

Program Review Reflect Form - Hybrid

Program Name: Online Education

Program Review Year: 2016-17

Program Performance

Analysis/Discussion:

In fall 2015/spring 2016, MiraCosta College offered 624 distance education (DE) course sections. 20.9% of MCC FTES were from DE, 49.8% of MCC students took at least one DE class, and 16.6% of MCC students took only DE classes. All of these numbers continue a steady upward trend, as DE classes play an increasingly important role at MiraCosta. MiraCosta continues to be a regional and statewide leader in both the absolute amount of DE enrollments and the portion DE represents within the overall enrollment mix. According to CCCCO Datamart, for 2015-16, MiraCosta had 20,046 DE enrollments, accounting for 19.7% of all enrollments. Just four California Community Colleges exceeded MiraCosta in both absolute DE enrollments and percentage of enrollment attributable to DE (Coastline, Foothill, San Joaquin Delta, and West LA).

According to Program Review data, the WSCH/FTEF ratio for DE sections exceeds that of non-DE: 490 vs. 414 (a similar gap has existed for at least the last several years). This demonstrates both the student demand and the administrative appeal of DE. Balancing that, however, are lower success (67% vs. 72%) and retention rates (78% vs. 84%) in DE vs. non-DE. Compared to statewide Datamart data, MiraCosta's 2015-16 DE success rates are superior (66% vs. 63%), but retention rates are behind (80% vs. 82%). In 2015-16, MiraCosta was among 12 California Community Colleges with DE enrollment of over 14,000 and DE representing over 17% of all enrollments. MiraCosta's success rate is third best among these, and its retention rate is 8th best. Departments continue to work toward reducing the gap between on-ground and online success and retention rates, and these gaps narrowed in 2015-16 for the first time in several years.

Program review data raises equity concerns about DE gaps for some populations. DE outcomes of Black/African-American and Hispanic/Latino populations, with success rates of 51.5% and 59.4%, respectively, are well behind the 69.8% success rate for White and 74.8% for Asian. This is in line with state and national research indicating on-ground achievement gaps between different community college populations are often exacerbated online, though it does show modest improvement of 1.5-3 percentage points over last year. DE access data also reveals equity concerns, with Hispanic/Latino population representing about 37% of on-ground enrollment but only 33% of online enrollment (gap closed by 2 percentage points compared to last year), and for males in general with 47% of on-ground enrollment but just 32% of online enrollment (same gap as last year).

MiraCosta surveyed students in the course management system evaluation process this year, and the CCCCO promises to resume its systemwide DE student satisfaction surveying in 2017, enabling us to resume longitudinal and statewide evaluation.

The Online Ed program continues to be held in high regard. Participation and satisfaction in faculty and student workshops remains very strong. MiraCosta continues as a participant in the CCC Online Education Initiative consortium, and both Online Ed staff have been involved in additional work within the OEI.

The Online Ed program leads MiraCosta's engagement with DE regulations and effective practices, not only in terms of compliance but also toward continuous improvement. The Faculty Director of Online Education was highly involved with the writing of the 2016 Institutional Self-Evaluation Report and provided significant guidance to faculty and staff involved with DE in preparation for and during this fall's accreditation visit. The Online Education Plan outlines a number of key action plans which will enhance support for faculty and students participating in online education.

Program Learning Outcomes

Analysis/Discussion:

The 2015-18 Online Education Plan established Service Area Outcomes (SAOs) for the Online Education program. Since this Plan was approved after the 2014-15 Program Review cycle, specific program review action plans have not yet been associated with these outcomes:

Develop, implement, evaluate, and refine initiatives designed to improve online education access and equity at MiraCosta College.

Develop, implement, evaluate, and refine initiatives designed to improve distance education class and program success and retention.

Develop, implement, evaluate, and refine initiatives designed to improve student and faculty satisfaction with online education.

Develop, implement, evaluate, and refine initiatives designed to ensure compliance with government regulations and accreditor expectations with regard to distance education.

A plan for this year is to develop SMART goals associated with these SAOs.

