Program Review Reflect Form - Hybrid

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Program (program, dept, committee, etc.): Online Education

Program Review Year: 2013

Program Performance

Analysis/Discussion: (less than 3,800 characters)

Students enrolling in Distance Education (DE) courses at MiraCosta have risen steadily in both absolute numbers and as a percentage of overall FTES, course enrollments, and headcount. For 2012-13, 17.1% of MCC FTES are from DE, compared to 12.6% in 2009-10. Further, 44.3% of MCC students take at least one DE course, and 12.4% of MCC students are taking only DE courses. For 2012-13, only one San Diego-area community college has a higher portion of FTES from DE (Miramar), and only one has a higher number of absolute FTES from DE (Southwestern). Within our area, only Southwestern has exhibited a similar growth pattern over the last several years of a steadily increasing portion of FTES attributable to DE; other colleges seem to be holding steady or even slightly reducing the percentage of DE in their total FTES. Nationally, however, according to the Instructional Technology Council, "For the past decade, online learning has been the predominant source of higher education enrollment increases. Additionally, the growth rate in online student enrollment has slowed." (ITC 2012 Distance Education Survey Results, p. 9)

According to Program Review Data, the WSCH/FTEF ratio for DE sections is significantly better than that of non-DE sections - 496 vs. 396 - for 2012-13. This demonstrates both the student demand in online education and the administrative appeal in offering DE. Balancing that efficiency, however, are the lower success (64% vs. 71%) and retention rates (78% vs. 84%) in 2012-13 DE sections compared to non-DE. Compared to statewide figures, MiraCosta's 2012-13 DE success rates are superior (64% vs. 61%), but retention rates are behind (78% vs. 81%).

Student satisfaction with DE at MiraCosta appears to be comparable or slightly above statewide satisfaction, according to data from the 2013 CCCCO survey of students who took a fall 2012 DE course. For the question, "I would recommend this course to others," 8.5% of MiraCosta students disagreed vs. 8.8% of students statewide. For the question, "I learned as much in this distance education course as compared to a face-to-face course" 69.5% of MiraCosta students agreed or strongly agreed, compared to 66.3% of students statewide.

In terms of student equity, program review data should raise concerns about achievement gaps for some demographic groups, where success rates for DE courses significantly lag those group's rates for non-DE courses. As this is the first year where this data has been provided, more research is needed, but it also is not surprising in light of national research showing that first-generation students and minorities often have greater challenges with DE than other demographic groups. This points to the critical importance of building additional online student support services, and considering how DE fits into nearly any student success initiative, as well as continuing to improve faculty training and support for offering effective online education.

Disaggregation of DE achievement data in the program review packets for all academic departments was done in 2012-13 for the first time, so it will be very important to track the analysis that departments complete and the plans that they form related to improving program performance in DE offerings.

The addition of online tutoring services in 2012-13 provided an important new online support service. Dialog continues with student support areas about adding and improving online support services, especially Counseling.

Service Area Outcomes have not yet been established for Online Education; as mentioned in the following section, it is anticipated this will be part of the Online Ed Plan to be written in the near future.

Program Performance - Service Area

Analysis/Discussion: (less than 3,800 characters)

The Online Ed program is held in high regard, both internally and externally. Surveys associated with Online Ed personnel reviews are extremely positive, FLEX workshop feedback is quite strong, and increasingly other institutions are looking to MiraCosta to provide insight into quality Online Education. Both Online Ed staff have been asked to provide workshops for @One, and our work with the Western eTutoring Consortium is a particular innovation that has caught the attention of many other California institutions of higher education.

In the last two years, Online Ed has sought to become more systematic and data-based. Key internal data that is now being more closely tracked range from faculty and student participation in course management systems to Flex workshop attendance and satisfaction. Online Ed has also developed an annual task list broken down by week to ensure that regular activities remain on track. Participation in Program Review will provide another important set of data for continuous improvement of the program itself, and will also enable the program to provide leadership for the improvement of online education across the institution.

The Online Ed program has been integral to MiraCosta's improving compliance with state, federal, and accreditor regulations & expectations for DE. Key initiatives in 2012-13 included the inclusion of DE in program review, a significant revision to AP 4105, and drafting of the first DE Substantive Change Proposal since 2009. This all lays a foundation for an array of ongoing work to systematize DE and ensure compliance with DE regulations throughout the institution, better aligning MiraCosta's DE offerings with its mission and ensuring continuous improvement through better support for faculty and students. For 2013-14, these efforts include development of a new Online Education Plan, which should establish SAOs for Online Education, redeveloping the Online Ed Faculty Handbook and professional learning opportunities for faculty, rolling out a new orientation for DE students, and presenting a report to the Board of Trustees on DE at MiraCosta.

