Online Education Subgroup Final Report

March 2013
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Online Learning Subgroup of the Technology/Online Education Task Force met from October 2012 through March 2013, with a goal of coming to consensus on recommendations for UIndy’s future ventures into online education. We spent our first meetings becoming informed about current UIndy online learning programs, followed by a number of educational sessions with experts, designed to help us envision “what could be” with UIndy online learning programs.

In an attempt to balance concurrent skepticism and enthusiasm, we divided our thinking into two major categories of students: undergraduate and graduate day students; and undergraduate and graduate non-traditional students. The approaches that are recommended for each of these groups differ—an organic approach for the former, and a market-driven approach for the later. In the end, the following recommendations were identified as areas of significant need for immediate improvement:

1. **Develop campus-based support for learning technology: the “Hub”**
   a. Full-time, well-qualified staff
   b. Well-trained student “Technology Troupe”
   c. Stop-In function for students and faculty during extended hours
   d. Outreach into classrooms
   e. Coordinated functions with the Help Desk and Faculty Development
   f. Instructional design capabilities to facilitate both the organic approach needed for day students and some of the market-driven approach needed for non-traditional students

2. **Establish an Online Delivery Service Department**
   a. Full-time, well-qualified staff
   b. Director has responsibility for a quality experience for students from pre-application through graduation and for supporting the development of new programs
   c. New online programs should be market responsive and designed to be scaled up; should partner with an enabler for new online programs
   d. The first new online program that doesn’t “fit” into the curriculum of an academic unit should be piloted to develop efficient processes for launch

3. **Create a governance model to facilitate an efficient and well-articulated system**
   a. University-wide strategic planning processes should consider online education and prepare for the cultural shift necessary to succeed in that marketplace
   b. Co-Chairs of Learning Technologies Advisory Group (L-TAG) should drive the policies and procedures for online education; broad-based input should assure smooth organizational processes.
   c. L-TAG and Technology Governance Committee should work in concert

In addition to these recommendations, the full report contains an explanation of estimated costs, scope, and approximate implementation timelines.
INTRODUCTION

Over the last decade, the prevalence of online learning in the United States has skyrocketed. This is in large part due to the insatiable appetite for online program offerings, especially among adult and graduate students. UIndy has lagged behind, remaining skeptical about the quality of online education and failing to fulfill the expectations of today’s continuing professional education students, and very likely, tomorrow’s undergraduate students.

The Online Learning Subgroup of the Technology/Online Education Task Force has had numerous discussions to identify the past challenges, current opportunities and future possibilities surrounding online learning at UIndy. While the purpose of this report is not to focus on past challenges, we believe they are worth summarizing, as these challenges drive our assumptions and recommendations.

Systems that work are well designed. We believe that online education at UIndy is faltering because efforts have emerged as the result of individuals and units moving ahead on their own, not as a result of strategic University planning. These efforts, while well intended, have resulted in frustration and mediocrity. Online programs were mounted in the absence of support infrastructure -- including all aspects of faculty and student support, admissions and marketing strategies, administrative support and perhaps most importantly, any mechanism for continuous quality improvement. In short, we have no system in place for planning, training, engaging or evaluating our online education efforts.

In spite of the many challenges, however, current online students’ and alumni experiences have been generally positive (as evidenced by unit-based program evaluation). This is in large part because we as an institution have relied, often unknowingly, on various units’ heroes who have committed to making sure that individual online students’ needs are addressed. While admirable, efforts by heroes are neither efficient nor scalable.

In preparing this report, the Online Learning Subgroup has made several assumptions that have guided our recommendations. We begin by outlining our assumptions, followed by recommendations and finally, our closing thoughts.
ASSUMPTIONS

1. For the purposes of this report, we are using the following operational definitions:
   a. Enhanced Course—1-29% of course content is delivered online
   b. Hybrid Course—30-79% of the course content is delivered online
   c. Online Course—at least 80% of the course content is delivered online
   d. Online Program—at least 80% of the program credit hours are delivered online

2. Online Education means different things for various student constituencies. Our Subgroup divided “students” into two general student categories that would experience online education:
   a. Traditional Undergraduate (day students, 18-22 years old) and Graduate Students (day students, primarily in Cohort Programs)—primarily web-enhanced and hybrid courses per the unit’s discretion; an occasional online course
   b. Non-Traditional Undergraduate (Evening, SAL—students > 24 years, other adult students) and Graduate Students (post-professional, adult students)—hybrid and online courses

3. An exceptional experience -- from first inquiry to alumni status -- is essential for all UIndy students. This includes pre-application communications, admissions, financial aid, billing, registration, student orientation, bookstore services, advising, library, tutoring, Help Desk and career services. These services are in addition to a consistent, top-quality educational experience. There is currently no organized effort that assures this is the case for students who experience UIndy entirely online.

