individual writing assignments. What about pairing them so they get another chance to interact with one another? Through communication, they find the same research topic of interest, read articles together, respond to each other’s findings and reflections, and learn from each other’s perspectives. What a great way to get them involved in the subject matter!

8. Games
I also create games using StudyMate (www.respondus.com/products/studymate.shtml) for them to learn contents and concepts, such as flash cards, crossword puzzles, fill-in-the-blank, pick a letter, true and false, multiple choice, fact cards, etc. It is fun, interactive, and non-threatening, and it reinforces the comprehension of the content.

9. Student presentations
In almost every face-to-face class, students are expected to make presentations. Can it be done online? Yes, sure! How? There are a couple of ways to do it, including using a discussion board for students to post their presentations and/or presenting in Live Classroom chat sessions. With the technology we have now, such as Wimba Live Classroom, Elluminate Live, Adobe Connect, etc., students can “talk” via microphone or headset and can make a live presentation. Students are able to ask questions and comment on their peers’ presentations, and presenters are able to respond to questions as if they were in a traditional classroom.

10. Guest speakers
Another way to engage students in an online course is to bring in guest speakers via discussion board and live chat sessions.

There are many ways we can engage students in their learning journey. We just have to be creative and have an open mind. Another important aspect we have to remember is that not everyone learns the same way as we design. We have to be flexible and make adjustments along the way.

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