

Appendix II: Extended Learning Plan

INTRODUCTION

As Texas State moves forward in meeting the needs of extended learners attending the University, we want to ensure that our strategic direction is founded in accurate, timely data. Toward this end, we will be gathering information in 2004-2005 to determine the audiences we serve and the types of extended learning needed to serve these audiences. As we develop this strategic direction, we will engage in the activities outlined in this plan.

The University's extended and distance learning **mission** is to provide a teaching/learning environment for extended learners that is equal in content and quality to the teaching/learning environment provided to students enrolled at Texas State's San Marcos campus. At the core of this mission is the recognition that Texas State must perform an important role to ensure an educated population and workforce for Texas' future. Furthermore, this role requires the university to ensure that appropriate academic and student support services are readily accessible.

The University's extended and distance education **vision** is to be recognized for its commitment to meeting the educational needs of extended learners including service to the underserved population of Texas. The university fulfills this commitment through the courses and programs it offers and the support services it provides.

Extended and distance learning at Texas State includes courses and programs offered on evenings (after 5:00 pm) and on weekends; at a distance to the San Marcos campus but not including the Round Rock Higher Education Center (RRHEC); and when the instructor and students are geographically separated e.g., Internet, video, ITV, correspondence. The largest extended and distance learning enrollments occur on evenings when graduate students are the primary students on the San Marcos campus. During FY '04-05, academic units project they will offer approximately 60 courses in a face-to-face format at instructional sites away from the San Marcos campus, but in the Central Texas region; 135 courses and 6 academic programs electronically to audiences that reside away from the San Marcos campus; 57 correspondence courses to approximately 2000 students annually; and study abroad programs to 300+ Texas State students in 15-20 foreign countries annually. Currently, the University, through its Extended & Distance Learning initiatives, has 7 exchange agreements with universities in 6 countries, and the University offers 8 extension courses.

Extended and distance learning at Texas State is administered through the Office of Extended & Distance Learning within the Division of Academic Affairs. The Office is administered by a Director with the support of an Administrative Assistant who also serves as an Administrative Assistant (50% time) for the RRHEC. Courses and programs offered at a distance to the San Marcos campus (other than courses and programs offered at the RRHEC) are administered through the Office. Courses and programs include those offered electronically, e.g.,

Internet, ITV, video; offered at various locations in Central Texas including San Antonio and Austin; offered out-of-state, e.g., New York; offered out-of-country, e.g., Mexico, Spain, United Kingdom, France, Germany; offered via correspondence studies; and offered via extension. The Offices of Correspondence, Extension, and Study Abroad Programs report to Extended & Distance Learning. Its Director and support staff administer and are directly responsible for correspondence classes, study abroad programs, and extension classes.

The Office of Extended & Distance Learning is the first point of contact with the public on all matters related to extended and distance learning resident credit course and program offerings including but not limited to those offered via the Internet, video, ITV, correspondence and extension, study abroad, and off campus instruction (including out-of-state/country courses and programs). The Office is responsible for facilitating the flow of information about extended and distance learning throughout Texas State's academic and external communities. It assists the Texas State community in responding quickly to the needs of knowledge consumers. It assists external communities in addressing in a timely manner their questions of inquiry and/or by referring their questions to appropriate support offices and academic units. The Office represents Texas State on issues related to extended and distance learning in both public and private sectors. Finally, it assists the university community in its efforts to increase its interaction with this new population of knowledge consumers; and it assists the university in leveraging its current resources in order to make significant contributions to the development of workforce talent in Central Texas.

The Office of Extended & Distance Learning collaborates with all divisions of the University in providing quality support services for faculty and students who are actively engaged in all types of distance and extended learning activities. It works with the broader Texas State community in identifying standards that Texas State should employ to assure quality of its distance and extended learning initiatives. The Office assists academic units in marketing online courses, programs, and degrees; developing and publishing on CATS WEB an electronic version of the distance and extended learning schedule of classes; works with academic units in developing distance and extended learning program proposals; and assists academic units in gathering assessment data on the overall effectiveness of course and program offerings.