4. An efficient and well-articulated operational system for online education is essential to UIndy’s success in this arena. Operations to support expansion of online education include strategic planning for growth; documented processes for determining organizational readiness for new online programs; expanded marketing; curriculum development, course design and delivery policies; policies for faculty recruitment, contracting, training and reimbursement; and program evaluation.
5. Online education is an important part of UIndy’s revenue generating potential. Most of the work of the other Task Forces has focused on proposals and plans that will require revenue for implementation. While our recommendations are not exclusively revenue generating, we believe that investing in online education will reap financial benefits, generated from increased student enrollment, that will provide funding for many initiatives that have emerged from Task Force discussions. There are many examples of success—both academic and financial—with online learning, but Regis University and its College for Professional Studies (http://www.regis.edu/CPS/Schools.aspx) stands out as an example of what can be accomplished at an institution very similar to UIndy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the many challenges and opportunities surrounding academic technology and various student stakeholder groups, the Online Learning Subgroup recommends a three-pronged approach to developing UIndy’s learning technology. We are making three broad infrastructure recommendations:

1. Develop campus-based support for learning technology: the “Hub.”
2. Establish an Online Delivery Service Department to support online program delivery and development
3. Create a governance model to facilitate an efficient and well-articulated system for strategic planning and coordination of learning technology efforts across campus.

Sub-recommendations, estimated costs, scope, and timelines are provided in the sections following each general recommendation. The diagram below depicts the general infrastructure that is envisioned by the Online Learning Subgroup.
Recommendation #1: Campus-Based Support for Learning Technology -- The “Hub”

1.1 Based on strategic prioritization by the University Planning Commission and driven by academic unit initiative, campus-based undergraduate and graduate programs should be encouraged and supported to incorporate instructional technology into enhanced and hybrid courses, and occasionally through online courses. These efforts will grow organically within academic units that are interested and willing to experiment and incorporate best learning technology practices into their programs. In contract, market driven online program development directed to non-traditional students should emerge through deliberate, thoughtful strategic planning.

1.2 Support for learning technology (for traditional undergraduate and graduate programs and for some non-traditional online programs) should be provided internally (with external consultants as needed), through robust and well-integrated academic technology support services. Support services should have an inviting physical location (the “Hub”) and a well-qualified learning technology team composed of both full-time staff and part-time student
workers. Dynamic and capable Hub leadership (administrative faculty) should have responsibility and authority for developing, implementing and assessing learning technology efforts across curricula. In addition, this university function requires a reporting and communication structure that allows direct and regular communication with existing academic and administrative leadership.

1.3 The Hub should serve the learning technology needs of faculty and students, closely coordinating efforts with the Help Desk and Faculty Development. The Hub’s capabilities should include a stop-in function (so faculty and students can come in for just-in-time assistance), an outreach function (so faculty can schedule in-services for students during class time) and an education function (so students and faculty can be proactive in their learning technology efforts).

**Estimated Costs:**

**Annual Expenses for fully functioning Hub:**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hub Salaries and Benefits</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff (Director, Sr Design Team, Jr Design Team X 2)</td>
<td>$385,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hourly Student Wages (20 Students)</td>
<td>$95,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Stipends (3 credit release or stipends for 30)</td>
<td>$105,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Training (Quality Matters for 30 @ $200/person)</td>
<td>$6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Operating Expenses (50% of staff salaries and benefits)</td>
<td>$192,500</td>
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**TOTAL** $783,500

**NOTE:** These estimates assume that dedicated training space exists. Full projection capabilities, teaching workstation and 25 computer stations are included in the budget of the Technology Subgroup as part of the Technology Training Center.

**Start-Up Equipment Costs (one-time only)**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Video and media equipment; Office Set-Ups for 4</td>
<td>$23,000</td>
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**Scope:**

Four full-time employees should staff the Hub—a Director with administrative and design team responsibilities; one Senior and one Junior Design Team member working together
to design up to 10 fully online courses a semester (or up to 20 hybrid courses with 50% online content); a second Junior Design Team member who will have responsibility for much of the educational role of the Hub, working in concert with Faculty Development and assuming responsibility for training and overseeing a 20 student “Technology Troupe.” If there is demand for additional design capacity, additional staff should be added.

