Report on Progress in Distributed Education Evaluation and Improvement
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During 2009-10, the Educational Technology Committee (ETC) of the Academic Senate, co-chaired by a faculty member and an instructional dean, continued its work to ensure the effectiveness of DE courses and the DE program as a whole. During the Spring 2010 semester, the committee implemented the revised certification process for instructors to teach distributed education courses, as well as the use of the "CHC Online Course Readiness Check List" by which committee members evaluate the actual Blackboard site prepared by instructors. A description of both processes, including applicable standards, was sent to the college's faculty, providing them with clear direction and guidelines regarding the expectations of DE courses at Crafton Hills College. Subsequently, the preparation of instructors as well as the quality of their Blackboard sites improved, compared to those evaluated in previous semester. The dialogue regarding approvals also led to further conversation among ETC members and DE instructors regarding course and program quality.

Content for the DE web portal was finalized during the Spring semester and went live at the beginning of Fall semester. In addition to a description of the aforementioned approval processes and standards for DE course at Crafton Hills College, the portal includes FAQ files for both students and faculty, links to quizzes by which students can evaluate their readiness to take online courses, technical guidelines and a gateway for student and faculty to access DE offerings and resources. The portal includes information that replaces the previously planned procedures handbook.

The ETC has also gathered considerable data regarding the effectiveness of DE course to guide improvements. The Online Course Evaluation was administered to students in all DE courses in Fall 2009 and again in Spring 2010. Participation rate in the survey was 27 percent in Fall and increased to 37 percent in Spring as a result of adjustments to the evaluation and implementation of strategies to increase response rate. Results were sent to individual faculty and their respective instructional dean. The ETC has also started evaluation of the aggregate data to identify trends, successes and areas of improvement. Student response to DE courses at Crafton Hills College has generally been positive. 93 percent of students surveyed in both Fall 2009 and Spring 2010 stated they would recommend their DE course to another student.

In addition, retention and success data for all online courses as compared to comparable face-to-face courses was collected and provided to faculty, instructional deans and the ETC. Initial analysis demonstrated that while success rates in DE courses at CHC are lower than those in face-to-face courses overall, that difference disappeared when the comparison controlled for term, course, and instructor over the three-year period ending in 2008-09; in fact, when controlled in that fashion, the success rate in DE courses was higher than that in face-to-face courses in 2008-09. Retention, on the other hand, was somewhat lower in DE courses even when controlling for term, course, and instructor. The Office of Research and Planning has also generated the following data and reports for analysis by ETC at a programmatic level:
- SBCCD DE Success and Retention Rates 2004 – 2005 to 2008 – 2009
- CHC DE Aggregate Retention and Success Rates, 2004-2005 to 2008-2009

- CHC DE Success Rates by Faculty 2004-2005 to 2008-2009
- CHC Distance Education Success and Retention Rates by Age, Ethnicity and Gender 2008 – 2009 to 2009 – 2010

The ETC has directed instructional deans to work with individual faculty to improve course effectiveness based on the results of this research. In addition, the ETC is scheduling faculty brown bags at which instructors who are successful in the DE environment can share strategies with other DE instructors. On an ongoing basis, the ETC will evaluate data on a programmatic level, make revisions to its processes, and make recommendations to the Academic Senate and instructional management aimed at ensuring the overall effectiveness of the DE program at every stage: teacher preparation, technical quality control, ease of access, student evaluations, comparative assessment of key outcomes and full documentation.