During 2012-13, Online Ed engaged faculty, administrators, and governance groups in many dialogues about the importance of updating MiraCosta's policies and practices regarding DE. Support for Online Ed to provide leadership in the updates and innovations needed to enhance DE regulatory compliance and online education effectiveness improved significantly. The MiraCosta culture which favors faculty and department autonomy continues to present both challenges and opportunities for the Online Ed program, especially in comparison to other institutions which have taken more centralized approaches to quality DE.

Program Resources

Analysis/Discussion: (less than 3,800 characters)

The Online Education department is housed in the Teaching/Technology Innovation Center (TIC), OC 1253. The area includes two offices for the Online Ed staff; a small lab with four workstations, scanners, printer, phone, office supplies, and a small meeting table; and a larger meeting space (1253B) with smart classroom capabilities. 1253B also includes equipment storage, a number of laptops, and two workstations with specialized software for faculty and staff to use in creating instructional materials/resources. One of those workstations is housed inside a professional soundbooth. 1253B may be reserved for meetings as well as for individual soundbooth use via 25Live.

Online Education has acquired technology to help faculty experiment and innovate; this includes iPads, a Galaxy tablet, a Chromebook, and several small netbooks, as well as accessories. At present the checkout of this equipment is managed through a paper-based system; eventually this should be migrated to a technology-based system that will better enable faculty to be aware of these options and reserve equipment online. TIC resources also include a wireless microphone system that enables meetings held in the TIC to be simulcast live over the web if desired.

While this facility and the budget to maintain and supply it are more than adequate to support the current Online Ed program, there lingers a question about its location. Out of the way at the back of the second floor of the library, it is not easy for faculty to “stumble upon” or just to quickly drop into. While more publicity and perhaps some creative thought on improving access might help (e.g. via the nearby stairway and external door), it also may well be worth considering a move to a more central, accessible location in future program reviews.

The Online Education website is fairly simple but includes some important resources for faculty and students. Although it is in need of a refresh once important foundational work related to the Online Ed Plan and the Online Ed Faculty Handbook is done, the site still gets kudos, especially for the DE readiness quiz (which is used by several other institutions). Saddleback College even adapted the entire DE site for their use. The site includes numerous video tutorials, a distance education readiness quiz for students, and information about and links to the various key online education systems that MiraCosta supports. It also includes the Online Course Schedule, which enables faculty to provide important information about DE courses that cannot be included in SURF or print schedules. This information helps students to learn about the details of DE courses, make course selections, and understand the initial steps required at the beginning of a DE course. With more persistent and targeted reminders, faculty completion of Online Course Schedule information rose to nearly 95% for the 300+ fall 2013 online and hybrid courses listed there, improving from less than 60% just two years ago. Now, publicity needs to be aimed at students, as the spring survey of DE students revealed that nearly 35% of DE students were not aware of this resource.

Online Education supports resources enabling MiraCosta’s online learning environment to remain current and innovative. Key resources include the Blackboard and Moodle course management systems; Respondus, for managing question pools for online tests; Turnitin, supporting plagiarism prevention and more effective grading and feedback of written work; Camtasia Relay, enabling simple screencasting with automatic captioning for all MiraCostans; Blackboard Collaborate Voice Authoring, enabling voice-based interactions in Blackboard and Moodle; and CCC Confer, a web conferencing tool.

Program Personnel

Analysis/Discussion: (less than 3,800 characters)

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 to attend the Blackboard World conference this summer as well as regional Blackboard user group events; the FDOE attended several regional and national conferences, as well as supporting the attendance of more than a dozen 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 has worked with the FTS to plan a professional development path slated to include courses in the San Diego State master's degree program in educational technology beginning in the summer of 2014. The FDOE is an active participant in MiraCosta Flex activities and the FTS and FDOE each offer numerous Flex workshops as well. The FDOE also builds and maintains professional networks with other CCC DE Coordinators through a regional SDICCCA DE group which meets monthly and was formally recognized this year as a SDICCCA subcommittee, and the statewide CCC DE Coordinators organization which meets online each month and maintains communication via an email distribution list.

This year, administrative oversight of Online Education was reassigned from the Dean of Academic Information Services to the Dean of Math & Sciences. This change aligns Online Ed more closely with the Office of Instruction and with other academic departments, which is important in several ways. First, given the extensive and ongoing involvement of Online Ed in core institutional and instructional functions such as accreditation, program review, and other aspects of strategic planning and continuous improvement, connecting Online Ed more closely with the Instructional Services administrative team will improve communication and enhance Online Ed's involvement in these efforts. Second, many faculty view AIS as a purely "technical support" area; by moving Online Ed out of AIS it may help to smooth Online Ed's transition to increased involvement in faculty professional learning for increasing student success through enhanced course design and instruction. Finally, there is the potential in this move to introduce new barriers in terms of Online Ed's involvement in the selection, maintenance, and support of the technical systems that are crucial to student and faculty success in online teaching and learning. Thus far, there is no evidence that problems have occurred; the relationships between Online Ed personnel and AIS staff and administration continue to be cooperative and mission-focused.

