

University of Alaska Southeast
TLTR Meeting Notes
10/3/2003

Distance Education Vision

1. Strategic vision for UAS is contained in the UAS Strategic Plan, Initiative 8. This initiative is several years old and will be updated within the next year.

“Be a center of excellence for distance-delivered certificate and degree programs.”

- Vision focuses on programs (degrees and certificates) and not on individual courses.
- The issue of whether to deliver a particular degree program via distance or not is a departmental issue.

2. Communication Issues

- Lack of knowledge of distance education vision among UAS students, faculty, and staff (Schrum and Ohler report).
- UAS Strategic Plan not always used as a basis for departmental planning.
- Lack of understanding about what specific parts of the initiative mean...need to work on communicating to establish a common understanding across all groups.
- Communications related to distance education must flow across all UAS campuses and other UA campuses where students are supported.
- In the beginning of the strategic plan, access to education through Alaska is mentioned, however, it is not addressed specifically in the distance education initiative.

3. Student Perceptions

- Overall, distance education a positive experience
- Confusion exists over inter-campus relationships/responsibilities
- Instructors make the difference between good and bad distance classes
- There is an assumption (maybe unwarranted) that just because a student is signed up for a distance class, they are technologically savvy.
- Better job needs to be done of communicating the course expectations and technology to the students.
- Students were generally not supportive of having a required course in orientation to technology or distance education.
- Substantial numbers of students are taking distance courses full-time. For a degree program that is distance delivered, the failure of the program to have sufficient course offerings is frustrating.

- There is some concern over whether or not the UAS distance program (Education) will be recognized (Yukon issue...emerging Canadian standards).
- For many students, the absence of a distance program would doom their prospects for further education. Barriers to traditional education:
 - Children at home
 - Having to relocate with spouse
 - Lack of community opportunities
- Students are increasingly participating in diverse delivery methods.
- Distance students sometimes feel like “second class citizens.”
- Different delivery methods are appropriate for different subject matter.
- Syllabi should clearly address distance issues (if for a distance class).
- The computer interaction definitely adds process time to the course. This becomes significant when the student is taking four or five courses.
- Response time to assignments, exams, and questions is important, lacking that face to face contact of traditional classes
- Students want to be better informed on course sequencing and scheduling so that they can plan their degree program (better advising is related to this).
- Access for rural students is complicated by sometimes unreliable Internet access. Course content should take this into account.
- Generally excellent technical support
- Although there are more hoops and complications to distance education, the problem solving skills are honed in the process and students often come away better prepared to deal with the world problems.
- More coordinated communication is needed related to services, technology, support, etc.

4. Instructional Design

- There is some confusion as to what an instructional design center or function is or should be
- Instructional design should be a service to faculty who are designing courses but should not be prescriptive
- Sitka has a specific instructional design function
- UAS has instructional design funds...but not at the level requested, which has affected the ability to fulfill the original intent.

5. Student Services

- The distance offerings and the growth in distance student enrollment has outstripped student services:
 - Degree audits
 - Transfer credit
 - Advising
 - Enrollment
 - Communication

- Lots of information is provided to distance students by various elements of UAS but it is fragmented and inconsistent
- General sense that communication using multiple media and channels will be most effective given the diverse characteristics of our students