Three examples of projects undertaken during 2015-16 intended to address one or more of these SAOs are:

First, continuation of a project to provide more support to both faculty and students involved in DE classes from departments with significant gaps between online and onground success and retention. The project includes the following components:

Having an instructional designer work with faculty to develop enhancements to the class

Providing more detailed information to faculty about success factors of enrolled students

Having student support specialists monitoring and supporting student engagement/success in the classes, particularly during the initial weeks of the semester

Providing support for collecting and analyzing data

This project is a continuation of one in 2014-15 in which SDSU graduate student interns supported two faculty in considering and making changes within their class. One of the classes included the changes in spring 2015, and the results were impressive: compared to the same class held one semester earlier, retention improved from 85 to 95%, success improved from 70 to 90%, and average GPA improved from 2.50 to 2.97. In 2015-16, a MiraCosta College Foundation mini-grant provided stipends for two SDSU graduate student interns who served as instructional designers for two International Languages classes and one math class. SSSP funds enabled the extra student and research support in these classes.

The second project was a comprehensive course management system evaluation. This process focused on developing a forward-looking recommendation for the best course management system to meet MiraCosta's strategic needs over the next five years. An inclusive taskforce conducted a thorough process involving faculty, students, staff, and administrators. The feedback from both faculty and students was unequivocal in recommending the selection of Canvas. Further, the taskforce thoughtfully advocated for a two-year transitional period with full support for faculty and students to be successful in making the transition to Canvas.

The third project was the development of MiraCosta Online Course Quality Guidelines. The MiraCosta Online Educators committee developed this document and the Academic Senate approved it in spring 2016. It includes both essential and recommended elements of distance education classes at MiraCosta, and will serve as a tool for individual instructors to improve their classes, a basis for departmental discussions about DE, and a foundation for more focused development of resources and faculty development experiences from the office of Online Education.

Program Performance - Service Area

Analysis/Discussion:

No additional service areas.

Program Resources

Analysis/Discussion:

The department is housed in the Teaching/Technology Innovation Center (TIC), OC 1253. The area includes two offices for Online Ed staff; a small lab with four workstations, scanners, printer, phone, office supplies, and small meeting table; and a larger meeting space (1253B) with smart classroom capabilities and a wireless microphone system for simulcasting meetings online. 1253B also includes equipment storage, laptops, and two specialized workstations (one in a soundbooth) for faculty and staff to use in creating instructional materials. 1253B may be reserved via 25Live. AIS updated nearly all workstations as well as the smart classroom control system in 2014-15. The laptops, however, have become very dated.

Online Ed has tools to help faculty experiment and innovate; this includes iPads, an Android tablet, a Chromebook, and several small netbooks. At present the checkout of this equipment is managed through a paper-based system; eventually these tools should be more widely promoted and managed online.

While the TIC and the budget to maintain it are adequate to support the current program, its location remains a question mark. While more publicity and creative thought on improving access might help, it is worth considering a move to a more accessible location. The Faculty Director of Online Education is advocating for co-locating or integrating the TIC with the proposed Center for Teaching and Learning.

The Online Education website (<http://tic.miracosta.edu>) is a valued, useful source of information and tutorial resources. This site will be updated in the coming year in alignment with the Online Ed Plan, the Canvas transition, and the Online Class Guidelines document. The Online Course Schedule enables faculty to provide important information about DE courses that cannot be included in SURF or print schedules. Faculty and students continue to underutilize this resource; the new student orientation to online learning helps students learn about it; the Online Education program sends personal reminders to DE faculty to update this.

Online Education (in conjunction with AIS) supports resources enabling MiraCosta's online learning environment to remain current and innovative. Key resources include the Blackboard, Moodle, and Canvas course management systems; Respondus, for managing question pools for online tests; Turnitin, supporting plagiarism prevention and effective grading and feedback of written work; TechSmith Relay, enabling simple screencasting with automatic captioning for all MiraCostans; and CCC Confer and ConferNow, web conferencing tools. Online Education worked with its users to select VoiceThread as a replacement for the now-defunct Voice Tools. However, this tool is more expensive and seats are limited; usage data this year will inform next steps. A pilot last year of Zaption, a tool for creating assessments within videos directly with Blackboard, held some promise, but the company was sold and the tool is no longer available; PlayPosit was identified as a similar tool and is being piloted this year.

As the Online Education Initiative progresses, it is important to determine which tools and resources provided by the OEI should be considered for use at MiraCosta. NetTutor, an online tutoring provider, is currently available for any of our online classes and has been piloted in some classes which do not have online tutoring available through the Western eTutoring Consortium. Proctorio enables computer-based online proctoring and security for high-stakes online assignments, but has not been used yet at MiraCosta.

