

The COM Academic Senate Recommendations regarding Distance Education

The Academic Senate with the assistance of its subcommittee on Distance Education has completed a review of the Distance Education Program including information from three surveys, data from the data dashboard. Our recommendations are as follows:

1. The March 2012 Distance Education Survey data did not suggest strong support for expansion. Therefore, we recommend that an additional compliment of units be given to Distance Education without limitations on units assigned to face-to-face courses.
2. The Senate strongly feels that for many, if not most of our community college students, face-to-face instruction is vital. Therefore, we urge the college to continue emphasizing support for professional development in best pedagogical practices for face-to-face instruction as well as Distance Education.
3. The Academic Senate strongly recommends and encourages:
 - a. Training, both for faculty in pedagogy, design and ADA compliance
 - b. Training or instruction for students in how to use Moodle
 - c. Ongoing technical support is vital as well, both in the design and implementation of a course and for the technical glitches that occur.
 - d. DE skills self-evaluation
 - e. Online counseling
4. We also encourage disciplines offering distance education courses to analyze their success and retention rates and when these rates are more than 10% below comparable face-to-face courses, departments should find solutions for improvement or consider not offering it.
5. We recommend that disciplines with more than one face-to-face section of a class that wish to offer that course in a DE format receive technical support, and training in Distance Education.
6. We recommend that future offerings focus on the GE areas and perhaps concentrate on the most highly demanded classes that are offered on a regular basis.
7. We recommend that priority for new DE units be given to disciplines that consistently

have wait lists for particular courses, whether face-to-face or online.

8. Whether or not to offer classes in Distance Education format should be up to the disciplines and departments themselves.
9. Student Success is paramount in all that we do. Having well-designed courses takes time and training. Therefore, the senate recommends that faculty is well-prepared technically and pedagogically in the use of the Learning Management System.

Basis for the Academic Senate's Recommendations

Academic Senate's Initial Concerns about Distance Education Offerings

- College had DE classes that had been created on Blackboard by teachers who were interested in doing it and went through training to set up their course shells. There was no real plan or framework for what was offered and when.
- There was a concern that a standard needed to be created
- College needed to choose an LMS going forward that would be sustainable.

Development of the Academic Senate Distance Education Committee (DEC)

- The Academic Senate approved the Charge for the committee in early Fall 2010.
- The committee began to meet in October 2010 with 10 members with experience or interest in distance education from 9 disciplines.

Highlights of DEC's accomplishments since October 2010:

- Evaluation and recommendation to move from Blackboard to MOODLE
 - Development of Student Evaluation Form and faculty observation form both of which are being negotiated by UPM at present.
 - Development of a Course Outline of Record addendum for DE outlines
 - Development of COR Handbook guidelines for DE.
 - Creation and approval through governance of AP 4105 Distance Education which included definitions for hybrid and online courses
 - Survey of current online students
 - Recommendations made to the Academic Senate
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Recommendations by the DEC to the Academic Senate Fall 2011 – Spring 2012

- I. DEC recommends to the AS that all disciplines with more than one face-to-face section of a class in the schedule should be supported with online infrastructure, technical support, and training so that they can offer additional class(es) or section(s) online if they wish.
- II. DEC recommends that additional units need to be offered to disciplines seeking to add DE (online and hybrid) course(s) to their offerings, for College of Marin Strategic Plan 2009-2012, Strategic Objective 1.2, to come to fruition. Without the addition of new units in the period from 2009-2011, the growth in the number of DE (online and hybrid) courses offered at COM has been very limited.
- III. DEC recommends disciplines that consistently have wait lists for particular courses, whether face-to-face or online, should be given priority for new DE units for those courses.
- IV. DEC will give additional consideration to developing criteria for unit allocation for online and hybrid courses. 10/18/11
- V. In the spirit of shared governance and greater transparency, the Distance Education Committee (DEC) recommends to the Academic Senate that the designated PRAC representative of DEC be included in the development of the Distance Education budget and in expenditure of funds from the Distance Education budget. The designated PRAC representative of DEC will serve as the contact person and share information related to budget and expenditure with the Distance Education Committee. 3/7/12

From Strategic Plan 2009-2012:

Action Step 1.2.2

A. Based on the data generated in Action Step 1.1.1 and the analysis conducted in Action Step 1.1.2, determine specific targets for distance education course offerings by discipline for fall 2010 semesters. These targets are contingent on progress on providing infrastructure to support distance education offerings.

