

Quality Enhancement Plan

Sub-Group Project Template

J. Sargeant Reynolds
Community College



Due March 7, 2008

(All completed templates should be uploaded to the SharePoint site.)

Project Title: Faculty Curriculum for Teaching Distance Learning

Theme project is related to:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Academic Support | <input type="checkbox"/> Career Advising |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adjunct Training | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Distance Learning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advising | <input type="checkbox"/> Instruction |
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Project Description:

Implement training program to increase faculty skill level to provide exceptional quality in distance learning instruction. Training program would consist of graduated training levels, using courses based on best practices discovered through research. Courses will involve training in pedagogy (teaching and learning), technology, and in-depth uses of BlackBoard. The outcome creates a richer, more productive learning environment through distance learning.

How does this project support the mission and vision of the institution?

Distance learning is a vehicle that creates access for students. By enhancing distance learning, not only are we providing a richer learning environment for Virginians but for individuals who wish to take our courses from all over the world. This then gives J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College the ability to grow and become an evermore diverse learning institution.

Honing technology skills, using the alternative delivery of context and technology, provides lifelong learning for students, applicable to job skills.

The project:

- provides a well-trained distance learning faculty to support greater student success and retention;
 - promotes the institutional commitment to excellence and demonstrates ways that the College is continuously seeking avenues for quality improvement;
 - encourages collaboration between staff and faculty;
 - enhances the teaching and learning environments.
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How is this project tied to the strategic plan of the institution? (2008-2009)

1.0 STUDENT ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITY

Ensure that all Virginians in the JSRCC service area have access and opportunity to participate in lifelong learning.

- 1.1.4 Develop a process for strategically determining the development and offering of distance courses.

1.1.5 Implement the college's [Retention Plan](#)

2.0 TEACHING AND LEARNING

Ensure that teaching and learning remain the focus of JSRCC in helping students achieve their personal learning and career goals.

- 2.1 Increase awareness and use of instructional techniques focused on active and collaborative learning, distance learning, diverse learning styles, and interdisciplinary approaches.
 - 2.1.1 Deliver training on new instructional techniques.
 - 2.1.2 Develop a peer-to-peer, cross-disciplinary, annual faculty symposium on effective application of collaborative learning and diverse learning style teaching techniques.
 - 2.1.3 Continue to design and implement cross-curriculum learning communities that engage a variety of approaches to enhance student learning.
- 2.3 Improve the delivery of academic advising and support services in order to increase retention and student success.
 - 2.3.1 Finalize and implement an advising model that includes a training component.
 - 2.3.2 Enhance and market academic information (e.g., course sequences and locations, costs, expectations, Learning Environment, establish advising protocol checklist, electives, scholarship & financial aid opportunities, manner of communication, curriculum layout in catalog and other publications, etc.).
 - 2.3.3 Improve services to part-time, distance, and evening students.
 - 2.3.4 Begin implementation of e-services for JSRCC.
 - 2.3.5 Meet the benchmark for intermediate level of services for on-line interactive advising system as defined by the VCCS Virtual Advising Project.
- 2.6 Increase the college's first-time, full-time, program-placed student retention rate from 56% to 65% (90th percentile for peer institutions) and the first-time, part-time, program-placed student retention rate from 41% to 45% (90th percentile for peer institutions).
 - 2.6.1 Continue implementation of the college's [Retention Plan](#).
- 2.7 Finalize and implement a comprehensive strategic plan for distance learning that recommends best methods and structures for delivering services to students and faculty, building capacity, developing new courses, improving student success rates, and enhancing course quality using the results of the Quality Assurance Plan
- 2.8 Increase the college's graduation rate of first-time, full-time, program-placed students from 10.7% to 20% (90th percentile for peer institutions) by 2010.
 - 2.8.1 Implement best practices from peer institutions for increasing graduation rates.
 - 2.8.2 Increase the college's graduation rate of first-time, full-time, program-placed students to 15% by June 2009.
 - 2.8.3 Increase the college's graduation rate of first-time, full-time, program-placed students to 20% by June 2010.

2.8.4 Continue to market the timeliness and benefits of graduation.

3.0 TECHNOLOGY

Build a world-class community college technology environment.

- 3.1 Deploy instructional technologies competitive with the top tier of national peer group institutions and designed to provide effective access to instructional content by students with diverse learning styles.
 - 3.1.1 Implement year three of the three-year instructional technologies implementation plan, including purchasing and installing hardware and software and training faculty and staff.
- 3.2 Maximize use of technology to improve cost effectiveness and efficiency in administrative operations.
 - 3.2.1 Continue the plan for regular training of faculty and staff in the effective and efficient use of current and new technologies.
 - 3.2.2 75% of faculty and staff will complete required training in administrative software as identified in the Professional Development Curriculum.
 - 3.2.3 Develop and implement document imaging in all units.

VCCS Goal

Decrease the attrition in distance learning courses by 5%. (DDL Minutes – November 15, 2007)

What data (internal and/or external) supports the importance of implementing this project?

According to the most recent available data, 30.7% of students at JSRCC in Fall 2007 were enrolled in distance learning (DL) courses. These numbers have increased significantly every academic year. To match the demand, the College is increasing the number DL classes offered, which requires a growing number of instructors. In order to ensure quality of these courses, DL instructors need instruction on successfully designing, implementing, and facilitating classes in the DL environment.