Program Personnel

Analysis/Discussion:

The Online Education staff consists of the Faculty Director of Online Education (FDOE) and a classified Faculty Technology Specialist (FTS). The budget for Online Ed includes sufficient funds for travel and professional development opportunities. This enabled the FTS and FDOE to again attend and present at important regional and national conferences, as well as supporting the attendance of about 12 faculty at the Online Teaching Conference in June. Both the FTS and FDOE also actively participate in online learning opportunities such as webinars and professional communities connected by listservs, discussion groups, and social media. The FDOE is an active participant in MiraCosta Flex activities and the FTS and FDOE each offer numerous Flex workshops as well, increasingly online in order to reach more participants and to capture archives for continued viewing. The FDOE also builds and maintains professional networks with other CCC DE Coordinators through the statewide CCC DE Coordinators organization which meets online each month and maintains communication via an email distribution list, the OEI Consortium which meets monthly, and through a regional SDICCCA DE group which meets monthly.

It has been anticipated for some time that Online Education will need to expand to include a professional instructional designer. At present both the FDOE and FTS can and do provide some instructional design support to interested faculty, though the FTS's expertise is primarily technical, and the FDOE's time is limited in offering 1-1 support to faculty. As mentioned in the Program Learning Outcomes section, efforts to pilot Instructional Design support for faculty proved fruitful in 2014-15 and 2015-16. Recruiting volunteer faculty for the 2015-16 project resulted in far more interest than could be accommodated. And the 2014-15 project was presented at a fall 2015 Flex workshop attended by 23 faculty; at the close of the workshop, a poll was taken of how many in attendance would be interested in having the support of an instructional designer; everyone present raised their hand.

Last year's Program Review included a plan for an instructional design position. This was not funded, but widespread support for this position has been acknowledged over the past year, particularly given increasing needs to support the Canvas transition, interest in the use of Open Educational Resources, and significant challenges in ensuring that online education materials and tools are fully accessible to students with disabilities. This year the office of the Vice President of Instruction is submitting the Instructional Designer position as a program review plan, with support from the Office of Online Education.

In the meantime for 2016-17, funds from the VPI and from the AB 798 OER grant are to be used to hire a temporary instructional designer.

Program Curriculum and Students

Analysis/Discussion:

DE curriculum is subject to the same processes of review and approval as all curriculum at MiraCosta. The Faculty Director of Online Education is an ex-officio member of the Courses & Programs Committee (C&P), as well as the Courses & Programs Curriculum Committee (CPCC). This helps ensure that DE issues are thoroughly considered in the approval of courses and programs.

As noted in the first section, program review data shows that 16.6% of MiraCosta's headcount in 2015-16 was comprised of students taking only DE courses. Research needs to be done to learn more about this population, but the existence of this significant portion of DE-only MiraCosta students raises curricular questions. Should more programs be made available completely via DE? Do we need to look more closely at systematically offering DE courses such that programs could viably be completed via DE? The Online Education Plan includes an action plan for establishing comprehensive fully online education programs; originally this was targeted to be completed by fall 2016 but the Canvas transition and accreditation processes took priority in 2015-16. It remains an important objective.

While it once was thought that CurricUNET would make it easier to track the programs affected by DE course approvals, and also to determine the proportion of courses offered via DE for newly proposed programs, this has not proven true. This kind of data tracking and analysis is important to ensure that C&P is fully informed about the implications of possible accreditor approval necessitated by any local approval of a course or program to be offered via distance education. At present the Office of Instruction and Office of Research, Planning, & Institutional Effectiveness are working with the Faculty Director of Online Education to establish other methods for this tracking, as well as to identify likely DE completion "pathways" and students who are completing programs primarily via DE.

Demographics of MiraCosta students enrolled in at least one DE course in 2015-16 mostly mirror the on-ground MiraCosta population (within 2 percentage points), with a few minor distinctions. A smaller portion of first-time college students take DE compared to on-ground classes (26% vs. 30%). Representation of females is stronger among DE students (64% vs. 54%) with a corresponding smaller portion of DE students who are male (35% vs. 45%). 18-20 year-olds comprise 36% of on-ground students but only 28% of DE students. Hispanics are slightly less represented among DE students compared to on-ground (34% vs. 37%).

As mentioned in the first section, it is important to conduct additional research to learn more about the performance of students in various demographic groups across various DE modalities, as well as to undertake research on the effects of different approaches to supporting student success, not just in general, but especially with regard to particular demographic groups that have achievement gaps which show up or are magnified in DE courses. The Online Education Plan calls for regular evaluation of online programs, resources, and support services to improve student satisfaction, equity, retention, and success.