The Office of Extended & Distance Learning is responsible for developing Texas State's Institutional Plan for Distance Education and Off-Campus Instruction and monitoring the plan's effectiveness. It monitors changes in Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) and Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) rules and regulations regarding distance learning and off-campus instruction and responds to these changes. It collaborates with appropriate Texas State divisions in developing policies germane to distance and extended learning. Finally, the Office coordinates the development of Off-Campus Plans including the Telecommunications Plan, Off-Campus Plan, and Out-of-State/Country Plan.

Extended & Distance Learning in 2009

A review of the strategic plans of the academic colleges indicates that college personnel plan to methodically increase their level of activity in extended and distance learning over the next 5 years. College plans provided evidence that the primary activity will be offering an increased number of courses (graduate and undergraduate) electronically; offering an increased number of programs at the RRHEC; and offering additional graduate but niche market programs electronically with the primary emphasis on certificate programs. In just the past few years, for example, it has become evident that as more faculty become comfortable with using technology to support their instructional goals, they are gradually moving their courses across the 50% threshold established by the THECB. (According to THECB policy, when more than 50% of a course or program is offered electronically, the course or program is considered a distance learning course or program.) In AY 2000-2001, for example, Texas State offered approximately 30 courses electronically and in AY 2004-2005, academic units project they will offer 135 courses, some with multiple sections. If Texas State decides to establish a presence in Northeast San Antonio larger than its current presence, this action will necessitate a greater commitment to a unit that provides academic and student support services.

Trend data over the last five years clearly indicate that extended and distance learning enrollments at Texas State will continue to increase, if not rather dramatically. In 2009, extended and distance learning will look much different than what it appears today. While Texas State will remain a residential college and many of its residential students will enroll in classes from their residence halls, its commitment to students who for whatever reason are unable to drive to the San Marcos campus to attend classes will increase and strengthen. This commitment to the "other" students at Texas State will necessitate a support unit staff. The support staff will be comprised of Texas State employees who represent all divisions of the University. They will collaborate to provide quality academic and student support services. The Office of Extended & Distance Learning will be the central office that coordinates extended and distance learning activities and it will be the office that brings together all the different human resources at Texas State to address extended and distance learning issues. The Office will continue to have a Director. There is a critical need for a fulltime Student Support Services Coordinator in 2004 and a fulltime Administrative Assistant in 2005.

The number of study abroad programs will gradually increase while the number of students who enroll in these programs will increase dramatically. Student participation in these programs will occur from all colleges in the university with the largest participation coming from the College of Liberal Arts. The Coordinator of Study Abroad Programs will require a fulltime Administrative Assistant.

Student enrollments in Correspondence Studies have remained rather constant over the past several years with approximately half of the enrollments being Texas State students. The number of correspondence courses being offered will increase slightly and there will be a gradual increase in the number of students who enroll in these courses. The most significant change in Correspondence Studies will come in the way courses are offered. By 2009, several

correspondence courses will be offered electronically, which will increase student completion rates. Student success in correspondence courses will increase significantly.

Funding to Address Enrollment Increases and Program Diversification

There will be a need to fund academic and student support service personnel to meet the growing demand for extended and distance learning courses, programs, and enrollments. Specifically, there is an immediate need for funds to employ an Administrative Assistant and an academic and student support services person in the Office of Extended and Distance Learning. There is also a need to fund an Administrative Assistant for the Study Abroad Program Coordinator.

PROCESS

All personnel employed within extended and distance learning contributed to the development of this academic unit support plan. These stakeholders were first invited to participate in a written exercise in which they identified the following related to Academic Program Support: (1) the kinds of support they currently provide academic programs; (2) new resources that would be needed to continue the current level of support for the next 2-5 years; (3) criteria they currently use to evaluate services they provide academic programs; (4) the identification of additional criteria they would recommend to be used to evaluate the services they provide academic units; (5) the identification of support for academic units that wish to introduce major distance learning programs over the next 2-5 years; (6) the identification of resources needed to raise the current level of support to that which is needed for these new distance learning programs; (7) the identification of the impact of the RRHEC on current operations; (8) the identification of the potential impact of a Northeast San Antonio MITC on current support services; (9) the identification of new support services that would be needed for a MITC; (10) the major changes that will be occurring in their office environment over the next 2-5 years; (11) the identification of new opportunities in their work environment over the next 2-5 years; (12) the required resources to capitalize on these opportunities; (13) the criteria used to measure success in these opportunities; (14) the potential impact of these opportunities on the current infrastructure of their work environment.

