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THE BENEFIT OF DISTANCE LEARNING

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Education:
Career and Technical Education

by
Mary Porter
June 2004

THE BENEFIT OF DISTANCE LEARNING

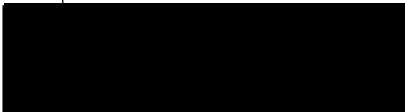
A Project
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June 2004

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ABSTRACT

This report addresses the issues concerning the benefits of distance learning, a growing area in our education system today. Distance learning takes place when the teacher and student's are separated, and technology is used to bridge the instructional gap. Distance-learning is design to assist student in getting the education they desire; it allow students with disabilities, students with a need for flexibility, and student living in rural areas the benefit of acquiring the education they want in a way that no traditional course has been able to do. Distance learning comes in many forms and can be beneficial for many different types of people. The demand on learning has led many institutions to revise the way in which they offer traditional classroom courses. It is concluded that the successfulness of distance-learning courses depends on the ability, to have access to computer with Internet, joint interaction between teachers and students, flexibility and meeting the expectation of the students. It is also concluded that learning styles also contributes to the benefit of distance learning and finally, the break down of how it benefits students and meets their educational needs.

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this book to my mother and father, who has been there for me no matter what I tried. I would like to thank them for their love and understand, as I went through my educational journey.

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND

Introduction

The content of Chapter One presents an overview of the project. The contexts of the problem were discussed followed by the purpose, significance of the project, and assumptions. Next, the limitations and delimitations that apply to the project are reviewed. Finally, definitions of terms were presented.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project was to develop a handbook to help increase the success of distance-learning students in the California school system, as well as to show the benefit of distance-learning. There are many theories related to the success rate and the benefit of distance-learning; such as, history, equipment, and learning styles; which will be covered in this handbook. The handbook was created so that students who are unsure about taking a distance-learning class will feel comfortable about taking a class or classes through distance-learning.

Context of the Problem

The context of the problem was to address the benefit of distance-learning and the misconception of distance-learning courses. Some of the misconceptions are that distance-learning is perfect for the weaker students, the best classes involve face-to-face instruction, the work in distance-learning classes isn't as challenging, distance-learning is about technology driven classes, and online courses will require less time and effort.

Significance of the Project

There was a great need for a handbook, to raise the success level of students in a distance-learning program that would assist in eliminating the fears and confusion of distance-learning.

With a growing demand for higher education, due to changes in global business, and changes in the economy, adults are looking to up-grade their skills for job advancement and higher wages. By enrolling in a distance-learning program adults can achieve their goals, without having to give up their present job or cutting their work hours.

Assumptions

This distance-learning handbook will assist in the success rate of students in a distance-learning course, by enhancing the students' knowledge of the benefits of distance learning and by providing information to lessen their fears.

The following assumptions were made regarding the project:

1. It was assumed that once this handbook is completed, it will be used as part of the curriculum for distance-learning courses, throughout California or nationwide.
2. It was assumed that, with the growing trend in distance-learning a handbook is needed to assist students to be more successful in distance-learning programs.

Limitations and Delimitations

During the development of the project, a number of limitations and delimitations were noted. These limitations and delimitations are presented in the next section.

Limitations

The following limitations apply to the project:

1. This project was designed and implemented entirely for students in the California school system.
2. This project was designed for non-traditional studies.
3. Learning styles is another limitation that may affect a student's learning.

Delimitations

The following delimitations apply to the project:

1. Schools throughout the world can use this handbook.
2. This handbook can be used in traditional classrooms.
3. This handbook can offer a variety of formats to meet the different learning style of students.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined as they apply to the project.

Abacus - An ancient calculation device consisting of beads strung on wires or rods that are set in a frame (Sharp, 2002).

Asynchronous - Occurrence at different times: the occurrence of two or more processes at different times (Microsoft, 2000).

Auditory Learner - Auditory learner relate most effectively to the spoken word. They will tend to listen to a lecture, and then take notes afterwards, or rely on printed notes (Mind Tools, 2001).

CD-ROM (compact disc read only memory) - A means of high-capacity storage (more than 600 megabytes) that uses laser optics for reading data Sharp, 2002).

