Developing a Plan for Online Distance Learning Program at Kapi‘olani Community College: Future Considerations and Directions

As the Information Age evolves, our society is undergoing enormous technological changes, which have a tremendous impact on our educational systems. These technologies have given students greater flexibility in obtaining their education, removing traditional barriers of time, space, and place. The World Wide Web (WWW) has caused the biggest change in education and learning since the advent of the printed book a little over 500 years ago (Draves & Coates, 2004).

The number of students who study online has been increasing at a rate of 18.2% over the last two years, which is ten times that projected by the National Center for Education Statistics for the entire postsecondary student population (Allen & Seaman, 2005). The proportion of institutions which believe that online education is important to their long-term strategy continues to increase, growing from 48% of all institutions in 2003 to 53% in 2004 and 56% in 2005 (Allen & Seaman, 2005). Associates institutions show the sharpest increase over the last three years, moving from 58% in 2003 to 67% in 2004 to 72% in 2005 (Allen & Seaman, 2005). Four out of every ten schools with face-to-face Associate’s programs also offer at least one online version. Public institutions continue to express a strong belief that online education is key to their long-term strategy (67% in 2003, 66% in 2004, and 74% in 2005).

The transition to online distance learning, primarily driven by social change, is creating a paradigm shift in the way colleges are viewing teaching and learning (Rogers, 2000). In online distance learning (ODL), not only does the instruction occur via a computer network system, usually over the Internet, but other educational processes such as student services, training, and support occur via the computer as well. This paper reviews future directions and factors to consider when planning and developing an online distance learning program. These considerations are: vision and plans, faculty development, student services, student readiness, copyright, intellectual property and fair use, distance learning policies and change in organizational structure for institutional effectiveness.

Vision and Plans

Many authors have written about the necessity of having a vision and plan for the implementation of an ODL program (Aoki & Pogroszewski, 1998). Hache (2000) made it clear that when college faculty, staff, and administration start with a vision, it is necessary for them to
understand that this vision will result in a change in the organizational culture. ODL cannot be molded into the image of existing campus-based programs (Miller, 1998) in which administrative and support systems were built for the traditional on-campus student (Aoki & Pogroszewski, 1998). Administrative support structures, student services, technology support, and faculty training and support needs are all areas that need to be analyzed and perhaps changed in order to successfully implement ODL. By accepting a vision statement and its implications, those at the forefront of ODL at the college, acknowledge that physical, organizational, and programmatic changes will be occurring, with the inevitable shift of resources (Bloomfield, 1993).

Most plans for ODL are incorporated into existing strategic planning documents at colleges and are not separate documents. A systematic approach to planning must be taken in order to provide a quality education for the diverse learning community of the 21st century (Frances, Pumerantz, & Caplan, 1999). The Western Association of Colleges and Schools (WASC) recommends that distance learning should remain consistent with the mission of the institution. In integrating a distance learning program into the institution’s mission, planning for technology-enhanced facilities and equipment appropriate to meeting the program or course objectives must be part of the long range planning and budgeting activities. The technology should support the programs’ design, and planning for obsolete technology should be evident. Expenditures patterns should demonstrate commitment to providing the resources necessary to ensure success and effectiveness, as well as continuity and integrity of the program (ACCJC/WASC, 2004).

Draves (2000) states that the rate of adopting ODL would improve if revised policies, procedures and strategies to address critical issues existed. By involving all the stakeholders, determining the purpose or goal for an ODL program (Kemp, 2000), and understanding the issues concerning ODL from everyone involved, administrators can determine the priorities and constraints with ODL that will lead to strategies to minimize the resistance to the changes being made. George and Camarata (1996) feel that leadership, and therefore, ownership of ODL, should come from all areas of the college, and not rely simply on administration leadership or faculty leadership.

Administrators who have educated themselves about ODL will be able to create a positive culture that will support others on their campus as they learn and adapt to the new
technologies (Robinson, 2000). Instruction is shifting from a model of individual use of technology to an integration of instruction and student services through technology. Yet, according to the California Community College Chancellor’s Office, "the race among institutions to develop and offer new distance education courses and programs has surfaced issues which could overwhelm some of the colleges and derail their entire effort" ("A Workplan," 2001, p. 4). As Garrison (1989) acknowledges, "progress has been limited because few have the conceptual understanding to create a viable strategic plan for adopting distance learning methods congruent with their institutional values and goals" (p. 2). According to Bothel (2001) and McLendon and Cronk (1999), moving forward with a singular vision and the development of policies and procedures are the greatest challenges in planning for ODL.