Employees then identified support areas within student learning and success support that included the following: (1) support services to assist with retention; (2) resources that would be needed to continue this support for the next 2-5 years; (3) evaluation of what is currently being done in support areas; (4) the identification of support that they provide to ensure and document student learning; (5) the identification of resources required to continue support for the next 2-5 years; and (6) the identification of criteria to evaluate how successful they are at providing student support services.

Employees also identified the types of support they provide for scholarly and creative activities including the following: (1) direct faculty support; and (2) resources needed to continue the current level of support. Finally, they identified activities within their unit that are inadequately funded due to growth, inflation, or other cost increases.

After they recorded their written responses to each of aforementioned areas, a meeting was conducted at which time they verbally responded to each of the planning areas. It was at this meeting that they shared their individual written responses with one another. This plan was also shared with the Extended & Distance Learning Steering Committee. The committee consisted of representatives from the Divisions of Academic Affairs, Information Technology, Student Affairs, and a student representative. Committee members were invited to provide reactions and input to all parts of the plan.

PROGRAM MAINTENANCE

Three areas within Extended & Distance Learning that are currently inadequately funded include an Administrative Assistant and an academic and student support person in the Extended and Distance Learning Office; and an Administrative Assistant for the Study Abroad Program Coordinator.

PLANNING CATEGORIES

PLANNING CATEGORY A: ACADEMIC PROGRAMS SUPPORT

1. Extended & Distance Learning is pursuing the following major initiatives within the context of the academic colleges' strategic plans.

- Provide academic units and students with support services that are commensurate to the services provided students on the San Marcos campus. **CONTINUE**
- Promote the recognized standards of quality in the design, development, and delivery of courses and programs offered electronically and assist units, where appropriate, to monitor those standards. **CONTINUE**
- Assist academic units in developing new degree programs (including certificate programs) that will be offered to extended learners. **CONTINUE**
- Assist academic units in completing necessary documentation for gaining THECB and SACS approval to offer programs off campus and electronically. **CONTINUE**
- ~~• Assist academic units in maintaining the quality of programs currently offered to extended learners.~~
- ~~• Assist academic units in the assessment of their extended teaching learning efforts.~~
- COMBINE BOTH ABOVE:**
- Provide academic units with the Principles of Good Practice documents to promote program quality and course assessment to meet good practice standards. **CONTINUE**
- ~~Provide~~ **DEVELOP** a support infrastructure for extended learning that supports and expands excellence in extended and distance learning. **CONTINUE**

- Provide academic units with data analysis on student enrollments in extended learning.

DELETE

2. If Texas State decides to become actively involved in the establishment of a multi-institution teaching center or other similar arrangement in Northeast San Antonio, the Office of Extended & Distance Learning will support the effort by providing administration and organizational services.

PLANNING CATEGORY B: STUDENT LEARNING AND SUCCESS SUPPORT

1. Extended & Distance Learning is strongly committed to student learning, student retention, and student support. Extended & Distance Learning is pursuing the following major initiatives within the context of the academic colleges' strategic plans.

- Promote student success through the use of support services such as ~~Smarthinking~~ **SmarThinking**

CONTINUE

- Modify the layout of class schedules to indicate the level of technology required in a course, e.g., technology intensive. **COMPLETED**

- Promote enrollments in study abroad programs so that students may participate in real life experiences abroad. **CONTINUE**

- Promote student enrollments in correspondence courses so that students may complete their degrees on schedule and on time. **CONTINUE**

- Provide academic units with data so that the quality of teaching and learning in extended courses may be compared to that which occurs in face-to-face format courses. **DELETE**

- Provide test-proctoring services so that extended students may complete examinations at secure sites remote from Texas State. **CONTINUE**

- Serve as the focal point on campus to coordinate academic and student support services. **DELETE**

- Continue to build an online student support service for all extended students.

CONTINUE

- Continue to provide a secure test site for correspondence studies students. **COMPLETE, CONTINUE**

- Continue to provide deans support funds that have been derived from the sale of correspondence courses.