As cited in Roach, R (Oct. 24, 2002). Getting retention right is high priority for online degree programs. *Black Issues in Higher Education*, Dr. Steven Jackson, an online education expert, “says there’s some research that shows a high correlation between online teaching quality and retention. In one study, a school showed that student persistence in courses increased as instructors attained more training. The courses that had the highest dropouts rates were the ones where the instructor had little or no training on how to teach online.” (p. 24)

As stated in Harris, M. and Gibson, S. [(Summer 2007): 147 (7). Course perceptions of distance education students. (Report). *Academic Exchange Quarterly*.], “Research by Hamann, Pollock and Wilson (2006) suggests that the delivery mode does not necessarily drive learning. Instead effective teaching is what truly promotes student learning. Students learn best in a well organized course that allows for active learning opportunities.” It is imperative that the college provides the training of instructors to ensure that course delivery is presented to the learners in the most effective manner.

“Comprehensive training and ongoing technological support are critical factors...Instructors need training to ensure a strong start, continuing support and services throughout their distance education experience to promote maximum quality and satisfaction in the online courses they teach... The maintenance of seamless technology and availability of knowledgeable individuals who can assist is a

reflection of administrative commitment to the distance education initiative. The assurance implicit in the provision of sound infrastructure and ongoing support can ease faculty concern about the logistics of distance learning and provide reassurance that their efforts are valued and will be rewarded.” McLean, J. (Spring 2006) (pp. 100-104) Promoting faculty commitment to distance learning. *Academic Exchange*

SACS broadly defines student learning as changes in knowledge, skills, behaviors or values. What is the definition of student learning in the context of this project?

For students in the distance learning courses: The ability to demonstrate competence in the concepts and skills identified as the course objectives in the outlines and syllabi for classes taught by distance learning faculty. As well, students will show increased persistence in their own learning experience.

For students involved as interns in the program: Improved their technical, organizational, communication, and project management skills, gaining practical work experience.

What are the specific learning outcomes?

- Course completion rate
 - Improved performance on outcome assessment measures
 - Improved performance on programmatic performance measures
 - Increased retention rates
 - Increased graduation rates
 - Technological Awareness: Ability to understand the applications and implications of technology and to use technology in ways appropriate to the situation. This outcome includes information and competency skills.
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What best practices are going to be used as a part of this project and why?

Because of the current growth, expected future growth, and complexity in designing courses in Distance Learning, faculty need to receive specific training. In this section, we consider delivery methods for the training, use of student interns to be involved in the technical training, and the development and use of the faculty learning community created through this plan.

Delivery Methods:

[Faculty Training Online](#)¹ notes: Training for faculty to teach online should contain four major components:

1. Technical training - At a minimum, technical training should include both the CMS [Course Management System] that will be used to deliver the online course and the use of other software that facilitates communicating via the Internet.
2. Pedagogical training - Pedagogical training must emphasize accepted best practices for online education. Specifically, faculty should receive training in:

¹ Faculty training for online education: http://thejournal.com/articles/16956_1

- Facilitating interaction and discussion in online courses;
 - Facilitating active learning and collaboration online;
 - Assessment and evaluation for online courses; and
 - Community-building activities for online courses.
3. Mentoring – This could be formalized, assigning the assistance of one experienced colleague, or more informal, where one particular experienced colleague works with one aspect with those newer instructors involved in the program. Either way, this would serve to familiarize faculty with best practices for online education.
 4. Online coursework - Some portion of either the technical or pedagogical training for faculty to teach online should be delivered online so that faculty experience online education from the student point of view.

Through further research, we found that in order to be fully effective, training sessions should:

- be presented through a coherent curriculum that provides a logical sequence;
- have interaction with full-time and adjunct faculty;
- be provided through a convenient schedule to make accessible to on-site and off-site instructors;
- be available in three formats: online, hybrid, and face-to-face;
- include competency assessments (particularly for technology topics) so that attendees can “test out” of sessions and receive credit for them.

We are looking to follow models of best practices for faculty training available through many colleges. One such model is Virginia Commonwealth University’s through its Center for Teaching Excellence, which can be found at: <http://www.vcu.edu/cte/workshops/workshops.htm>. VCU does have all classes onsite, but we will offer these sessions online, hybrid, and/or face-to-face. Faculty members face time constraints, so a blended approach of online workshops and seminars, and further establish a sustained culture of collaboration. The Sloan Consortium Group has a repository of post-secondary institutions with best practices for training faculty in distance learning instruction. (<http://www.sloan-c.org>)

What resources (human, fiscal, academic, technology) will be needed to complete this project?

- Instructional Designers
- Interns
- Technology support
- Trainers for the program – faculty and technology
- AV needs
- Consumables
- Increase in staffing (security, housekeeping)
- Compensation for faculty involved in program

What could be the impact on student learning if this project is not implemented?

This project is essential to developing a world-class distance education course offering; the college needs to implement some of these actions even if this project is not chosen as the one project. Status quo is no

longer acceptable. Improving teaching has a systematic positive effect on student learning. If students are not retained due to disappointment in learning, Reynolds will not be doing its part to increase the number of college degrees that are imperative for the growth of Richmond's educated workforce and regional prosperity.

Name(s) of faculty/staff involved in the preparation of this project template.

Donna Levy, Marian Macbeth, Skip Bottom, Missy Monolo, Ann Sullivan, Leslie Tyler, Tim Hoffman, Joe Cortez, Joel Adler, Beverly Aronowitz, Chris Peace

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