

**DISTANCE EDUCATION**  
**ANNUAL REPORT**  
**2008-2009**

Prepared by

**HOWARD STORY**  
**FACULTY COORDINATOR, DISTANCE EDUCATION/MEDIA**

**ALICE GRIGSBY**  
**DIRECTOR, LEARNING RESOURCES**

## Table of Contents

<b>Program Overview .....</b>	<b>3-5</b>
<b>Statistical Look at Distance Education.....</b>	<b>5-7</b>
<b>Student Learning Outcomes .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Facilities and Technology.....</b>	<b>7-8</b>
<b>Staffing.....</b>	<b>8-9</b>
<b>Planning .....</b>	<b>9-10</b>
<b>Recommendations .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Future of Distance Education at El Camino College .....</b>	<b>10-11</b>
<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Appendix 1.....</b>	<b>1-4</b>
<b>Appendix 2.....</b>	<b>1-20</b>
<b>Appendix 3.....</b>	<b>1-6</b>
<b>Appendix 4.....</b>	<b>1-6</b>
<b>Appendix 5.....</b>	<b>1-8</b>

## **I. Program Overview:**

The purpose of offering Distance Education courses in the El Camino College curriculum is to extend educational opportunities to populations who may have difficulty obtaining college courses by traditional methods. These populations include working women with children, older adults who are less mobile, the disabled, and working adults with schedules which make it difficult to meet frequently on a college campus. The program supports the college mission which is to meet the educational needs of its diverse community and ensure students success by offering quality, comprehensive educational opportunities.

The Distance Education program is located in Learning Resources which includes the Library, Learning Resources Center and Media Services department. Learning Resources is one of nine academic divisions in the Academic Affairs area of the college. Learning Resources provides academic resources and services to all students and faculty and other members of the El Camino College community. The program is under the direction of the Learning Resources Director. The Distance Education Office is housed in the technology center in the Schauerman Library and is staffed by one faculty coordinator and several part-time employees. The major goal of the DE Office is to ensure that a high level of quality is maintained in the courses and services offered to students enrolled in the program. This includes adherence to institutional and state policy and regulations regarding this delivery method. DE office staff work with a myriad of areas throughout the campus including: the staff development office to arrange ongoing training for faculty, the admissions office for students adding and dropping courses, instructional deans to develop schedules, Information technology services for course management system licenses and web hosting, and numerous other areas of the campus to facilitate and support instruction at a distance. Staff is also available to develop informational material, provide technical support to faculty and students.

El Camino College has a long history of offering quality Distance Education courses. The first two courses were offered during the Fall Semester of 1970. Today some 133 courses have been approved by the college curriculum committee for delivery as Distance Education courses. Currently, the program offers a wide variety of fully accredited college courses. Most of these courses are delivered through online computer instruction. A small number of telecourses were offered using Cable TV and videotape. Most of the courses fulfill general education, elective and/or major requirements and many can be transferred to four year institutions. Any student who is eligible to enroll in the college may enroll in a Distance Education course.

Faculty teaching distance education classes utilize various methods of delivery (see Appendix 1):

- Web Site - Faculty develops a web site that includes the lesson materials and links to Reference materials. Students access the site through a password provided by the instructors.
- Course Management System - ETUDES is the system of choice supported by the College – a large percentage of the faculty create and upload their materials to the CMS. Features include chat, discussion board and testing capabilities.
- Publishers Materials - In various departments, publisher produced material serves as the basis for the materials used in the course. Students are required to purchase the textbook which includes an access code to appropriately complete assignments and fully participate in the class.

The El Camino College Distance Education Advisory Committee (DEAC) has primary responsibilities for developing policies and procedures for distance education courses that comply with local and state guidelines Title 5) and regulations. DEAC works closely with the Academic Senate, college and division curriculum committees to ensure commitment to quality assurance and continuous improvement of the program. The committee includes faculty from all academic divisions, along with the Director of Learning Resources, the Distance Education Coordinator, and an Academic Dean, staff from the DE Office, representatives from the College Curriculum Committee, Special Resource Center and Counseling. The committee meets once a month and has been very active this year. Following are initiatives the committee has developed this year:

- Wrote guidelines to defined effective instructor - student contact
- Developed proposal for “Minimum Requirements for Course Shells”
- Strengthened the requirements for first time online instructors
- Added a recommended preparation for DE courses to include completion of or concurrent enrollment in Academic Strategies 60, previous completion of an online course, or a satisfactory score on the Distance Education Online Class Self-Assessment Instrument
- Made a recommendation to support faculty assignment of more than two sections of Distance Education Courses (DE Load Policy)
- Held the first annual Distance Education Summit

2008 was the final year of a program growth plan that was developed through the consultation process in 2006. One of the major goals was to grow the program from 33 sections in fall 2005 to 150 sections by fall of 2008. Additional funding was given to support

this effort and 89 sections were offered fall 2008. This represents 169% of growth. As a result of this growth, students can now acquire courses that fulfill the general education requirement and many of the major subjects in some degree and certificate areas.