Cognitive - Concerned with acquisition of knowledge: relating to the process of acquiring knowledge by the use of reasoning, intuition, or perception (Microsoft, 2000).

Computer - Electronic data processor and storer: an electronic device that accepts, processes, stores, and outputs data at high speeds according to programmed instructions (Microsoft, 2000).

Correspondence Study - Individual or self-guided study by mail from a college or university by which credit is typically granted through written assignments and proctored examinations. More often referred as Independent Study (Peterson, 1998).

Distance Education - The delivery of educational programs to off-site students using one or more technologies such as cable television, video/audio tapes, fax the Internet and other delivery media (Peterson, 1998).

Distance-learning - Courses in the home: education for students working at home, with little or no face-to-face with teachers and with material provided remotely, for example, by e-mail, television, or correspondence (Microsoft, 2000).

Electronic Mail - More often called e-mail; this term refers to text messages and documents sent over telephone lines, cable or satellite, to a receiving computer (Peterson, 1998).

Interactive video - A system consisting of a computer, videodisc player, videotape, and software that provide the student with immediate feedback. It includes management features so lessons can be customized to specific student needs (Sharp, 2002).

Internet - A system of worldwide networks that enable the user to send electronic mail, conduct research, chat, and participate in newsgroups (Sharp, 2002).

Kinesthetic - Kinesthetic learners learn effectively through touch and movement and space, and learn skills by imitation and practice (Mind Tools, 2001).

Listserv - an e-mail program or electronic mailing list that allows the distribution of messages to many individuals in one mailing and allows multiple computer users to connect to a single system for communication or discussion (Gilbert, 2001).

Online - Active and prepared for operation. Originally a military term, it now implies being connected to a computer network (Gilbert, 2001).

Operating system - A computer program used to provide basic services like files, screen information, and mouse use. Microsoft Windows and Apple MacOS are the most common operating systems for personal computers (Gilbert, 2001).

Postsecondary Education - Courses or programs of study offered to students who have completed high school degrees or the equivalent. These including programs of an academic, vocational, or continuing education nature (Peterson, 1998).

Technology - Application of tools and methods: the study, development, and application of devices, machines, and techniques for manufacturing and productive processes (Microsoft, 2000).

Visual Learner - Visual Learners relate most effectively to written information, notes, diagrams and pictures (Mind Tools, 2001).

Web-based instruction - Distance education whose primary delivery source is the Internet. The course site, found on the web, contains detailed information about the course. It is self-contained in that the student does not meet in person with other learners or the instructor. Communication occurs through e-mail, listservs and most assignment and tests are completed and submitted online (Gilbert, 2001).

Word Processor - A software program designed to make the computer useful electronic writing tool that can edit, store, and print documents (Sharp, 2002).

World Wide Web - High speed, graphical interface for the Internet, which permits real-time video, sound, and sophisticated graphics to be transmitted to the user. A broad and growing number of institutions (and individuals are creating web sites as a source of public information and as an opportunity to market products and services to Internet users (Peterson, 1998).

Organization of the Thesis

The thesis portion of the project was divided into four chapters. Chapter One provides an introduction to the context of the problem, purpose of the project, significance of the project, limitations and delimitations and definitions of terms. Chapter Two consists of a review of relevant literature. Chapter Three documents the steps used in developing the project. Chapter four presents conclusions and recommendations drawn from the development of the project. The Appendix for the project consists of: Appendix The Benefit of Distance Learning and How to Succeed. Finally, the Project references.

CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Chapter Two consists of a discussion of the relevant literature. Specifically, the history of distance learning, where it all began; the history of computers, students learning styles, the role of the teachers as well as the benefit of distance learning.

Brief History of Distance Learning

Distance learning has been around for centuries, beginning with correspondence courses. An early recorded effort at using the new technology of regular mail services as an aid to education. An advertisement in the Boston Gazette on March 20, 1728, in which teacher, Caleb Philips, offered to send weekly shorthand lessons to prospective students. Other early examples are from Great Britain. In 1840, Issac Pitman offered shorthand courses through the mail. In the 1880s, Skerry's College offered help in preparing for civil service examination; and shortly thereafter, in 1884, the Foulkes Lynch Correspondence Tuition Service offered courses in accountancy (Mood, 1995).