DELETE

PLANNING CATEGORY C: SCHOLARLY AND CREATIVE ACTIVITY/GRANT ACTIVITY SUPPORT

1. Extended & Distance Learning is strongly committed to providing support to faculty who engage in scholarly and creative activities and grant activities in extended and distance learning. Extended & Distance Learning is pursuing the following initiatives within the context of academic colleges' strategic plans.

- Forward to academic units announcements of RFPs. **DELETE**
- Provide seed money to faculty who desire to present papers on extended and distance learning topics at conferences. **CONTINUE**
- Provide seed money to faculty who desire to undertake small research projects related to extended and distance learning. **CONTINUE**
- Encourage faculty to publish their initiatives in extended and distance learning journals. **DELETE**
- Develop nationally recognized extended and distance learning programs ~~that will also promote faculty research and attract highly qualified and academically competitive students.~~ **CONTINUE**
- Provide support funds for doctoral students who are conducting research in distance learning. **DELETE**

PLANNING CATEGORY D: DEVELOPMENT

1. Extended & Distance Learning is strongly committed to providing support to academic units who engage in development activities. Extended & Distance Learning is pursuing the following initiatives within the context of academic colleges' strategic plans.

- Increase support from the private sector for the design, development, and offering of extended and distance learning courses and programs to niche markets that serve the private sector's needs. **DELETE**
- ~~Convey to academic units the need to offer extended and distance learning programs when such need is expressed by the private sector.~~
CHANGE TO:
- Alert academic units to requests for extended and distance learning programs when approached by public and private sectors entities expressing the need for credit and non-credit courses and programs. **CONTINUE**

PLANNING CATEGORY E: DIVERSITY

The Office of Extended & Distance Learning has been collecting demographic data on students enrolled in extended and distance learning courses since 1999. The demographics of these students closely parallel on campus students. The most noticeable difference is that off campus students, evening on campus students, and Internet, ITV, video, etc. students are older in chronological age. While considerable literature has been published in recent years on the digital divide that has occurred between those individuals who have access to technology and those who do not, there does not appear to be a digital divide among Texas State students. The heavy

reliance on technology for Internet courses does not appear at this time to be discouraging students from enrolling in electronically delivered courses.

PRIORITIES

Extended & Distance Learning followed a process of inclusion to establish its priorities during this planning cycle. The process included the following: (a) The academic colleges' strategic plans provided the context for developing the Extended & Distance Learning Strategic Plan. (b) The Director of Extended & Distance Learning conducted interviews with several college deans. (c) All staff employees within Extended & Distance Learning participated in a strategic planning session where staff responses to several questions were recorded and placed into minutes of the meeting. (d) The Extended & Distance Learning Steering Committee reviewed a draft copy of the plan and provided input to all parts of the final plan. The following priorities have been established to support the missions of the University, Academic Affairs, and academic colleges:

Academic Units and Students

- (2004-2009). Provide outcome-based data to academic units about their extended & distance learning students to ensure that the quality of teaching, learning, retention, and student-to faculty and student-to-student interaction are equal to or greater than that which occurs in face-to-face courses. (Twice per year, no new cost associated with this activity.) **CONTINUE**
- (2004-2009). Assist academic units in collecting and distributing assessment data that documents the performance of extended and distance learners. (Twice per year, no new cost associated with this activity.) **CONTINUE**
- (2004-2005). Provide academic and student support services to faculty and students that are equivalent to that provided San Marcos campus-based students and coordinate services among other support divisions/departments/offices at Texas State. Employ a Coordinator of Academic and Student Support Services. (\$42,000/year) **DELETE**
- (2004-2009). Provide a test proctoring service for students who are geographically separated from their instructors. (This service will be administered by the Coordinator of Academic and Student Support Services.) **COMPLETED**
- (2004-2009). Develop in collaboration with academic units policies and procedures for extended and distance learning. (No new cost associated with this activity.) **CONTINUE**
- (2004-2009). Assist academic units in developing electronically delivered courses to meet student demand. Provide release time for faculty to design and develop 10 resident credit courses per year at \$3,500 per course. (\$35,000/year) **DELETE**