**Faculty Development**

Though the principles of instructional design are not altogether different in ODL from those of the traditional classroom, instructors need training and support to be willing to adopt this new teaching and learning paradigm. Instructors need to be aware of how the details of their course will be implemented in the new environment. Courses for ODL programs need to be clearly planned and designed (McNaught, 2002). Replacing the current educational model in digital format is not sufficient (Weigel, 2000). Effective ODL requires the instructor not only to have knowledge of the content area, but also to have interpersonal skills to effectively communicate with their students online (White & Weight, 2000). Instructors will be assuming a broader role as planners, designers, guides, mentors, and facilitators and will no longer be seen as lecturers (Gillespie, 1998; Young, 2002).

ODL instructors must have adequate technology skills. They often need to upload their own files, deal with hardware and software problems, and help students overcome their own problems with the technology. Instructors must be able to design their courses, making sure they are accessible to disabled students under the American with Disabilities Act. Online lessons also need to run effectively on the students’ computers. Instructors need to consider that computer memory and speed will vary greatly among students; lessons must not take long to download; web pages must be based on screen proportions, not inches; and colors must be chosen carefully. Instructors, who have the frontline contact with students, will be the ones who will be in contact with students to solve the problems as they arise. This requires faculty development and training.
Despite the obvious advantages of making courses easily accessible to students through the Internet, many instructors are reluctant to make the move to ODL. The instructors are reluctant for many reasons, including what they perceive to be an increase in the time it takes to develop and deliver online courses (Clay, 1999; Georges, 2001), the lack of technical and administrative support available to them (Betts, 1998; Schifter, 2000), concern about copyright and intellectual property issues (Berge, 1998), concern about the quality of online courses (Betts, 1998), concern about incentives and obstacles to teaching online (Rockwell, 2000); resistance to being told what to do by administrators (Noble, 2002), and inadequate training for the instructors who are being expected to write and teach these online courses (Schifter, 2000). Others are concerned that when administrators try to compare the effectiveness and cost benefits of ODL to traditional on-campus courses, this will put more pressure on instructors to teach more online courses (Armstrong, 2000).

Training instructors about the new technology and way to teach is essential to help them effectively deal with change (Lick, 2001). When an instructor’s professional growth needs are met, student learning can be enhanced (Lockard, 2001). To gain the knowledge necessary to implement online curriculum effectively, instructors must have the necessary training, mentoring, and support, preferably on the equipment they will use. Faculty training must be considered when institutions plan for an online distance learning program.

Many instructors do not want to change their style of instruction (Anderson & Middleton, 2002). Some feel that interactive lectures, small group activities, or closed labs are the only way that a subject can be taught. Others have not yet adapted their lectures to the advances provided by technology such as multimedia demonstrations and do not want to change their teaching style. These deeply held beliefs and long-established practices will be changed as courses are moved online, requiring new ways of thinking about teaching and learning (Bates, 2000). WASC distance learning standards for faculty development state that ongoing faculty training and access to appropriate technology and software as well as to support personnel are critical.

**Student Services**

Some say that technology should not be the impetus to drive organizational change (Brown & Jackson, 2001); others state that technology cannot be introduced into teaching without changing the ways other things are done in the educational process (Moore & Kearsley, 1996). Therefore, more attention needs to be given to the organizational structures, especially as
they pertain to servicing students (Bothel, 2001). One problem with ODL planning is that too much focus is on instruction, and not enough on student services. Tinto (1993) found that in order for students to be successful, they must have access to student services. Husmann and Miller (2001) agreed that a major problem is that an entire program is not being planned, and that most attention when planning is paid to individual course offerings. Planning for ODL must include fiscal, personnel, academic, legal, technological, and support issues as a framework for future decision making (Fryer, Jr., & Lovas, 1991). ODL is not just about teaching and learning, it is about giving students who are not able or not willing to come to campus an experience equivalent to the on-campus student (Berge, 1998) by providing the same types of student services online that an on-campus student has available.