The Troupe should serve as the primary staff for the stop-in and outreach function of the Hub. Ideally, Troupe members should be recruited in their freshman year and participate in a significant orientation as well as ongoing training each semester. Underclassmen in the Troupe should be trained and mentored by the upperclassmen, who should in turn be mentored and trained by the Hub Staff. Upperclassmen in the Troupe should receive differential pay for their increased responsibilities.

Faculty participating in course development should be awarded 3 credits of release time (or during the summer and with adjuncts, should be paid a 3 credit hour stipend) to participate in 7 weeks of training (2 weeks of Quality Matters training and 5 weeks of Teaching with ACE) and to meet weekly with the design team to work on one course. Faculty should be required to achieve certification by demonstrating competency during both training programs. Weekly meetings should involve collaborative work between the faculty and the design team with the expectation of steady progress toward course completion.

Interested faculty should apply for the opportunity to participate in the 7-week training and work closely with the instructional design team. The process should include approval by Chair and/or Dean to assure that instructional design resources are being used in a way that corresponds with strategic academic priorities.

**Timeline:**

**Short-Term—0-2 years:** Hire director and staff for Hub; initiate development of the Troupe; provide training and design services for 15 complete online courses in Year 1; 30 in Year 2. Priority for training and instructional design services should be given to current and developing hybrid and online graduate programs

**Mid-Term—3-5 years:** Fully functioning Hub
Long-Term—6+ years: The vision of campus-based support for learning technology is to provide timely, competent support to all students and faculty, keeping pace with the options and opportunities available in the field.

In summary, the Hub should include the following:
- Full-time, well-qualified staff
- Well-trained student “Technology Troupe”
- Stop-In for students and faculty during extended hours
- Outreach into classrooms
- Coordinated functions with the Help Desk and Faculty Development
- Instructional design capabilities to facilitate both the organic approach needed for day students and a portion of the market driven approach needed for non-traditional students (up to 30 online courses/year with priority given to current online programs)
- Faculty training cohort: 10 faculty per semester receive 3 credit release (or summer contract) to participate in training and course design with design team

Recommendation #2: Support for Online Program Delivery and Development via an Online Delivery Service Department

2.1 A centralized online delivery service department, distinct from the campus-based learning technology support “Hub,” should assume operational responsibility for online programs. The online service department should coordinate an exceptional online experience for students, while curricular oversight will remain with the schools and colleges, making online education at UIndy administratively centralized, but academically decentralized. Leadership (administrative faculty) for the online delivery service department should be given the responsibility and authority for both assuring an optimal online experience for students and developing online education as a profitable venture for the University.
2.2 New online programs at UIIndy should be market-driven, primarily graduate level, credit-bearing certificates or degree programs with at minimum, a regional reach. It is likely that opportunities will arise that favor undergraduate or non-credit bearing program offerings; each online program opportunity, regardless of level, should be vetted and prioritized by academic leadership in collaboration with the University Planning Commission.

2.3 Current online programs and new online programs that fit well within a school or college should be administratively coordinated through the online delivery service department and academically coordinated through the appropriate unit. When a new program opportunity arises that does not fit within an existing unit, it should be considered a “pilot” and processes necessary for launch should be determined. A pilot of this sort should be conducted as soon as possible, so efficient processes can be established for future online programs.

2.4 For new online programs, UIIndy should partner with an external online enabler that will allow us to mount programs efficiently and effectively. Choosing an online enabler will involve negotiating which aspects of programs delivery should be outsourced and determining an acceptable tuition split as UIIndy moves into this marketplace.

**Estimated Costs:**

*Annual Expenses for the Online Delivery Service Department:*

- Online Delivery Service Department Salaries and Benefits
  - Staff (Director, Support Staff) $190,000
  - Office Operating Expenses (50% salaries & benefits) $95,000
- **TOTAL** $285,000

**Note:** This estimate assumes that there will be no additional expenses in coordinating the experience for online students, rather it may result in cost savings as efficiencies across units are realized; estimate does not include expenses that may be incurred during the development of new online programs.
Zen

Two full-time employees should staff the Online Delivery Service Department—a Director (faculty status) with full-time administrative responsibilities, and a technologically capable support staff person. The work of the department should initially be divided between coordinating the online experience for existing programs and supporting the implementation of new programs. A Director who is skilled in both online delivery and organizational change should be hired to drive these efforts, and a reporting/communication structure that provides clear direction and allows for direct and regular communication with existing administrative, academic and student services leadership should be designed.

