

**EXPANDING ACCESS TO QUALITY
EDUCATION: A STRATEGY FOR
DISTANCE LEARNING AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS, FAYETTEVILLE**

**Submitted
to
Daniel D. Bennett
Interim Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs**

**Submitted
by the
Distance Learning Committee**

**University of Arkansas
Fayetteville, Arkansas
March 29, 2000**

DISTANCE LEARNING RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The Distance Learning Committee was charged with providing a framework for the development, implementation, and maintenance of distance learning initiatives by the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville (hereafter referred to as the University). This document represents the Committee's recommendations for integrating distance learning technologies into the University's operational framework and expanding access to quality education.

The recommendations are presented under five major headings as follows:

- Vision Statement
- Mission Statement
- Administration and Governance
- Strategic Planning
- Budget

Each of these topics will be addressed, followed by additional topics in the Appendix B that are considered important to the success of the institution's distance learning initiatives.

Vision Statement

The University of Arkansas, Fayetteville is a nationally competitive, student-centered, research university serving Arkansas and the world. The University provides distance learning as an integral part of an overall strategy to make higher education and lifelong learning easily accessible.

Mission Statement

The University has a land-grant mission to meet the educational needs of citizens throughout the State. This mission implies a requirement to provide leadership in the coordinated selection and use of educational technologies and facilities as well as programs, courses, and course content for distance learning purposes.

Administration and Governance

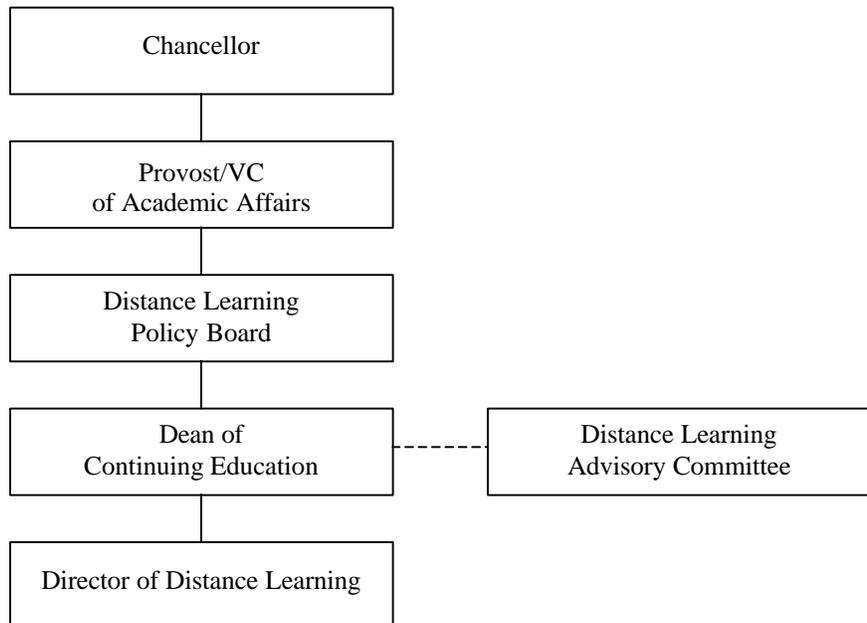
Overview

Consistent with the University's present governance and administrative structures for program development, course creation, content, and quality control, there is a growing need to promote and coordinate the use of new delivery methods.

Distance learning at the University will be coordinated by the Dean of the Division of Continuing Education under the oversight of a Policy Board composed of the Deans, the Chair of the Faculty Senate, and the Chair of the Campus Faculty, or their proxies.

A campus-wide Distance Learning Advisory Committee, appointed by the Provost/Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, will identify and study issues and make recommendations to the Dean of the Division of Continuing Education for the production, service, and delivery of distance learning. Academic issues and concerns will be referred to appropriate academic units. The committee will consist of representatives from each college/school, the Division of Continuing Education, Computing Services, Enrollment Services, and the Library and will be chaired by the Dean of the Division of Continuing Education. The Dean of the Division of Continuing Education may appoint ad hoc working groups to address and report on specific issues.

The administrative structure for policy development in distance learning is depicted in the following schematic:



Planning and Approval

The Dean of the Division of Continuing Education will make recommendations to the Policy Board for the establishment of priorities and directions for enhancing the distance learning capability of the University. The Policy Board will review annually the vision and mission statements of the preceding year and modify as needed. In addition, the Policy Board will review recommendations of the Dean of the Division of Continuing Education and make recommendations to the Provost/Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs for action.

Policies

The Distance Learning Advisory Committee will identify policy issues that may need resolution. It will review student-related policy issues with respect to their implications and impact upon distance learning, including such topics as tuition and fees, admission requirements, distance learning fees, exams, residency requirements, grading, etc., and will make recommendations to the Dean of Continuing Education for referral to the Policy Board.