- A new plan is being developed to incorporate recommendations from the DE Summit and the recent accreditation report.

## II. A Statistical Look at Distance Education

The growth of the Distance Education program has been stimulating. It has been fueled by the support of the academic deans and the encouragement of the Vice President of Academic Affairs. Resultantly, additional faculty members have been trained, new online sections added and more students introduced to the online learning environment.

**Distance Education Statistics**

Semester	Fall	# Enrolled	Spring	# Enrolled	Summer	# Enrolled	Winter	# Enrolled
2004	31	1,547	29	1,478	18	702	0	0
2005	34	1,450	33	1,563	20	715	3	75
2006	51	1,860	37	1,494	23	708	2	146
2007	79	2,606	59	2,179	34	1,044	9	403
2008	89	3,603	83	3,165	54	1,779	20	725
2009	75	Pending	89	3,628	54	1,900	31	1,212

# Enrolled taken from First Census Reports

**FTES generated for each semester during 2006-7; 2007-8 and 2008-9.**

<b>Semester</b>	<b>Fall</b>	<b>Spring</b>	<b>Summer/Winter</b>
2006-07	196.73	200.68	N/A
2007-8	242.91	293.73	N/A
2008-09	326.77	415.76	N/A

The most recent profile and survey results of online students produced by the Institutional Research department reveals some characteristic description of the online student (see Appendix 2). Seventy two percent (72%) were female and the median age was 24 compared with 22 for all ECC students. A significant number are prospective transfer students who were enrolled full-time. Asian and Latino students were less likely to be enrolled in an online class.

A comparison of this survey and the California Community Colleges Distance Education Course “W” and “DR” study reveals additional dichotomies (see Appendix 3).

**Top Reasons for Taking Distance Education Classes**

<b>REASONS</b>	<b>Profile Study2006-7</b>	<b>DE Drops Fall 2008</b>
Work/family commitments	64.50%	n/a
Prefer online course format or had good experience previously	39.94%	8%
On campus section filled	12.72%	4%
Other or no response	12.43%	6.5%
Do not live within driving distance of campus or travel often	5.03%	2.5%

Program challenges have also surfaced with the growth of the program. The initial evidence was revealed in the “Fall 2007 Enrollment Growth and Academic Course Performance of Traditional vs. Online classes” analysis prepared by the Institutional Research department

(see Appendix 4). It revealed overall that a larger percentage of students in the face-to-face classes were successful and retained compared to the online students.

#### Fall 2007

	Traditional	Online
Success	63.3%	48.6%
Retention	78.0%	65.0%

#### FALL 2008

	Traditional	Online
Success	62.4%	48.7%
Retention	81.4%	69.4%

A follow-up analysis of the fall 2008 enrollment growth and academic course performance<sup>4</sup> reflects minor statistical changes (see Appendix 5). The 2007 and 2008 statistics were shared with all academic deans and an effort was made by online instructors to identify possible causes of these unsatisfactory numbers. The retention/success issue was taken to the Distance Education Advisory Committee as one of the most challenging issues of the year.

### III. Student Learning Outcome (SLO)

Learning Resources developed the following program level SLO:

“Students will gain knowledge of online and on-campus LRU services and resources by visiting the LRU Webpage.”

Distance Education and Library Skills classes were targeted for assessment. A virtual assessment survey is being developed and will be administered to students fall semester 2009.

### IV. Facilities and Technology

El Camino Distance Education faculty have the freedom to choose various applications (Websites, Publisher sites, Course Management systems, etc.) to deliver their courses provided they have met the training requirements. The majority of the faculty use the

college supported Etudes Course Management system. The department has worked with ITS and the vendor to automate the uploading of rosters and students adding classes to Etudes eliminating any manual work by faculty. Improvements must be made to improve the add process especially for the shorter winter and summer sessions. It is critical that students who add online classes can access their course information no later than the start of the second week of the five and six week sessions.

El Camino is a member of the non-profit consortium of California community colleges (Intelecom) that produces curriculum based media for online, distance and classroom learning. The Distance Education program has used their telecourses since 1970. A new online resources network has been recently introduced by Intelecom and the college has become a subscriber. The network includes a video object repository that is hosted and contains a subscription database of academic video clips – streamed on demand – for use in support of online, hybrid and face-to-face classes. This resource is now available for faculty use.

A new Distance Education Conference Center is due to open Fall 2009. This center will provide DE faculty the opportunity to use some of the latest presentation technology (lecture capture, collaborative software, etc.). The center is part of the Learning Resource Center addition. Hopefully, this facility will help improve the retention and success rates of students enrolled in online courses.