A coordinated online experience for UIndy students should include timely, efficient interactions during pre-application communications and timely, efficient processes during application, admission, placement exams (if required), financial aid processing, billing and registration. Once registration is completed, the online student needs to have easy, convenient access to new student orientation, the bookstore, academic advising, library services, tutoring, the Help Desk and Career Services. All of these services need to be developed or revised to assure that the online student is effectively served.

Significant strategic planning needs to occur prior to building additional online programs. Depending on UIndy’s goals, there are options with regard to online enablers. One option is contracting with a company that offers a “turn-key” approach, such as Hot Chalk (www.hotchalk.com). These kinds of organizations provide support for the entire student lifecycle, drive enrollments and allow clients to scale up numbers of students very quickly. In this approach, UIndy provides the curriculum and assumes little financial risk. Tuition split for these models tends to be around 20/80, with longer term (10-year) contracts often required.

Conversely, companies such as Deltak (www.deltak-innovation.com) or Pearson (www.pearsonhighered.com) have more of a “partnership” approach that can be likened to a menu of support options. The menu includes student, faculty and administrative supports; faculty training; use of a learning management system; and operational supports such as market research, lead generation, program marketing, enrollment management, course development, and a tracking/retention program. Aspects of the online experience handled by
UIndy and aspects outsourced to the enabler are negotiated. Negotiation also occurs to ensure financial parity. As UIndy “learns the ropes” of online program delivery, arrangements may be modified to allow insourcing of components of online delivery for which we have developed competency, thus reducing the enabler’s tuition share. In the partnership model, UIndy has broader control but risks slower growth and increased financial burden.

Timeline:
Short-Term—0-2 years: Hire director and staff for Online Delivery Service Department; complete basic work on coordinating the online experience for UIndy students; work with administrative team to select an appropriate online enabler and assist with implementation of at least 2 new graduate programs

Mid-Term—3-5 years: Fully functioning Online Delivery Service Department

Long-Term—6+ years: The vision for the Online Delivery Service Department is to coordinate all aspects of the online experience for UIndy students to assure an exceptional experience and to grow online program offerings in response to the demands of the marketplace.

In summary, the Online Delivery Service Department should include the following:
- Full-time, well-qualified staff
- Director has responsibility for assuring a quality experience for online students from pre-application through graduation
- Director has responsibility for supporting the development of new programs
- New online programs should be market responsive and designed to be scaled up
- The first new online program that doesn’t “fit” into the curriculum of an academic unit should be piloted to develop efficient processes for launch
- UIndy should partner with an online enabler for new online programs
- All online programs coordinated through this unit should be designed to be profitable for UIndy
Recommendation #3: Support for Strategic Planning and Coordination

3.1 Academic leadership, in collaboration with the University Planning Commission, should develop specific, coordinated and prioritized goals and strategies for all aspects of learning technology based on available capacity.

3.2 A Learning Technology Advisory Group (L-TAG) with broad representation from the academic units, student support and administrative offices should be charged with assuring coordinated organizational systems. Hub and Online Delivery Service Department leadership will co-chair the L-TAG and will rely on the group to provide input on learning technology policies and procedures and organizational system coordination. Policies and procedures will be adopted according to existing University processes if possible; if new processes are necessary, they will be developed and piloted. The L-TAG should include work groups focusing on faculty “on boarding;” curriculum and instruction; online student services; compliance and reporting; and program evaluation.

Estimated Costs:

  Coordinated and prioritized goals for Online Learning efforts should be a part of the ongoing work of the University Planning Commission and the Academic Affairs Leadership Team. (No additional cost)

  The Co-Chairs of the L-TAG (Director of the “Hub” and the Director of the Online Delivery Service Department) will oversee L-TAG’s work as part of their job responsibilities. It is possible that faculty assigned to L-TAG could fulfill their University Committee assignment through participation in the L-TAG or that the L-TAG could assume the role of the Senate’s current Learning Resources Committee.

Scope:

  All strategic planning discussions that occur within the University Planning Commission, Cabinet, Vice Presidential areas and AALT should consider the implications and requirements of expanding high quality online education via web-enhanced, hybrid and online programs. As we
move further into the online program marketplace, all levels within the University should be prepared for the cultural shift that is inevitable and necessary when the market-driven, fast paced approach of successful online programs collides with slower paced, conservative higher educational structures. Failures should be expected and embraced as learning experiences; a model of continuous quality improvement with quick adaptations in response to ongoing data collection should be put into action as both essential and beneficial.