Note: an increase in the number of distance education courses offered does not necessarily mean a net increase in the number of sections offered by the program or the college as a whole.

This Action Step states that it was contingent on providing the infrastructure to support distance education offerings. Soon after this was made, the decision was made to move to Moodle as the single LMS platform at COM. Therefore, rebuilding and expanding the DE infrastructure and training/re-training faculty on the new software has been a priority. A study of the scheduling patterns in Action Step 1.1.1 focused more on evening, weekend, and IVC offerings than Distance Education. The college is only now beginning to look at determining “specific targets” for DE course offerings by discipline. In support of this endeavor, the Academic Senate surveyed faculty in March 2012. The results of this and other surveys and a review of success and retention data are outlined below.

2012 Academic Senate Distance Education Survey DATA

Winter 2012 Academic Senate Survey of Faculty regarding Distance Ed (80 respondents) Results:

- 56% of the respondents had not taught online, hybrid or video courses.
- 52% had not created a web-enhanced course.
- 82% felt that their discipline should offer the same number (42%) or more (40%) of DE classes.
- 70% commented that it should be offered across more disciplines.
- 59% felt that DE might be or would be appropriate for their class content.
- 70% said they would like to teach online given the opportunity.
- Top three advantages were increased access, flexible scheduling and convenience.
- Top three disadvantages were suitability of subject matter, student retention and student success.
- Comments pointed out the lack of personal contact with the teacher or classmates – and advocated for face-to-face classes.
- 58% felt their students would be successful in an online course.
- Ten commented that students would be successful if they were prepared, self-disciplined and tech-savvy and if they get tech support.
- 69% felt that faculty and staff professional development were vital.
- 70% wanted tech support for faculty.
- 62% wanted tech support for students.

Faculty who responded to the AS DE survey question “Given the kinds of students you teach, do you feel your students would be successful in an online course” came from the following disciplines:

Disciplines where students would be successful:			Disciplines where students would not be successful:	
Anthropology	Economics	MMST (2)	ART (2)	English Skills (4)
Biology	Education	Music	BEHS	ESL (6)
BSS	English (8) - 150+	Nursing	Biology (6)	Italian
Business (2)	ESL (2)	Nutrition	Chemistry	Math (3) (don't)
Chemistry (hybrid)	French	Physics	Career Ed (2)	Modern Languages
CIS (does)	Geography	Psychology	CIS (doesn't)	Machine Metals and Technology
Communications (2)	HED/PE/Psych (3)	Speech/Mass Comm	Counseling	PE/Adapted PE
Computer Science	IEP	Study Skills	Drama	Social Sciences
Court Reporting	Library	Work Experience	ECE	
Dance	Math (4) (3 do)			

** (Numbers in parenthesis are number of respondents; do/don't = the respondent does or doesn't teach online now.

*Clearly there is a little bias depending on whether the instructor presently teaches online.

March 2012: Technology Survey of Students, Faculty and Staff

Student Technology Survey Questions regarding Moodle (153 total respondents):

- 54 out of 153 respondents (35%) are using Moodle for on-campus courses.
- 88% of 56 respondents have used Moodle to download course materials or assignments and to receive announcements from their instructors.
- 64% -66% have submitted an assignment or participated in a discussion forum through Moodle.
- 75% of 60 get help from their instructor if they are having Moodle problems.
- 83% have received NO training on using Moodle.
- 42% would or might like to receive Moodle training.

Student comments:

- It would be helpful to have a course for those first using Moodle.
- It was requested that teachers be more tech savvy and clear on how to use it before teaching online.

Faculty Technology Survey Questions regarding Moodle:

- 23 out of 71 said they were currently using Moodle.
- An additional 30 said they were thinking about it in the future.
- 22 make course materials or assignments available to students.
- 75% of 28 responses said they have not received training on how to make their course materials ADA Compliant. Most said they would if offered.
- 23 out of 32 stated that they had attended at least one Moodle training session.
- 44 out of 54 said that they would go to trainings if available.

Fall 2011: Survey of Students Taking Online Classes*

Are you interested in taking more online courses?

