

# Student Success Update

## COLLEGE ACTION PROJECTS

Project Title: Expanding the Distance Learning Program

Project Author: Eric Kunnen

Project Team: Eric Kunnen, Meegan Willi, Jose Mora, David Anderson, Mark Nordblom, Amanda Chatel, Eric Mullen, Heath Chelesvig, James Schafer, Pat Ingersoll, Garret Brand, Julie Hess, Katie Daniels

Project #: 2.2.1

Date: September 2012

### Quick Facts

- In 2011-12, 19.3% of all courses offered at GRCC were delivered via distance learning.
- In the Winter 2012 semester there were over 5,100 student enrollments in distance learning courses, which represented a 19% increase from the previous semester.
- Over the past five years, distance learning enrollment at the College has grown by 334%.
- In the Summer 2012 semester, 29.2% of all college credits were offered online.

### Introduction:

Teaching and learning in higher education have traditionally followed a model in which students meet face-to-face with faculty at a scheduled time, in a classroom, on a college or university campus. Instruction occurs through lecturing, note taking, group work, classroom discussions, assignments, and assessments taken in person, often with paper and pencil.

With recent advancements in technology, however, education has extended beyond the boundaries of the physical classroom and into the online environment where faculty teach and students learn through “distance learning.”

Distance Learning, Distance Education, eLearning, and Online Learning are the most commonly used terms used to describe a model of education in which the students who are taking a course and the faculty who are teaching it are separated by a physical distance but connected through technology. This model of education is growing rapidly. According to “Going the Distance: Online Education in the United States 2011” by Babson Survey Research Group, over 6.1 million online student enrollments were recorded in 2010 and distance learning courses made up more than 31% of all higher education enrollments.

### Purpose:

To ensure that all members of the community have an opportunity to participate in college programs, GRCC will increase the college's distance learning program so that 25% of course offerings exist in an online or hybrid modality.

### Results:

- **Strategic Plan Developed** – The team collaborated in writing a strategic plan that includes recommendations for the college in the advancement of online learning.
- **Course Offerings Expanded** – 19.3% of all courses at GRCC are now offered online. In addition, 27 new courses are planned to be developed in the 2012-13 academic year.
- **Course Quality Focus** – A course review process, rubric, and committee to review new online courses were established. “Quality Matters” will be implemented in 2012-13 to certify the quality of online courses.
- **Streamlined Course Development** – An instructional technologist/designer in the Distance Learning and Instructional Technologies Department provides support to faculty, and we plan to build fully online master course templates.
- **Dedicated Faculty Professional Development** – All faculty who teach online are certified through a five-week training course. Faculty with Equated Overload provide training and support to their peers in advancing online teaching.
- **Cross College Support** – Through the work of the DL CAP team, recommendations and work have begun to collaborate across functional areas.
- **HLC Site Visit** – A successful site visit in February 2012 resulted in the approval to offer up to 20% of our total degree programs through distance education.

## Challenges:

- **Online Student Services** - To ensure student success, a wide array of support services are required that are dedicated and designed specifically for online learners. These include online tutoring, disability support services, help desk, testing services, and tutoring.
- **Student Success & Retention** – Based on data provided by the Office of Institutional Research, student retention in online courses is on average 10% lower than the campus face-to-face average. Challenges to improvement in this area are multi-faceted.
- **Faculty Support and Training** – Training and resources to support faculty are required, such as training and certifying faculty to teach online, providing instructional design guidance, video transcription services, and courseware development support.
- **Course Quality and Instructor Evaluation** – Linked to student success and retention is the need to focus on the development and delivery of high quality online courses.
- **Budget and Operating Expenses** – Funding is challenging, as new technologies are often required to facilitate communication, collaboration, and content delivery.
- **Shared Responsibilities** – The success of distance learning at GRCC is a collaborative effort. A few of the key areas and departments related to distance learning include Disability Support Services, the Testing Center, the Library, Communications, Admissions, the Enrollment Center, the Academic Support Center, Advising, Counseling, Student Retention, Center for Teaching Excellence, Information Technology, and the work of deans, associate deans, and academic departments.



## Goals:

- write a business plan for distance learning to assess current resources and capacity and lay out recommendations to expand online learning
- increase online course offerings
- improve online course quality
- streamline online course development
- increase instructor certifications
- enhance online instructor professional development
- collaborate with student facing departments and systems to improve student readiness and retention
- receive HLC accreditation for fully online programs

## Growth in Online Courses

Year	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012
# Online Courses	170	198	241	255	276
# All Courses	1,353	1,396	1,435	1,452	1,430
% Online	12.6%	14.2%	16.8%	17.6%	19.3%

## Next Steps:

Through the work of the DL CAP team and the creation of the Distance Learning Strategic Plan, the following themes were identified as key areas that provide the operational aspects of distance learning. Among these areas, the team identified areas of concern as well as suggestions for the college to consider for the expansion and better operationalization of distance learning.

### 1. Planning, Administration, Budget, and Facilities

Leverage the \$16 per contact hour distance learning fee to support staffing, resources, facilities space, and budget needs; investigate Intelliworks CRM, a relational database for tracking online course development, and Blackboard Collaborate for synchronous teaching.

### 2. Curriculum and Instruction

Focus on adopting and implementing quality standards such as “Quality Matters,” master course templates, and plan for improvements to student success and retention rates.

### 3. Students and Support

Improve learner intake process to include an enhanced and revised online student orientation; recommend 24x7 student help desk support and increase online tutoring.

### 4. Infrastructure, Identity, Security, and Support

Recommend the acquisition of synchronous technologies such as Blackboard Collaborate for teaching, professional development, and student services needs such as tutoring and online advising; recommend online test proctoring tools.

### 5. Faculty and Support

Investigate needs for additional staffing such as a multimedia courseware developer position to support master course template development process; improve the Online and Hybrid Certification Course to include Quality Matters standards and accessibility training; leverage the AGC Distance Learning Faculty Advisory Board for course quality initiatives and faculty evaluation processes or policies.

### 6. Data, Analytics, Evaluation, and Assessment

Establish online teaching review, quality control/standards assessment, and monitoring process through a faculty evaluation cycle; ensure a baseline of data such as enrollment, courses, sections, student success rates, faculty certifications, etc., are readily available; research the use of the Noel-Levitz online student survey.

## Timeline:

August 2009 – Learning Day Announcement by President highlighting 25% online/hybrid courses goal

December 2009 – College Planning Council DL CAP recommended

March 2010 – DL CAP team formed

March 2010 – DL CAP selected by CLC for AQIP status

January 2011 – “Online Behaviors and Student Success” research project begins

December 2011 – Distance Learning Faculty Advisory Board holds its first meeting

February 2011 – Online course evaluation rubric created

July 2011 – Budget for Distance Learning and Instructional Technologies created

January 2012 – First GRCC Student Distance Learning Satisfaction Survey deployed

June 2012 – GRCC’s HLC change request approved by the HLC’s Institutional Actions Council

July 2012 – Final draft of the DL CAP Strategic Plan developed