It has been anticipated for some time that Online Education may eventually 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 the work of the FDOE to systematize and further institutionalize Online Ed continues, especially in the development of broader and deeper professional learning opportunities for faculty, and as the adoption curve for online instruction moves further along to faculty who may have less interest in devoting considerable time and energy to exploring online education technologies and pedagogies, the need for additional support more focused on instructional design may grow. This is an important area to monitor, and consider for inclusion in the rewrite of the Online Education Plan.

Program Curriculum

Analysis/Discussion: (less than 3,800 characters)

Curriculum for DE courses is subject to the same processes of review and approval as all curriculum at MiraCosta. Starting in Fall 2013, the Faculty Director of Online Education has been added to the Courses & Programs Committee (C&P), as well as the Courses & Programs Curriculum Committee (CPCC). This helps to further ensure that issues related to Distance Education are thoroughly considered in the approval of courses and programs. MiraCosta's Form A, the supplemental form included when courses are being submitted for approval to be offered as fully online and/or hybrid, meets state requirements for the process

of approving DE courses. The committee will revise the form in the upcoming year to better reflect the requirements for offering DE at MiraCosta as stated in the revised AP 4105, which was adopted in the summer of 2013.

As mentioned in the first section, program review data shows that 12.4% of MiraCosta's headcount in 2012-13 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 process of drafting the Substantive Change Proposal for Distance Education this year revealed that MiraCosta's current systems for tracking how DE course approvals affect programs are insufficient. C&P will consider changes in the upcoming year requiring requestors of DE course approval to list the programs the approval would affect, as well as requiring program proposals to list the percentage the program would be available via DE given current course approvals. The upcoming change from WebCMS to CurricuNET promises to make this kind of data tracking and analysis much simpler and more accessible.

The role of the Online Education program in regards to the curricular issues mentioned above is primarily one of advocacy, awareness-raising, data gathering and sharing, and facilitation of process improvement.

As a newly recognized program, Online Education needs to establish Service Area Outcomes (SAO) in the coming year. It is anticipated that the writing of a new Online Education Plan will include development of Online Education SAOs as well as a variety of metrics, benchmarks, and goals for improvement, which will become the basis for future program reviews.

Program Students

Analysis/Discussion: (less than 3,800 characters)

Demographics of MiraCosta students enrolled in at least one DE course in 2012-13 largely mirror the MiraCosta population, with a few minor discrepancies of note. Fewer DE-takers are first-time college students (17% vs. 21%), and more are continuing MiraCosta students (44% vs. 36%). A greater portion of DE-takers intends to complete associate's degrees (52% vs. 47%). The DE-taking population is more strongly concentrated between 25 and 44 (36% vs. 28%). Representation of females is stronger among DE students (64% vs. 57%). Fewer DE students are enrolled in K-12 (1% vs. 5%) and this difference is reflected in the higher portion of DE students whose educational level is a high school diploma or equivalent (78% vs. 74%). Ethnicities are very similar, with slightly lower representation of Hispanics among DE students (15% vs. 18%) and slightly higher White representation (51% vs. 49%). In all, these demographic data would appear to suggest that the DE student population at MiraCosta might reasonably be expected to be slightly more successful than the general population of MiraCosta students, but this is certainly an area where more research is needed.

Comparing the demographics to state and national data on students enrolled in DE courses is interesting. Sources for this comparison include a national survey of 2-year institutions (Instructional Technology Council 2012 Distance Education Survey Results: Trends in eLearning: Tracking the Impact of eLearning at Community Colleges) and a statewide survey of community college students who took a DE course (California Community Colleges Summary Report for 2012 Fall DE Student Satisfaction Survey).

ITC data shows 49% of DE students between 18-25, while the CCC data shows 40.5% of statewide DE

student survey respondents were between 18 and 24. 55% of MiraCosta's DE students are traditional college age (18-24). The ITC reports 65% of DE students are female; the CCC survey respondents were 70% female. MiraCosta data shows 64% of its DE students in 2012-13 were female. ITC data did not include ethnicity, but as might be expected, CCC data shows that MiraCosta is less diverse in its DE population than is generally true among California Community Colleges. White students were 51% of MiraCosta's DE population but 36% among student respondents to the DE survey.

In this first year of program review for Online Education, the data packet did not include demographic trends - only data for the most recent year. The data establishes a point of comparison for future DE student demographics. But as mentioned in the first section, it will be 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.