In 1878, John Vincent created a home reading circle for adults. Vincent became one of the founders of the Chautaugua movement, a popular education society based on the idea of expanding access to education to all Americans (Verduin & Clark, 1991).

It was not until 1891, that United State enter the market, Thomas J. Foster provide pamphlets by mail to teach mine safety. He also organized a tutoring staff that helped in grading assignments. Even earlier, Anna Eliot Ticknor organized a correspondence school with less utilitarian purposes. Ticknor began the "Society to Encourage Studies at Home," based in Boston, Massachusetts. This society offered instruction in 24 subjects organized within six departments: history, science, art, literature, French and German (Mood, 1995).

These educators of distance education were entrepreneurs that were working a lone. It was not until the mid-nineteenth century that Universities in Great Britain and United States developed extension services, which consist of lectures at various sites and with correspondence system.

New technology in distance education has evolved. In 1928, the British Broadcasting Corporation was using radio for adult education (no credit or degrees were granted,

but it was seen as a way people could increase their knowledge). Television was another form of distance education by the late 1950s, television channels dedicated to instruction had been established in many American cities (Mehrotra, Hollister, & McGahey, 2001).

Also, The Open University of the United Kingdom was granted a Royal Charter in 1969 and began teaching in 1970s, by using television as a form of educating more than 90,000 students (Mood, 1995).

By the mid-1990s, the digital revolution had developed the personal computer, the Internet, the World Wide Web (www or the web) and the CD-ROM to the point where it became feasible to deliver educational content directly to student's homes and offices. Geographic location ceased to be a major consideration in that Web-based courses could be taken anywhere an Internet connection existed and anytime of the day or night (Mehrotra, Hollister, & McGahey, 2001).

Brief History of Computers

The abacus, a device for mathematical computation, was different from any other recording device that preceded it; it allowed manipulation of data. In 1854, at Senkerah near Babylon, archaeologists found a clay tablet resembling a primitive abacus. They believed it was nearly

4000 years old. This artifact, which now resides in the British Museum, indicates that some form of calculation existed in Babylon about 3000 B.C. Records show that ancient civilizations, such as India, China, Egypt, and Mesopotamia, were using calculating devices several thousand years ago. The abacus user manipulated beads in a wood frame to keep track of numbers and place values. Users could perform calculations almost as quickly as people who use calculators (Sharp, 2002).

Further, the abacus could only do arithmetic until Charles Babbage, a Cambridge mathematician, became the first individual to conceptualize an actual computer. Babbage wanted to improve the errors in mathematical tables that were being printed. Babbage began working on the Difference Engine, a machine that was intended to solve differential equations. In 1835, Babbage designed a system with stipulation for printed data, a control unit, and an information storage unit. In spite of this, the Analytical Engine was never completed because construction of the machine required precision tools that did not exist at the time.

Babbage is responsible for two classifications of the computer: the store; or memory and the mill; a processing unit that carries out the arithmetic calculations for the

machine; for this achievement Babbage is recognized as the "father of computers" (Sharp, 2002).

Konrad Zuse, a construction engineer, earned the semiofficial title of "inventor of the modern computer" for a series of automatic calculators, which was invented to help with lengthy engineering calculations. The most difficult task was keeping track of all intermediate results in their proper place. Realizing that the automatic-calculator device would require three basic elements: a control, a memory, and a calculator for the arithmetic.

In 1936, Zuse made the Z1 (mechanical calculator) the first binary computer. In 1939, the Z2 was completed, the first fully functioning electro-mechanical computer. Further, in 1941, Zuse created Z3, the world first electronic and fully programmable digital computer based on a binary floating-point number and switching system (Bellis, 2003).

History is finally catching up with John V. Atanasoff. After decades in obscurity this 84-year-old retired physics professor is now gaining recognition from computer scientists for something accomplished almost half a century ago: the invention of the first electronic digital computer. Until very recently, standard histories

of the computer routinely credited its feat to others (Mackintosh, 1988).

Between 1939 and 1942, Professor John Atanasoff and Clifford Berry, a graduate student of Atanasoff designed and built two smaller electronic computers. The first was a prototype for the large machine that has come to be known as the Astanasoff-Berry Computer or ABC (Billis, 2003).