Total respondents = 57

- 92% yes (52/57).
- 7% negative responses (4/57)

The reasons stated were: flexibility, convenience, time and energy saver, complete a degree/get back into workforce, want to take more online courses, do better, future mode of education, do not have to be on campus, preferred learning style, and great alternative.

Please list the 3 online courses you would most like to take.

Classes mentioned were in Social Sciences (16%), English and Humanities (15%), Career Education (12%), Math (12%, BIS (9%), BEHS (7%), Life and Earth Sciences (7%), Physical Sciences (6%), Fine and Visual Arts (4%), PE/Athletics (3%), Health Sciences (3%), Modern Languages (2%), Performing Arts (2%).

* Survey conducted by Susan Andrien and results compiled by Faye Mueller.

Student Success and Retention Review

Academic Senate review of Distance Education Success and Retention rates from Fall 2005

– Fall 2011 Results:

- Retention rates increased from 60% in Fall 2005 to a high of 86% in Spring 2011.
- Retention rates for Face-to-Face classes have hovered between 89% and 93%.
- Success Rates increased from a low of 33% in Fall 2005 to 58% in Spring 2011.
- Success rates for Face-to-Face classes have hovered around 75%.

Strategies already in place for increasing student success:

Much has been done to increase student success over the last couple of years as evidenced by the increased rate of success. The Academic Senate would like to applaud the following that are already in place:

- Explanation of necessary skills for DE
- Course letters for each DE course
- Online Library services (access to online databases from the MyCOM portal and “ask a librarian”)

The Academic Senate would like to make the following recommendations for increasing student success and retention:

- Continue DE Support already in place for students outline above.
- In addition, ensure that students have a clear understanding of skills, time commitments and requirements for success in DE courses by offering:
 - DE skills self-evaluation
 - Online counseling
 - Training for students on how to navigate Moodle (would it be possible to create a Moodle “sandbox” shell for Orientation?)
 - A clear and well-crafted Moodle course site

Recommendations on training for faculty offering online and hybrid courses

1. Having a clear and well-crafted Moodle course site requires training and assistance for teachers setting up Moodle sites.
2. Faculty, when hired, are vetted to teach face-to-face but are not vetted to teach online. While recent hires were asked about their technology skills, they were not asked to demonstrate an online class.
3. Therefore, faculty teaching online and hybrid courses should have training or show that they have experience in this area.
4. Online and hybrid Course Design should follow a set of best practices guidelines that will help students succeed.
5. Additionally, because by Fall 2012, Moodle will be used for all courses for communication with students and possibly for course handouts upload – ALL faculty who need to move from Course Studio to Moodle need to be trained in Moodle basics. This is a priority.
6. Courses must be evaluated for ADA compliance.

Areas for Developing College of Marin's DE offerings

The Senate recommends that future offerings focus on the GE areas and perhaps concentrate on the most highly demanded classes that are offered on a regular basis.

At present COM offers a number of the basic graduation requirements through DE:

- The graduation requirement for English and Math.

Other COM GE areas:

- Natural Sciences (Chem 105)
- Social and Behavioral Sciences (Psych 114)
- Humanities (Philosophy 110)
- Composition (English 150)
- Communication and Analytical Thinking (English 151, Math 103, 115)
- American Institutions (none are online yet – do have video course)
- Cross-Cultural Studies (not yet)

Disciplines/courses likely not appropriate for DE according to DE Faculty Survey:

- Science Lab Classes
- Studio Art Classes
- Developmental/basic skills and ESL students
- Performing Arts – production and skills classes
- Some disagreement about language classes

Whether or not to offer “major prep” classes should be up to the disciplines themselves. However, faculty should be aware that according to WASC/ACCJC:

*Institutions are expected to provide the Commission advance notice of intent to offer **a program, degree or certificate in which 50% or more of the courses are via distance education or correspondence education, through the Substantive Change process. For purposes of this requirement, the institution is responsible for calculating the percentage of courses that may be offered through distance or correspondence education.***

April 2012: AP 4105 Distance Education Revision

The following points have been added to the procedure:

- A provision for review of courses for ADA compliance
- A provision for Instructor training in the LMS
- The procedure for authenticating student identity
- The procedure for proctored testing services for DE students
- The procedure for informing students of their privacy rights