A contributing factor to the fact that ODL planning is limited to instruction is that faculty has been the major force behind the implementation of ODL on most campuses (Husmann & Miller, 2001). The problems with ODL will become more significant if colleges continue to let individual faculty members and departments put classes online without planning to implement the support structure involved with teaching and learning (Daniel, 1997). According to Brown and Jackson (2001), administrators should not only be concerned with how to get faculty to develop and teach courses online, but on how to deal with the need to support online students in other areas of education such as counseling, advising, tutoring, library services, and financial aid.

Sally Johnstone (2002), the founding director of the Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications at the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, stated that there are three stages to providing online student support. The first is to create web pages that provide information. The second is to add forms and communication methods to the web pages. The last stage is to offer services that can provide personal interaction, such as online counseling via chat rooms and email. Many institutions are in a support service crisis because colleges are not planning for, and therefore are not finding the resources, to provide adequate student support (Milliron & Miles, 2000). If colleges want to succeed in ODL, they must consider access, equity, and continued support and not treat ODL students as second-class citizens (Bothel, 2001). Aoki and Pogroszewski (1998) claim that by integrating online courses and student services, costs would be cut and productivity would be improved, and hopefully, according to Matthews (1999), the enrollment would grow.
Unfortunately, colleges face a dilemma in planning for ODL because they are torn between wanting to serve students online and the need to continue to support their traditional student services (Collis et al., 1993). Yet, it is important for administrators to consider the student who will never come to campus, and to provide the essential student services for that student. Inglis et al. (1999) stated, delivering courses online at a distance calls for a reorganization of the ways in which support services are provided. This is important to ensure that the highest standard of support is provided for the resources available as well as to avoid the possibility of costs escalating. Dennis Bancroft, Director of Oscail, the National Distance Education Centre in Dublin, Ireland, when interviewed by Savrock (2001), identified student support as one of three critical areas (the others being curriculum and technology) needed to maintain a successful ODL program.

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) provides the following distance learning guidelines for students and student services:

- Students receive clear, complete, and timely information on the curriculum, course and degree requirements, nature of faculty and student interaction, assumptions about technological competence and skills, technical equipment requirements, availability of academic support services and financial aid resources, and the cost and payment policies.
- Enrolled students have reasonable and adequate access to the range of student services appropriate to support their learning and assess their progress.
- Advertising, recruiting, and admissions materials clearly and accurately represent the courses and programs, and services available.

**Student Readiness**

Students who are not prepared for the online environment can have a negative impact on other students and the instructor in the online classroom (Fink, 2002). Not all instructors will be able to tell students why a file is not downloading or how to access a multitude of learning resources, making student access to orientation and support even more critical. Lynch (2001) concludes that student orientation to online courses and student socialization with other online students greatly affect their success in the course. As indicated within the literature, students with support systems such as online tutoring, online counseling, and online study groups are more likely to succeed in their ODL classes (Mason & Weller, 2000). Bennett et al. (1999) studied
about the social isolation of students and came to the same conclusion. A study on technical support for students showed that students who needed the most help did not ask for it (Ehrmann, 1999). Students need to have access to online tutorial modules and learning resources to help them develop their basic computer, Web, and other technology skills.

WASC distance learning standards for student readiness state that the academic and technical skills required to successfully complete such a program should be made clear to students, and since a distance learning environment requires students to have certain skills and competencies to succeed, the institution should have the means to assess whether students have them. They also state proper training should be available for students to successfully use the technology involved in their course work, and accessibility to student support be available for students who are physically challenged and place bound.

Copyright, Intellectual Property, and Fair Use

The issues of copyright, fair use, and work for hire are all being reconsidered in this era of online distance learning. As courses are being put online, thereby becoming marketable, institutions are beginning to claim their rights to the copyright. Full-time instructors have no legal authority to keep the classes they write unless they negotiate for that right. Lawyer Corynn McSherry, in an interview with Young (2001), claimed instructors need to be careful how they negotiate copyright issues, for the results may infringe upon their academic freedom. Instructors need to be educated about their rights under copyright law (Simpson, 2001).