The Distance Learning Advisory Committee will review faculty-related policy issues with respect to their implications and impact upon faculty involved in distance learning, including such topics as intellectual property rights, copyright infringement issues, compensation and workload, promotion and tenure, etc., and will make recommendations to the Dean of Continuing Education for referral to the Policy Board.

Funding

The Dean of the Division of Continuing Education, in concert with the Distance Learning Advisory Committee, will develop comprehensive institutional budget recommendations for the distance learning requirements of the University campus.

The Distance Learning Advisory Committee will support the institutional pursuit of funding for distance learning with appropriate external and internal units/organizations.

Reporting and Accreditation

The Dean of the Division of Continuing Education will coordinate, aggregate, and convey appropriate data for reporting purposes and will coordinate accreditation compliance with appropriate campus officials.

Educational Partnerships

Distance learning initiatives may require Memoranda of Understanding with other entities such as the University of Arkansas System, other University of Arkansas institutions, other higher education institutions, state agencies, the Arkansas Department of Higher Education, and/or private enterprise. These Memoranda of Understanding will be coordinated through the Dean of the Division of Continuing Education and will be formalized in accordance with University policy.

Marketing and Advertising

Colleges/Schools are responsible for conducting needs assessments, environmental scans, marketing analyses, and establishing distance learning enrollment forecasts and targets. These activities should be coordinated with the Dean of the Division of Continuing Education.

The Division of Continuing Education will develop a comprehensive University distance learning website portal that includes links to all University distance learning programs/courses, the library website(s), and University of Arkansas System distance learning websites. Any University unit developing a distance learning website or course should notify the Division of Continuing Education webmaster for inclusion of a short description and a link from the portal. The portal will serve as an online reference to all University distance learning.

Strategic Planning Guidelines

The technologies that are enhancing distance learning are also enhancing traditional education in campus classrooms. The University will continue to develop these technologies to enhance both distance learning capabilities and local classroom instruction.

Each college or university in the state has its own areas of focus that position it for particular educational missions. Such is the case for this University which will capitalize on its strengths by centering on one or more of the following where consistent with resources and mission:

- Courses and programs to develop professional and technical expertise to support state and regional economic development.
- Courses that expand or enhance existing University graduate, professional, and upper division offerings.
- Courses that are designed to prepare associate degree graduates for entry and success in University programs.

- Courses and programs that reflect significant areas of University expertise and have state and/or national enrollment potential.
- Courses in which University expertise and capacity can offer curricular enhancements to other state educational institutions.

Each of the colleges/schools within the University will develop its own strategy for distance learning within the context of this overall strategy for the University.

Budget

The following budget discussion assumes that a high bandwidth network is available throughout the state and on campus and that the Arkansas Digital Library plan has been funded.

Development and operational cost requirements are substantially different for the four major distance learning methods that are proposed to be used, as well as the support for distance learning expansion, and are discussed separately.

Base Annual Program Support for Distance Learning Expansion

To provide the level of courses planned, a base increase in program staff is required for Mullins Library, and Computing Services. The Mullins Library will require an additional staff budget increase of \$175,000, and a \$60,000 budget increase will be required for additional network support staffing in Computing Services to maintain the increased usage and full-time (24 hours, 7 days/week) availability of the network. Total annual support costs for Mullins Library and Computing Services distance learning support will be approximately \$235,000/year plus fringe benefits.

Compressed Interactive Video (CIV)

Projected additional CIV course offerings by the University for fiscal years 2001-2006 are as follows:

■ Dale Bumpers College of Agricultural, Food and Life Sciences	20
■ Sam M. Walton College of Business Administration	23
■ College of Education and Health Professions	15
■ College of Engineering	40
■ Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences	10
■ School of Architecture	4
■ School of Law	0
TOTAL	112

Initial capital costs for CIV are the studio costs. Each studio is projected to cost from \$100,000 to \$175,000 and can support from 8 to 10 courses per semester. Individual course modification costs average \$5,000 per course, T1 line/transmission costs will be \$400/month/studio effective July 1, 2000, and receiving location costs vary considerably.

To support the projected 112 CIV courses a total of 5 additional studios are required (not all courses will be offered every semester).

Development of 112 CIV courses will require \$560,000 (112 x \$5000).

World Wide Web

Projected additional World Wide Web course offerings by the University for fiscal years 2001-2006 are as follows:

■ Dale Bumpers College of Agricultural, Food and Life Sciences	10
■ Sam M. Walton College of Business Administration	20
■ College of Education and Health Professions	22
■ College of Engineering	10
■ Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences	30
■ School of Architecture	2
■ School of Law	5
TOTAL	99

Web-based courses have higher development costs than CIV but are more scaleable. In addition, the number of available seats and technological restrictions in a classroom limits CIV courses; no such limitation applies to web-based courses, although instructor resources may limit enrollment.