While completing Atanasoff thesis, with a desk calculator, Atanasoff longed for a more automatic method for computing. It was determined that the memory function-the storage of data-should be separated from the computational function and that the method of computation should be digital rather than analog. The machine would express numbers as digits rather than by analogy to some physical quantity, such as a distance along the axis of a slide rule. Digital computing today is based on the binary system. Clearly Atanasoff was not the only person thinking along this line-electromechanical computers were often binary-but Atanasoff was the first to utilize an electronic means of manipulating the binary digits (Mackintosh, 1988).

Another mathematician and a computer engineer as well, Howard H. Aiken, invented the first large, American

calculating machine that worked reliably from coded instructions, a forerunner to the modern-day computer.

In 1937, Aiken and other engineers began designing a programmable calculator. The International Business Machines Corporation (IBM), along with the United States Navy, provided the backing to help them build their design. The navy wanted a computer that could design new weapons, calculate the paths that bombs take once they were dropped as well as break the enemy's secret codes.

In 1944, Aiken and a group of IBM engineers finished the Mark I, which was also called the Harvard-IBM Automatic Sequence Controlled Calculator. The Mark I was 8 feet high, 51 feet long, and weighed nearly 5 tons. The program instructing the Mark-I on how to operate made use of a paper tape on which coded instructions were punched. Once programmed, the computer could automatically perform the desired sequences of arithmetical operations on numbers up to 23 digits long. The Mark-I was used for military purposes, including development of the atomic bomb (Microsoft, 2000).

Over the next centuries, inventors came up with various calculators and data storage devices. It was the Second World War, which would stimulate the implementation and use of computers. Subsequent development can be

divided into five generations of modern computers: First Generation - Vacuum Tube: computers of the 1940s and early 1950's were large and consumed substantial amounts of electricity. Their size was due to the fact that they used vacuum tubes (small glass tubes) as the main component. Thousands of tubes were used in a typical computer, which made them difficult to maintain. The second generation, transistor: the transistor replaced the large, cumbersome vacuum tubes in televisions, radios and computers. Transistors led to second-generation computers that were smaller, faster, more reliable and energy-efficient than their predecessors. Next, the third generation, integrated circuits on chips: developed in 1958 combined three electronic components onto a small silicon disc, which was made from quartz. As a result, computers became even smaller as more components were squeezed onto the chip. The fourth generation consisted of microprocessors, which has allowed new technology to manufacture smaller computers, thereby allowing millions of components to be squeezed onto a single chip. The microprocessors made computers smaller, faster, cheaper and simpler. Finally, the fifth generation, present and future, made possible for engineering advances to allow computers to accept spoken word instructions (voice recognition) and imitate

human reasoning, as well as translate foreign language (Lloyd, 2003).

Learning Styles

Litzinger and Osif (1993) define learning styles as the ways in which children and adults think and learn. They break down thinking and learning processes into cognition, or the ways in which people acquire knowledge; conceptualization, or the ways in which people process information, and motivation, which includes decision making, styles, values, and emotional preferences (as cited in Palloff & Pratt, 2001).

Many of the technological developments may be helpful in accommodating various student-learning styles. An auditory learner, for example, may feel more comfortable listening to a brief audio clip explaining a concept than reading about it. A visual learner tends to do well in an environment that presents mainly text or uses video clips. A learner who is more kinesthetic may appreciate assignments requiring visits to other websites on the Internet and the incorporation of online research. All of these techniques also help to keep learning interesting for students who feel the need for more activity in their academic pursuits (Palloff & Pratt, 2001).

Learning styles have implications for teaching methods. Smith (1982) suggests that certain tendencies and preferences of adults influence their learning styles and the way they would like to acquire new knowledge. Some adults are inclined toward teacher-centered instruction, and some may opt for self-oriented or self-directed instruction (as cited in Verduin & Clark, 1991).

Learning styles focus on the individuals' ability to learn by direction, interaction, inquiry, or creation; and although learners may have a preference or strength, the effectiveness of the learning environment increases when all four styles can be accommodated (Meyer, 2002).

