



Digest

Title: Periodic Report on Distance Education

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Background

This item provides an update to the Board of Governors on the status of distance education in the California Community Colleges. The report contains a 2-year overview of distance education activity through the inclusion of data for fiscal years 2006-07 and 2007-08. Distance education, or distance learning, is a field of education that focuses on the pedagogy, technology, and instructional systems design that aim to deliver education to students who are not physically present in the same location with the instructor. Distance learning is the process of creating an educational experience of equal qualitative value for the learner to best suit his/her needs outside the classroom. Title 5 section 55200 defines distance education as “instruction in which the instructor and student are separated by distance and interact through the assistance of communication technology.” Distance education courses that require a physical on-site presence for any reason including the taking of examinations is considered to be a hybrid or blended course of study.

Serving the educational needs of more than 2.5 million students, California has the largest community college system in the nation. To address the educational needs of the students served by this system, community colleges are offering more courses through distance education (DE).

Using data as defined by title 5 regulations and in accordance with Standing Order 409, the first distance education report by the Chancellor’s Office was issued in August 2001. The original study recognized the extent to which distance education was offered within the California Community College system and covered the five-year period of 1995-2000. Biannually, the report is updated to include data from the prior two fiscal years. The last report was submitted to the Board of Governors in July 2007 and covered the development of distance education through June 2006.

The 2009 Distance Education Report includes data for fiscal years 2006-07 and 2007-08 from the Chancellor’s Office Management Information System (COMIS). The system-wide data provide information about the students served through DE, including the age, ethnicity, gender, and disabilities of students enrolled in these courses. This report also includes information about student access, enrollment, and course completion rates. Unfortunately, technical difficulties prevented the Annual Institutional Survey from being submitted by the colleges to the Chancellor’s office. The Educational Technology Advisory Committee (ETAC) was instrumental in revising this survey as well as the

Faculty and Student Satisfaction Surveys. The revised surveys were administered for the first time in fall 2008. Survey data will be included in the next Distance Education Report to Board of Governors, scheduled for the May 2011 meeting.

Proposal

Examination of the number of DE courses offered during the report period reveals steady growth in student access to instruction. Data in the 2007 report showed 21,902 DE course sessions were offered in 2005-06. In 2006-2007, the number increased to 26,134 sessions and in 2007-2008, the number of sessions increased to 32,417. This represents a 48% increase in the number of sessions over the two-year period.

Table 1 compares the number of DE and traditional course sessions offered and the percentage of the total course sessions for the two-year period. The number of sessions included for noncredit courses is not significant. In 2006-2007, there were only 13 noncredit course sessions offered via DE and 37 sessions in 2007-2008.

Table 1
Comparison of Distance Education and Traditional Sessions
2006 – 2008

Fiscal Years	Distance Education	Traditional Education	Total Sessions	% DE
2006-07	26,134	514,938	541,072	4.83%
2007-08	32,417	542,406	574,823	5.64%

Internet-based instructional delivery has out-paced televised instruction as the predominant delivery mode for DE in the community college system. Televised instruction accounted for 2,720 course sessions in 2006-2007 and for 2,464 course sessions in the 2007-08 academic year. The total number of DE course sessions delivered entirely, or predominately (i.e., more than 51%) over the Internet rose from 22,259 in the 2006-2007 academic year to 25,511 in 2007-08.

- ***Synchronous Communication*** is direct communication, where all parties involved in the communication are present at the same time (an event). Examples include a telephone conversation, a company board meeting, a chat room event and instant messaging.
- ***Asynchronous Communication*** does not require that all parties involved in the communication need to be present and available at the same time. Examples of this include e-mail (the receiver does not have to be logged on when the sender sends the e-mail message), discussion boards, which allow conversations to evolve and community to develop over a period of time, and text messaging over cell phones.

Asynchronous Internet-based instructional delivery now accounts for 24,449 DE course sessions, followed by synchronous Internet-based instruction with 2,178. Other technologies used in the CCC system to deliver instruction include correspondence, audiocassette, radio, and other media not specified.

Table 2 displays an analysis of trends in the number of students enrolled in DE course sessions in comparison to students enrolled in traditional sessions. In the two-year period, enrollment growth in traditional education sessions was only 3.26% in comparison to 17.57% growth in distance education sessions.

Table 2
Total Student Headcount Trends in
Distance Education and Traditional Education
Course Sessions
(Unduplicated headcount)
 2005-2008

Fiscal Year	Distance Education			Traditional		
	Headcount	Annual Variance (+ or -)	Percentage Change	Headcount	Annual Variance (+ or -)	Percentage Change
2005-06	328,372			2,630,207		
2006-07	392,355	63,983	16.31%	2,694,149	63,942	2.37%
2007-08	483,384	91,029	18.83%	2,810,572	116,423	4.14%
Average Percent Change			17.57%			3.26%

Table 3 displays the comparison of success rates between DE students and traditional education students in credit courses during the two-year period. The number of students in Table 3 is a duplicated head count including performance in multiple course sessions with a grade of “C” or better. Students receiving a grade of “D” or lower were not counted as a successful completion. The distance education success rate rose slightly in 2007-08, from 53% to 54%. This success rate compares to 65% for traditional education students in the same period.

Table 3
Comparison of Student Success Rates in
Distance Education and Traditional Education Course Sessions
(Duplicated Headcount)
 2006-2008

Credit Distance Education Sessions		
Student Outcome	2006-07	2007-08
Completed	392,145	500,142
Not Completed	346,551	425,762
Total	738,696	925,904
Success Rate	53%	54%

Credit Traditional Education Sessions		
Student Outcome	2006-07	2007-08
Completed	5,469,554	5,725,712
Not Completed	2,963,846	3,023,945
Total	8,433,400	8,749,657
Success Rate	65%	65%

Conclusion

The full report provides an in-depth analysis of distance education within the California Community Colleges for the two-year period of 2006-07 through 2007-08. Distance education continues to grow at an exceptional rate in the system and offers students a viable alternative for completing their educational goals. The next scheduled report to the Board of Governors on distance education will be in spring 2011.