Initial capital costs are for hardware and software to support delivery of the course. With the projected number of 99 web-based courses, \$75,000 will be required for a server system and software.

Course development and support teams will be required to create the courses and to provide technical support to the faculty. Course development costs are projected at \$50,000 per course.

Development of 99 World Wide Web courses will require \$4,950,000 (99 x \$50,000).

Internet Videoconferencing

This is an emerging technology whose costs are not yet easily projected.

Satellite Uplink

At present, the cost of uplinking courses/degree programs via satellite is exorbitant. However, this remains a viable alternative should transponder costs be greatly reduced.

APPENDIX A DISTANCE LEARNING PLANNING COMMITTEE

Donnie Dutton (chair), Division of Continuing Education
Glen-Peter Ahlers, School of Law
Michael Buono, School of Architecture
Bill Curington, Sam M. Walton College of Business Administration
Collis Geren, Graduate School
Reed Greenwood, College of Education and Health Professions
Barbara Hinton*, College of Education and Health Professions
Fred Limp, Fulbright College of Arts & Sciences
Randy Luttrell, Dale Bumpers College of Agricultural, Food and Life Sciences
Gary McHenry, Division of Continuing Education
Will Miller*, Fulbright College of Arts & Sciences
Jerry Musick*, Dale Bumpers College of Agricultural, Food and Life Sciences
Janet Parsch, David W. Mullins Library
Tim Tarvin**, School of Law
Robert Welch, College of Engineering

* Faculty

**School of Law Alternate

APPENDIX B

SUPPORTING THE UNIVERSITY'S DISTANCE LEARNING STRATEGY

Addressing issues and concerns that follow is important to the successful implementation of the University's strategic goals. They will be used by the appropriate campus distance learning groups (noted in parentheses) as discussion points and possible action items as the University continues to formulate policies that develop and strengthen distance learning coursework and programs.

Faculty and Faculty Support

An effective distance learning strategy should provide incentives to the faculty for integrating the delivery of distance learning into their assigned responsibilities. Since distance learning is a relatively new process for many faculty, there must be an ongoing program of faculty development for all of the elements involved in distance learning. Finally, it is very important that systems for ensuring quality instructional programming across the University be created and maintained.

Incentives

- Develop provisions for determining workload assignments for faculty to include (along with teaching, research, and service) development of course and degree programs, development and production of instructional materials, preparation and coordination time for course delivery, and advisement of distance learning students. (*Colleges/Schools*)
- Support the recognition of exemplary performance in distance learning through its inclusion in achievement awards for teaching and through recognition during promotion and tenure decisions. (*Colleges/Schools and the University*)
- Review compensation policies for faculty involved in distance learning course and program development, as well as policies for faculty involved in delivery of these courses and programs to the student. These policies should include the possibility of financial incentives to faculty and should enable faculty to bring special attention to this activity during their annual reviews. (*Colleges/Schools and the Division of Continuing Education*)

Faculty Development

- Provide for continuing faculty development activities in the areas of instructional development, design, and delivery of courses; for the support of faculty development at the departmental level to address the needs of specific disciplines; and for faculty mentoring of faculty in distance learning activities. (*Colleges/Schools and the University*)

- Provide funds for faculty to participate in external programs and activities that are discipline-specific and that provide state-of-the-art knowledge and experience not otherwise available. (*Colleges/Schools and the University*)

Degree Programs and Courses

The design and delivery of courses and degree programs present many challenges for distance learning. Traditionally, the authority for the development of courses and degree programs resides with the faculty. In this role, as applied to distance learning, the faculty, as well as administration, are called upon to address several issues. Needs assessments are required to determine what courses and degree programs are needed in the state that are within the University's areas of strength. The University must be careful to maintain proper balance between residential and non-residential instruction. The institution must deliver programs in a manner that enables students to complete them in a reasonable time. Marketing of courses and programs should give prospective students sufficient information to make informed decisions about course and program enrollment. It will be very difficult to meet the objectives of distance learning delivery without effective support systems for course development and delivery and site management on both ends of the instructional process. Finally, it is important that existing procedures for developing and maintaining programs of high quality and interest are followed.