Harvard University's Howard Gardner identified seven distinct learning styles. This theory has emerged from recent cognitive research and documents the extent to which students possess different kinds of minds and therefore learn, remember, perform, and understand in different ways. According to Gardner's theory (1991), we are all able to know the world through language, logical-mathematical analysis, spatial representation, musical thinking, the use of the body to solve problems or to make things, an understanding of other individuals, and an understanding of ourselves. Where individuals differ is in the strength of these intelligences - the so-called

profile of intelligences -and in the ways in which such intelligences are invoked and combined to carry out different tasks, solve diverse problems, and progress in various domains.

People receive new information every day of their life; by understanding how individuals naturally take in and process that information will go a long way toward making people life-long learners. Every person is unique; each person sees the world in a way that makes the most sense to him or her. This is called perception.

Perceptions shape what an individual thinks; it determine how they make decisions, and determine how he or she defines what is important. Individual perception also determines a person's natural leaning strengths, or learning styles. Since people are not alike, when they approach a learning task or situation, individuals do not all benefit from the same approach (Dennis, 2002).

The intuition seems to be that people are different and therefore learn in different ways from each other. Hence teachers should respond by creating different instruction for different kinds of learners. If this were true, research would show that different learners benefit differently from the same material, and that some learners would do better with some material than with others. Both

of these predictions were found to be true. However the reverse inference, therefore there must be different learning styles and that teachers should create different kinds of teaching material for them, does not necessarily hold true. Furthermore, it seems equally logical to conclude from this fact that learners differ from each other, and that they should be tested by different exams, otherwise teachers will simply be re-measuring the different inherent properties or "styles" of the learners. Certainly from these premises teachers should draw either both or neither conclusion.

Of course, different learners benefit differently: first, because some may already know more than others, second, because some may have the desire to want to learn more, and therefore, try harder. But above all, people vary considerably in their general ability and quickness to learn (Draper, 2003).

There are two basic ways of thinking about distance learning. The terms synchronous communication and asynchronous communication will explain the essential differences by defining the extent to which a course is bounded by place and or time.

Synchronous communication occurs when all parties participate at the same time. In distance learning it

emphasizes a simultaneous group learning experience. If one takes a course that uses synchronous conferencing communication, one must attend at a specified time and in a specified place.

Conversely, Asynchronous communication happens when parties participate at different times. Further, it offers a choice of where and, above all, when the student will access learning. In a class using asynchronous communication, the students can learn any time and place they choose. Web-based courses belong to this category, as do videotapes, Email, Listservs, and correspondence courses. The instructor usually posts on the Internet the lesson materials and assignments for the course, allowing the student to view assignments at their leisure (Connick, 1999).

Teacher Role

Distance delivery methods for teacher education are well established throughout the world. For over thirty years such methods have been an informal operation. In many countries, distance education methods were taken up in order to rapidly expand the teaching force in response to public demands for more schools and teachers. The establishment of the Open University in the UK in 1969 led the way to legitimization and institutionalization

of distance education as a higher education delivery method; now many such formal institutions exist worldwide (Collis, Nikolova, & Martcheva, 1995).

Not all instructors are suited for the online environment; and some academic institutions are making serious mistakes when deciding who should teach. The problem with this is that the decision rests on the lack of attention of the personality type which determines who does best in the online arena. Research shows that introverts do particularly well online, which applies not only to faculty but students as well (Pallof & Pratt, 2001).

A classroom teacher relies on visual cues from students, by taking a quick glance that reveals which students are most attentive and which student are not and these clues the teacher can adjust the course delivery to meet the needs of the students. In contrast, the distant teacher has few, if any, visual cues. It is difficult to carry on a stimulation teacher class discussion when spontaneity is altered by technical requirements and distance (Gottschalk, 2003).

The instructor who may not present in a lively fashion in the classroom yet who has subject matter expertise, flexibility, and is willing and open to the

development of a more collaborative way of teaching, may be a better candidate to develop and deliver online courses. Additionally, an instructor who is open to giving up control of the learning process; using collaborative learning techniques and ideas; allowing for personal interaction; and bringing in real-life experiences and examples; and who builds reflective practice into teaching, is a good candidate for online (Palooff & Pratt, 2001).

Oakeshott explains that a pupil is a learner who is known to the teacher and that teaching, proper speaking is impossible in his or her absence. A group of theorists see teaching as a reciprocal act that is impossible in the absence of a learner. One cannot teach without someone being taught. In conventional, oral education this essential reciprocity is clear if the students do not attend the classroom or lecture hall, one can speak to the empty room but that is not teaching (as cited in Moore, 1990).