The doctrine of fair use is also challenging to online instructors. In the past, instructors could copy and distribute articles, provided that the articles were less than 2,500 words or 10% of the original work. They could copy one illustration, chart, picture, or diagram per work, and no more than two works from one author. The copied material could only be used for one course and needed to show the original copyright notice from the work (Simpson, 2001). As more and more information goes online, instructors and students may be under the misconception that this work is being distributed freely. In reality, if the site that is hosting the article or illustration has advertisements on it, then using that work can affect its marketability and therefore may be an infringement of copyright.

Until very recently, the interest about copyright was an even greater concern for faculty who used video or music clips in their online classes (Technology, Education and Copyright Harmonization (TEACH) Act, 2001). As explained earlier, copyright law allowed these clips to
be used within a classroom. That meant that the same clip could not be transmitted online, even if for educational purposes without proper copyright notice attached. In March 2001, legislation was submitted to allow faculty members to use many of the same copyrighted works in online courses that they have long been permitted to use in traditional courses. In the case of dramatic and musical works, this legislation requires safeguards such as passwords to ensure that only eligible students view the copyrighted material. This legislation is the Technology, Education and Copyright Harmonization (TEACH) Act (2001), which was passed by the U. S. Senate in June 2001, and by a committee of the House of Representatives in October 2001.

Educational institutions need to protect their interests while maintaining academic freedom for their instructors. Therefore, establishing a copyright/intellectual rights policy is necessary to deal with issues before a problem occurs (Gasaway, 2002). WASC standards state, “The preparation of distance learning instructional materials differs from the preparation of materials for the traditional classroom setting, raising questions about ownership, copyright, and fair use.” Therefore, faculty and administrative personnel will need to develop policies that do not undermine faculty rights or the learning and teaching process and that address issues of copyright, ownership, and faculty compensation (WASC).

**Distance Learning Policies**

Distance learning at the University of Hawai‘i provides access to opportunities for quality higher education to students in the state and beyond who are unable to attend the UH campus offering their program of choice. Executive Policy E5.204 has been promulgated to guide strategic planning, program and policy implementation, and procedures for Distance Learning throughout the University of Hawai‘i System. A UH System Action Plan establishes the context of the UH System distance learning planning and implements an ambitious agenda, identifying actions and the general area of responsibility.

ACCJC policy specifies that all learning opportunities provided by our accredited institutions have same quality, accountability, and focus on student outcomes, whether they are delivered electronically or by more traditional means. The intent of the policy is to provide a framework that allows institutions the flexibility to adapt their delivery modes to the emerging needs of students and society while maintaining quality. Any institution offering courses and programs electronically is expected to meet the requirements of accreditation in each of its
courses and programs and at each site. The following principles are stated from the ACCJC Distance Learning Manual:

- Development, implementation, and evaluation of all courses and programs, including those offered electronically, must take place within the institution’s total educational mission.
- Institutions are expected to control development, implementation, and evaluation of all courses and programs offered in their names, including those offered electronically.
- Institutions are expected to have clearly defined appropriate student learning outcomes in all courses and programs, including those delivered through electronic means.
- Institutions are expected to provide the resources and structure needed to accomplish these outcomes.
- Institutions are expected to demonstrate that their students achieve these outcomes through application of rigorous assessment.
- Institutions are expected to provide the ACCJC reasons to believe that these outcomes will continue to be accomplished.
- Institutions are expected to give the ACCJC advance notice, through the Substantive Change process, of intent to: initiate a new delivery mode, such as electronically-delivered courses; or 50% of a program through a mode of distance or electronic delivery.

It is clear from the ACCJC Distance Learning Manual that online courses are expected to meet the same academic standards and rigor as other courses in the institution regardless of the delivery method.

**Change in Organizational Structure for Institutional Effectiveness**

The connection between the distance learning program and the institution’s mission needs to be clear and communicated to constituents. The institution should commitment the necessary financial and technical support to allow a program to continue for a period of time sufficient for students to complete educational objectives. Those involved with the administration of the program should provide an appropriate infrastructure and possess skills appropriate to such an endeavor – especially technological proficiency and the ability to communicate with all the constituencies.