Strategies for Course and Program Development

- Conduct program reviews at the departmental level to determine the most appropriate responses to distance learning needs and opportunities. (*Colleges/Schools*)
- Assess intra- and inter-college programming to determine potential strengths for interdisciplinary programming. (*University*)
- Assess markets and opportunities for joint programming with other colleges and universities, especially strategies that would encourage additional enrollment at this campus. (*Colleges/Schools and the University*)

Marketing Courses and Programs

- Market distance learning to special populations in unique ways as well as with on-campus programming. (*University*)

Site Management and Support

- Provide for instructional and technical design staff to support a variety of distance learning delivery systems. (*Colleges/Schools, Division of Continuing Education, and the University*)
- Provide site management for distance learning to ensure effectiveness in equipment operation, delivery, and management at the originating and receiving sites. (*Colleges/Schools, Division of Continuing Education, and the University*)

Quality Assurance

- Ensure compliance with accreditation standards in distance learning offerings. (*Colleges/Schools and the University*)

Web Site Development

- Develop a comprehensive University distance learning website that includes links to the library website as well as to other higher education campuses' distance learning websites. (*Division of Continuing Education*)

Students and Student Support

For a distance-learning program to be successful, it is essential that students have positive reactions to the program itself, including the support services. Admissions, registration, fees, support materials, and access to instructors must add to a positive outcome and learning experience. Adequate library and other research resources must be available that are appropriate to courses and programs and are of adequate quality to support study at levels comparable to on-campus study.

Academic and Student Support Policies

- Review policies for impact on distance learning students. Such policies may include those related to admissions, tuition and fees, advising, student performance, probation, suspension, dismissal, academic honesty, and transfer of credit. (*University*)
- Identify ways for the Mullins Library to receive designated financial funding for support of distance learning (e.g., custom help for finding/delivering library resources, tracking off-campus students for receiving electronic access to library materials). (*University*)

Student Access and Information

- Develop a system for tracking individual distance learning students over time. (*University*)
- Establish a system to identify distance learning courses and enrollments in the student information system. (*University*)
- Establish web-based access for registration, fee payments, and other applicable procedures. (*University*)

Student Curriculum Support

- Provide access to curriculum materials and research materials, e.g., syllabi, books, online search indexes, archived lectures on video, textbooks, etc. (*University*)
- Provide access to materials for disabled students by means of voice recognition, closed captioning of video transmissions, etc. (*University*)
- Provide very large computer storage archives to students for large data sets, such as graphics, animation, and Geographical Information Systems (GIS) or consider whether courses with such requirements are too expensive to be cost effective in distance learning. (*University*)

Student Access to Library Resources

- Support the establishment and expansion of a digital library so that distance learning students and faculty can have access to applicable electronic resources, digitized collections, and electronic reserve materials. (*University*)
- Support the continued development of inter-library agreements and mechanisms for providing library resources to distance learning students, such as provided for in the “Minimum Guidelines for Distance Education Library Resources” developed by University of Arkansas system librarians. (*University*)
- Support the adoption and implementation of the Association of College and Research Libraries’ “Guidelines for Distance Learning Library Services.” (*University*)

Infrastructure

The campus network infrastructure must support a variety of communication venues, e.g., interactive video, telephony, computer conferencing, etc. It must be designed around standard, replaceable network building blocks to ensure cost effectiveness and

future viability. The scope of delivery is limited by the ability of the institution and students to readily connect to the ends of the “pipe.”

Planning

Since campus needs and networking infrastructure technologies are changing continually, planning must be ongoing. An advisory committee should review the current technical standards and the overall network plan on a yearly basis. The committee should also inform and advise the campus community regarding the incorporation of new networking technologies.

Network infrastructure designs, where possible, should be based on standard, replaceable network building blocks having a clear path for upgrades.

As distance education programs increase, plans for providing redundancy in the network infrastructure should be developed to meet reliability goals.

Significant leadership must be provided in the research and development of networking infrastructure across the state.

Cost

Addition of capacity or function to a network imposes additional cost for implementation and maintenance. Appropriate funding should be allotted to maintain network efficiency.

Network infrastructure investments should be proportional to the expected network life span. Plans for overcapacity should be related directly to identifiable and anticipated campus needs.

Maintenance and Support

As the number of distance education programs increase, the need for staff expertise in network infrastructure will grow. Provisions should be made to provide a network infrastructure that has secure, verifiable, and reliable paths of communication and provides technical support to faculty, students, and staff to establish connectivity with the network infrastructure. (*University*)

Evaluation and Assessment

The evaluation and assessment of a distance learning program must gauge enrollment, student achievement, student and faculty satisfaction with the program, and other variables that will assist the University in measuring success. The criteria for success must be based on measurable goals and objectives established at the outset of each

new program. Evaluation and assessment should lead to an ongoing process of planning and review that allows continuous improvement.

Needs Assessment

- Assess degree of fulfillment of the distance learning needs of students. Primary consideration must be given to distance learning programs that address specific markets. Measurable goals and objectives associated with each distance learning program should provide benchmarks for determining its continuance. (*Colleges/Schools*)
- Encourage collaboration within and among colleges/schools to share resources to meet distance learning needs. (*University*)
- Provide support resources (e.g., surveys) to assist colleges and schools in evaluating market trends in their subject areas. (*University*)

Evaluation

- Ensure that all aspects of distance learning programs are included in all established curricular review processes.