The L-TAG should provide the opportunity for broad input from online learning stakeholders including academic units, admissions, financial aid, marketing, learning technology team, IS, student success center, career services, bursar, human resources, registrar, library, and others as necessary and appropriate. A critical job for the L-TAG is to provide perspective during the development of policies and procedures including:

• For New Programs: Organizational readiness checklists for new programs, documented process to assess administrative requirements for new programs
• For Home Faculty: Load and reimbursement guidelines, training expectations
• For Adjunct Faculty: Recruitment guidelines, contracting requirements, reimbursement guidelines
• For Course Development and Delivery: Timelines for course access, expectations for response to student initiated communication, expectations for weekly substantive feedback
• For Compliance: Process for assuring state authorization; documented process for assuring compliance with financial aid requirements

Because learning technologies are so intertwined with technological capabilities, the activities of the Technology Governance Committee (recommended by the Technology Subgroup of the Technology/Online Education Task Force) and the L-TAG need to be coordinated. The Technology Governance Committee has a broader scope involving policy and procedure level authority for implementation and use of campus technology in all areas, while the L-TAG is an advisory group with a focus on coordinating experiences and opportunities surrounding online learning and the use of learning technology. The Chairs of the Technology Governance Committee
and the L-TAG should sit as members in one another’s groups to assure that the efforts of both groups are compatible and beneficial for the University at large.

**Timeline:**

Short-Term—0-2 years: L-TAG should be assembled and functional during 2013-2014; pending the identification of leadership, policies and procedures should be completed. High level strategic planning should begin immediately and be ongoing.

Mid-Term—3-5 years: Fully functioning L-TAG; focus on refining initial set of policies and procedures.

Long-Term—6+ years: The vision for this group would be to provide ongoing broad-based input into strategic planning, development and operations for online education.

In summary, Strategic Planning and Coordination should include the following:

- University-wide strategic planning processes should consider the impact and requirements of high quality online education
- All levels of the University should be prepared for the cultural shift necessary to succeed with online program delivery
- Co-Chairs of L-TAG should drive the development of policies and procedures for online education
- L-TAG and Technology Governance Committee should work in concert
- L-TAG should provide crucial, broad-based input to assure smooth organizational processes for campus-based and market-driven online programs

**CLOSING THOUGHTS**

In this era of fierce competition for limited revenue and resources, it is more critical than ever that UIndy embrace new opportunities and adopt tactics to successfully create, grow,
and sustain educational technology and online programs. It is time to revise slow paced, traditional educational structures and lay the groundwork for efficient, high demand certificates and degrees that are delivered in a way that fulfills the expectations of today’s and tomorrow’s students.

As we move in this direction, however, we must guard against a fabricated dichotomy--face-to-face traditional liberal arts education versus completely online professional programs. In reality, there is a broad continuum of educational technology that is providing unprecedented educational innovation. The opportunities that lie between entirely face-to-face and entirely online include dozens of hybrids that blend online, face-to-face, asynchronous and synchronous delivery modes with an ever changing array of web based tools and resources to enhance student learning. Our subgroup recommends a strategic, yet organic approach to adopting educational technology for traditional undergrad and graduate day students, and a much more deliberate market-driven approach for non-traditional students that will strengthen our presence in the competitive online marketplace. By advocating for this two-prong approach, we anticipate less turmoil and more success. That is not to say that we will not experience failure as we attempt new programs and models of delivery. We anticipate that one of our most dramatic cultural shifts as we move further into the online marketplace will be quick adoption followed by quick adaptation—an iterative process that will respond to missteps and result in a culture of continuous, rapid cycle quality improvement.

In closing, we recognize that there is no single answer to the challenges faced by higher education. We are confident, however, that moving swiftly and strategically toward our stated recommendations will result in a UIndy success story. As stated by Phil Hill, educational consultant, in his EDUCAUSE review article about online efforts in higher education (http://www.educause.edu/ero/article/online-educational-delivery-models-descriptive-view), “....complacency or even gradual change is no longer acceptable. That is the real transformative power of the current generation of online educational delivery models.”

What are we waiting for?
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TECHNOLOGY/ONLINE EDUCATION TASK FORCE MEMBERSHIP

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<th>Technology Subgroup</th>
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<td>Steve Herriford - Chair</td>
<td>Ellen Miller - Chair</td>
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<td>Heidi Carl</td>
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