Planning for the fiscal, technical, and human resources needed to deliver such a program must be thorough and continuous and provide evaluation on an on-ongoing basis. Evaluation should focus on the relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency of the institution’s distance learning program, as well as on assessment of student learning, retention, and satisfaction. Evidence of
institutional effectiveness will require that the institution develop distance learning outcome and assessment strategies. Such strategies should include:

- A comparison of distance learning and traditional programs in the areas of transferability, observable and measurable student learning outcomes, eligibility for financial aid, student satisfaction, and other program goals.
- A review and approval process to ensure appropriate goals and objectives as well as the effectiveness of distance learning.

"American higher education is in the midst of a virtual revolution" (Kriger, 2001, p. 3). The structure of higher education in America has been relatively unchanged since the first university opened in the 1600s (Farrington & Yoshida, 2000). This structure has been based on the age of mass-production, limited information, and vast sources for funding, and little technological change (Richart, 2002). As the ease of access to higher education allows institutions to come under greater scrutiny (Prestera & Moller, 2001), and as innovation and competition influence the learning environment (Farrington & Yoshida, 2000), society will have a more direct effect on higher education, and society’s expectations of these institutions will increase (Carr-Chellman, 2000). Institutions of higher education need to be ready for major challenges and possible structural change (Bates, 1997; Kriger, 2001). Colleges may find that the goals, and therefore the structure of the organization, may be realigned when incorporating ODL into their plans (Hanna, 1998).

Market and economic demands will affect education in new ways. Higher education is entering a global economy with intense competition and commercialism (Bates, 1997). Higher education will depend more on partnerships, outside vendors and institutions. Partnerships will be formed to make weaker institutions or departments stronger, combine resources, and save duplication of costs. Consortiums will be formed so that those colleges that provide similar services for students can pool their resources and expertise for the online student (Farrington & Yoshida, 2000; Hanna, 1998). Students will be able to put together their own individualized programs for what will be known as a virtual degree. That is, they will combine courses or programs from various institutions to make each student’s degree program unique (Garrison, 1989).

Curriculum and instruction face changes, as well. The role of the instructor will be unbundled in the online environment (Young, 2002). Unbundling means that different people
will do different parts of the work of a traditional instructor. Content specialists will decide what material needs to go online. An instructional designer will design the presentation of this material, and a technical specialist will work with the instructor to create the online course. Instructors will interface with the students who are taking the online course (Grunert, 1997). Instructors will spend an increased amount of time interacting with online students to challenge them individually (Farrington & Yoshida, 2000). Education will become a more individualized process (Darnell & Rosenthal, 2000).

Many student services can be served by outside vendors. For example, virtual bookstores already exist for many colleges. Technical specialists who put classes online do not have to be employees of the college. Short-term marketplace pressures may mean that the institutions will outsource more of their student services (Darnell and Rosenthal, 2000). This interface between internal and external resources will cause new administrative procedures and possibly new management structures to develop (Hanna, 1998). Administrators will need to run their institutions more as businesses (Green, 2001).

In order for ODL to be successful, it must be integrated into the organizational structure and vision of the college (Bates, 1997). The challenge to higher education is to design an organization that will continuously reform itself (Carr-Chellman, 2000). Traditional campuses may not go away (Hanna, 1998), but organizational change is likely to occur because of the changes and advances ODL brings to teaching, learning, and meeting student needs.

Colleges are finally beginning to realize that planning for a comprehensive ODL program is necessary if they want to provide the same type of educational opportunities to the ODL student that they provide to the traditional on-campus student. The problem is that planning is not happening often enough. So where should colleges begin?

Questions and Discussion Points to Consider
Based on the literature and best practices in distance learning it is clear that the College needs to spend some time in discussing the future directions and plans for online learning. The following points for discussion are:

- **Vision Statement**
  The vision for ODL should be supported and informed by the College Strategic Plan. Below are the relevant goals, objectives, and action plans from the KCC 2003-2010 Strategic Plan:

  **Goal 1 - To Promote Learning and Teaching for Student Success**
  Objective 1 - Strengthen campus support for Holomua, the remedial and developmental
program that integrates student learning skills with academic instruction in English and mathematics and fosters behavioral changes necessary for student success in the liberal arts and career programs.