Many teachers feel the opportunities offered by distance education outweigh the obstacles. In fact, instructors often comment that the focused preparation required by distance teaching improves their overall teaching and empathy for their students. The challenges

posed by distance education are counted by opportunities to reach a wider student audience; meeting the needs of students who are unable to attend on-campus classes; involving outside speakers who would otherwise be unavailable; and linking students from different social, cultural, economic, and experiential backgrounds (Gottschalk, 2003).

Teachers need to help students learn how to be life-long learners. If students have not learned how to learn, the end result may render them ill prepared for a career. It is vital for teachers to deliberately use a variety of methods to reach students. There are many approaches to individuals learning styles. There is no "pure" style. Each individual has a unique combination of natural strengths and abilities. By understanding students' learning styles, the teacher will be better able to adapt his or her teaching styles and strategies to meet students' needs. It is not as important to figure out what a person is as it is to recognize how and why a person is, doing something (Mills, 2002).

According to Murray (1995), a Meta analysis of more than 70 studies found that, from a student's point of view, effective teachers demonstrate knowledge of subject matter, love of the discipline, and love of teaching.

Students also argue that effective teachers are organized, clear, and prepared. Another review of the literature found that students consistently identified eight characteristics common among effective teachers.

- Knowledge of the subject matter.
- Interest in, concern for, and respect for the students.
- Well prepared/well organized.
- Enthusiasm about/interest in the subject matter, dynamic, energetic, stimulates interest.
- Ability to present material interestingly and clearly.
- Openness, respect for opinions of others, encouragement of questions and discussion.
- Fairness.
- Helpfulness and availability.

Any definition of effective teaching needs to be closely connected to the goals of a particular course and the objectives of the specific curriculum contained within the course. The type of institution and academic department that offers a course should influence the curricula and course goals (Murray, 1995).

The new skills in which teachers must learn as they assume the role of distance educators are:

- Understanding the nature and philosophy of distance education.
- Identifying learner characteristics at distant sites.
- Designing and developing interactive courseware to suit each new technology.
- Adapting teaching strategies to deliver instruction at a distance.
- Organizing instructional resources in a format suitable for independent study.
- Evaluating student's achievement, attitudes, and perceptions at distance sites (Sherry, 1996).

Student Role

Research suggests distant learning students bring basic characteristics to their learning experiences, which influence their success in coursework. Distance education students:

- Are voluntarily seeking further education.
- Have post-secondary educational goals with expectations for higher grades.
- Are highly motivated and self-disciplined.

- Are older.

Studies also conclude that similar factors determine successful learning whether the students are distant learner or traditional. These factors include:

- Willingness to initiate calls to instructors for assistance,
- Possessing a more serious attitude toward the courses,
- The ability to be employed in a field where career advances can be readily achieved through academic upgrading in a distance education environment,
- Previous completion of a college degree (Gottschalk, 2003).

Many distant learners require support and guidance to make the most of their distance-learning experiences (Threlkeld & Brzoska, 1994).

Successful distance education systems involve interactivity between teacher and students, between students and the learning environment, and among students themselves, as well as active learning in the classroom (McNabb, 1994).

Meeting the instructional needs of students is the cornerstone of every effective distance education program,

and the test by which all efforts in the field are judged. Regardless of the educational context, the primary role of the student is to learn. This is a daunting task under the best of circumstances, requiring motivation, planning, and an ability to analyze and apply the instructional content being taught (Gottschalk, 2003).

At the secondary level, locally or federally funded distance education addresses the needs of small rural school districts or underserved urban school districts. Some secondary school students may enroll in courses to meet graduation requirements which their own districts are unable to offer; some take advanced placement; foreign language; or vocational classes; others may be homebound or disabled.

In many instances, talented or gifted high school students have been selected to attend distance classes because of their high academic ability and capacity for handling independent work. This makes classroom management easier, but it may disenfranchise students who lack discipline or time management skills. The resulting inequity of access then becomes a policy problem, not a technology problem (Sherry, 1996).