## **V. Staffing**

The Distance Education program is in a major expansion mode and has grown over 100% in the number of sections and instructors teaching online courses in the last five years. This rapid growth was fueled by student demand and the administration's desire to increase the college's enrollment in this area.

Since the resignation of the full-time Distance Education Program Specialist in 2004, the department staffing has been subpar. The department is currently supervised by the Faculty Coordinator who is also responsible for Media Services with the staffing assistance of one part-time casual employee and one student assistant. A temporary Technology Specialist was hired to assist faculty with the transition to new Etudes-NG course management system. However, this position was short lived. The schedule of the Staff Development Office technology trainer was temporarily realigned to provide additional customer support to online faculty. However, she is no longer on staff and this support is not currently available.



The reduction of full time staff has made it difficult to provide support for growing numbers of students enrolled in Distance Education courses and ensure program quality. Additional program staff is needed because the popularity of online learning is at an all time high, more faculty are being trained, more courses and sections offered and online degree certificate programs are also in development. The trend at most institutions is for the distance education office to also support faculty and students using online technology in their traditional courses (Hybrid). To maintain quality and improve students' success, staffing levels will have to be increased. Full time staff is needed and should include a minimum of one Instructional Specialist to support faculty with the implementation of Distance Education and hybrid courses. This individual can also help train faculty to utilize the technology. Additional clerical support for Distance Education Office and help desk to support students enrolled in these classes is needed.

With the growth of the Distance Education program, the need for assistance to faculty and students via a dedicated help desk during the initial weeks of each session has intensified. This is considered a key component in reducing the number of dropouts in the first weeks of the class. Evidence from the fall 2008 Distance Education survey of ECC students who dropped or withdrew from a DE course in fall 2008 was that 43% of the respondents were first time online students. 5% reflect that they experienced too many technical difficulties and 8% indicated that they lacked directions to get started in and manage the course. A viable help desk would mitigate some of these challenges.

This would be a temporary/short term assignment to be staffed three weeks of each academic session to provide support to students enrolled in distance education classes. Research has shown that available assistance improves the early session retention rate of students enrolled in DE classes who often drop because of limiting technical skills.

## **VI. PLANNING**

To ensure a quality distance education experience the need for planning is uppermost. A task force was organized by the Vice President of Academic Affairs to broaden the scope of thinking regarding Distance Learning. The Distance Education Advisory Committee accepted a plan of action for Distance Education for 2006-2008 that was approved by the Academic Senate and funded by the Planning and Budgeting committee. Plan Builder also documents program goals for the coming year.

A variety of circumstances highlight the issues accompanying this program. The accreditation commission visit of fall 2008 highlighted a perceived weakness in the program and included a recommendation for "evidence of rigor" in all Distance Education courses that mirrors traditional classes. This provided an opportunity for an assessment of the protocols that should

be used by all online faculty. The committee that developed responses to the question used to craft the recommendation included representatives from both campuses. The Compton center is piloting a quality control document that ensures that academic rigor, as quantitatively measured by student success and retention, is driven by faculty.

DEAC has implemented several recent changes: updated the DE guideline relevant to “regular-effective” instructor-student contact; developed requirements for first time online instructors; identified minimum requirements for course shells; and developed a web course template that is posted on the DE website for each section offered.

The department also sponsored a Distance Education summit that included specific goals:

- To develop a pre-orientation session for students who want to take an online class for the first time
- To recommend a protocol for revising the DE class listings
- To design a faculty development program for online teaching
- To develop a process for evaluating the distance education program and
- To develop a process for online instructors to showcase components of their online courses.

Action plans and timelines were developed for each goal. They will form the recommendations for the 2009-2010 school year and the revised Distance Education action plan.

## **VII. Recommendations**

- Validate academic rigor in all online classes through structured faculty participation in course content assessment, training and support and evidence of effective student contact.
- Create focused marketing of the inclusion of multimedia components from Intelecom for online and hybrid courses.
- Prepare a substantive change report for Distance Education to facilitate the actualization of offerings sufficient to complete general education requirements.
- Consistently participate in the CCC online satisfaction survey to develop accurate data on student and faculty satisfaction with the courses and the program.
- Institute an orientation to distance education for prospective first time students.
- Update the 2005-2008 Distance Education plan to reflect current needs and goals.

## **VIII. Future of Distance Education at El Camino College**

The accreditation recommendation has created an opportunity to again review processes and the program. With the major budget cutbacks envisioned over the next two years, little

growth is anticipated on the main campus. However, this is an area of significant growth for the Compton Center.

# Appendices

Appendix 1

Appendix 2

Appendix 3

Appendix 4

Appendix 5