Action Strategies 6 - Strengthen and increase learning resources and tutorial services for remedial and developmental students through a variety of methods including in-place and online technology.

Goal 2 - To Build A Learning, Partnering, and Service Network for Student Success

Objective 4 - Adopt new funding strategies to support the College's expanding programs.

Action Strategies 2 - Seek a UH system budgetary commitment for resources and support services such as courier delivery of library materials, licensing of databases and other online resources, an integrated library system (UH Voyager), and electronic document delivery systems in support of intra system loans and distance education.

Goal 5 - To Invest in People: Professionals in a Learning Organization

Education for the 21st century is diverse and inclusive in every way. It seeks out diverse perspectives, crosses disciplinary lines, seeks wisdom from multiple cultures, employs a range of teaching techniques...It calls for high standards, but without standardization. (AAC&U)

Objective 1 - Redefine faculty roles and rewards to promote the scholarship of teaching.

Action Strategies 7 - Support active student learning in the classroom and online.

Goal 6 - To Invest in the Learning Environment

Objective 4 - Develop student-centered learning and teaching resources and approaches to ensure superior academic achievement and career training, anticipate and address changing economic and social conditions, and provide access to all who seek these College resources.

Action Strategies 1 - Effectively use physical and human resources to promote and support quality learning experiences for the traditional and nontraditional student on or off campus or through distance and online delivery.

Goal 7 - To Contribute as an Equal Partner to UH System Resource Development and Stewardship in Support of Student Learning

Objective 1 - To build an effective constituency that converts community support for the University of Hawaii into public and private revenue streams that support achievement of strategic plan goals.

Action Strategies 4 - Develop a coherent pricing and funding model for distance learning and allocate funds based on the shared priorities of the system.
What components in the Online Distance Learning vision statement would we need to see that supports the mission and strategic plan of the College?

- Distance Learning Curriculum and Programs
  Given the College vision and strategic plan goals, which programs should be given priority for online development and delivery?
  Which criteria would we use to determine the priority?
  Which programs do we focus on (e.g. ease of development, programs unique to the college)?

- Evaluation and Assessment
  Considerations for online evaluation and assessment focus on student learning and achievement, and program effectiveness.
  How best do we measure student learning online? How do we evaluate these areas?
  What measures and mechanisms do we use for online student and peer evaluations?

- Student Services
  Following ACCJC recommendations, these student services need to be accessible to online students: system application, registration, transcripts, bookstore, library services and resources, financial aid, billing and payment, tutoring, advising, counseling, catalog of distance learning course offerings, career advising, scheduling, testing sites, student grievance procedures, student government procedures, and international student services.
  Which of these services need to be developed and implemented and what do we need to do to develop them?

- Student training and support
  Students with limited computer skills who are taking an ODL class for the first time may not know what the technical and other skills are required for success.
  What would we need to do to support such students? What is already in place, what more do we need to do, and who is going to do it?

- Faculty Development
  What support and training will faculty need to develop and teach courses online?
  What is already in place, what more do we need to do, and who is going to do it?
- Distance Learning Policies

  *What UH DL Policies pertaining to distance learning already exists?*

  *What other policies and procedures need to implement to meet ACCJC and other DL recommendations?*

- College Infrastructure and Support

  *What technology infrastructure and personnel does the campus need to have in place?*

  *What business and personnel infrastructure need to be in place?*

  *What collaborative relationships need to be established between the ODL program and the campus and system community?*

  *What is the best way to manage the ODL program?*

Conclusion

We are now in the Information Age where many aspects of our environment, especially in education, are moving online. A shared vision and thoughtful meaningful planning is essential for an online distance learning programs to be successful. Planning helps a college to grow and change in an organized, meaningful process (Rogers, 2001).

Colleges that want to have an effective ODL program need to consider all aspects of providing an education from student services to faculty development. Investing the time to discuss and plan issues and concerns with members of the college community will aid the institution in using its limited resources effectively, efficiently, and wisely. These issues and concerns need to be addressed within the context of the college mission and strategic plan.
References

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