- (2004-2009). Alleviate the demand on faculty to travel and teach at remote sites by incorporating technology to deliver instructional activities. (\$3,500 per course if the course meets THECB guidelines as a distance learning course.) **DELETE**
- (2004-2005). Convert halftime Administrative II position to fulltime position and change classification to Administrative III. (\$18,492/year) **DELETE**
- (2004-2005). Assist the university in reviewing current approaches to faculty compensation to determine whether new incentives should be established for faculty members with teaching responsibilities in extended and distance learning. (No new cost associated with this Team activity.) **COMPLETED**
- (2004-2005). Lead a Feasibility Study Team to explore possibilities for Texas State in San Antonio. The Team will complete a detailed analysis of the need for upper-level and graduate education in Northeast San Antonio and will recommend what role, if any, that Texas State should play in addressing identified critical educational needs of the Greater San Antonio area. (No new cost associated with this Team activity.) **DELETE**
- (2004-2009). Ensure that the development of any new Web-based programs clearly identify a market need and that a business plan clearly demonstrates the capacity to yield an appropriate overhead contribution to the university. (No new cost associated with this activity.) **CONTINUE**
- (2004-2005). In collaboration with other stakeholders at the university, complete a review of the Off Campus Course Fee currently assessed for instruction offered in distance learning formats to determine whether changes should be made in the structure of the fees that are assessed for extended and distance offerings and in the way that income from these fees is allocated. (No new cost associated with this Team activity.) **COMPLETED, CONTINUE**
- (2004-2009). Assist colleges in establishing thresholds of quality (above THECB & SACS requirements) that are unique to individual colleges and Texas State University. (No new cost associated with this Team activity.) **CONTINUE**
- (2004-2009). Assist academic units in establishing minimum expectations for quality teaching in extended and distance learning. It is important that students who attend classes at extended sites perceive courses and faculty expectations as equal to those same courses and expectations when offered on the San Marcos campus. (No new cost associated with this Team activity.) **CONTINUE**
- (2004-2009). Assist RRHEC personnel in meeting their academic and student support services mission. (See RRHEC Strategic Plan. No new cost associated with this activity.) **DELETE**

Correspondence Courses

- (2004-2009). Develop correspondence courses for online delivery while placing three existing correspondence study courses per year online. **CONTINUE**
- (2004-2009). Increase correspondence course offerings with two new contracted courses per year. **CONTINUE**
- (2004-2009). Continue to seek correspondence courses from other Texas State University System campuses ~~with specific focus on Angelo State University and Sul Ross University.~~ **CONTINUE**

Study Abroad Courses

- (2004-2009). Seek additional consortia agreements to increase study abroad opportunities for Texas State students. Consortia agreements make it possible for university-based financial aid to be used for study abroad. **CONTINUE**
- (2004-2009). Develop other possible scholarship opportunities for students to study abroad. **CONTINUE**
- (2004-2009). Further develop CONAHEC as viable consortia for recruiting students from Canada and Mexico to Texas State University. **COMPLETED**
- (2007-2009). Propose and seek approval (with collaboration from academic units) for a one credit-hour course to be offered to Texas State students who plan to study abroad. **CONTINUE**
- (2004-2009). Seek alternatives for current receipting practices. **CONTINUE**
- (2004-2005). Seek additional funding for staff for study abroad student services. (\$35,000/year) **COMPLETED**

Plans and Markets

- (2005-2006). Develop Institutional Plan for Distance Education and Off Campus Instruction (as required by the THECB). **COMPLETED**
- (2004-2009). Develop annual plans for Off Campus Instruction, Telecommunications Instruction, and Out-of-State and Out-of-Country. (No new cost associated with this activity.) **CONTINUE**
- (2004-2009). Increase the number of exchange programs with two new contracts per year to include more departments/colleges to ensure long-term viability. (\$6,000/year) **CONTINUE**

Technology

- (2005-2006). Seek a computer position to handle technological needs. (\$45,000/year)
DELETE
- (2004-2009). Transition from print-based information and marketing of correspondence courses and study abroad programs to web-based. (No new cost associated with this activity.)
COMPLETED, CONTINUE
- (2004-2009). Increase instructor's use of the Internet to interact with students. (No new cost associated with this activity.)
CONTINUE