The theoretical basis on which instructional models is based affects not only the way in which information can

be communicated to the student, but also the way in which the student makes sense and constructs new knowledge from the information which has been presented (Gottschalk, 2003).

Although technology is an integral part of distance education, any successful program must focus on the instructional needs of the students, rather than on the technology itself. It is essential to consider their ages, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, interests and experiences, educational levels, and familiarity with distance education methods and delivery systems (Sherry, 1996).

Columbia University offers a television and a development of children course in two formats, distance learning and a face-to-face format. Their plan was to merge the two classes and have them interact in a common virtual space. Both groups used the same course site, syllabus, readings, assignments and online discussion area. The only difference between the two courses was the face-to-face meetings held on campus. Some of the face-to-face students expressed their concerns that communication interaction would mostly take place online. The online students were welcomed to the physical classroom if they chose to. In some cases online student

attended class only once, subsequently realizing that all class materials were available online (Mouza, Kaplan, & Espinet, 2000).

The course design was based on the principle that communication should include a broader audience; should be based on issues and interests; and should not be restrained by constraints of time or distance. By bringing the two groups of students together in an online environment, the institution essentially expanded the traditional classroom boundaries and provided all students the opportunity to access the course material and interact with each other around the clock (Mouza, Kaplan, & Espinet, 2000).

Economic incentives and pressures are pushing U.S. higher education enrollment to record levels. Rates of participation by 18-24 year olds have never been higher, and the market for training and retraining of working adults is booming. Some estimates suggest that almost half of the of the adult U.S. population engages in some type of part-time education or training, and part-time enrollments are growing three times faster than full-time enrollments (Gladieux & Swail, 1999).

Benefit of Distance Learning

Distance learning is the delivery of educational programs to off-site students through the use of technologies such as cable or satellite television, video and audiotapes, fax, computer modem, computer and video conferencing, and other means of electronic delivery (Peterson, 1998).

Many educators ask if distance students learn as much as students receiving traditional face-to-face instruction. Research comparing distance education to traditional face-to-face instruction indicates that teaching and studying at a distance can be as effective as traditional instruction, when the methods and technologies used are appropriate to the instructional task, there was student-to-student interaction, and timely teacher-to-student feedback (Verduin, & Clark, 1991).

When it comes to effectiveness, educators must look at students' outcome (test scores, grades and comparisons to on-campus students), students' attitudes about learning in this manner, and student's satisfaction with distance learning. The studies found that the students participating in the virtual class produced better results on tests. The difference could be attributed to the

enhanced ability for students to collaborate in the online class (Palooff, & Pratt, 2001).

Courses and programs offered on the Internet are destined to grow, and improvements in technology will break down more of the barriers that were keeping many schools (and students) from participating in distance education. With careful planning, schools can reach students previously unreachable, offer learning opportunities to meet a broader range of needs and help students develop technological skills that will serve them well in the workplace (Zirkle, & Guan, 2000).

According to a survey conducted by the International Foundation of Employee Benefits Plans, employees rank continuing education as more important than childcare, flextime, and family leave (as cite in Peterson Guide, 1998).

Students were asked in a survey of the Wyoming's Casper College to state why they decided to take an Internet class. Responses were varied and most students gave more than one reason. These reasons include:

- 1) Accessibility, meaning Internet Based Distance-learning (IBDL) is the only or nearly the only medium of education available due to a student's physical distance from providers, or work and family schedules that make it

impossible to attend college during traditional hours.

2) Convenience, in that while other educational opportunities are present. IBDL present a convenient choice. Students in this category like to set their own schedules, and work independently at their own pace.

3) Internet a medium was mentioned by numerous students as a reason - they simply like the idea of the Internet.

4) Internet in the class topic was mentioned by a small number of students as a primary reason for taking IBDL classes (Nelson, 1997).

There are advantages of deliver distance-learning on the Internet which includes the following: time and place flexibility, potential to reach a global audience, no concern about compatibility of computer equipment and operating systems, quick development time compared to videos and CD-ROMs, easy updating of content, as well as archival capabilities, and usually lower development and operating costs, compared to satellite broadcasting (Eastmond, 1995).

Individual states are also working together to promote distance learning. At the request of its governor, California launched its own "Virtual University" in 1998. This institution ties together the numerous online and

distance-learning offerings of the 301 accredited colleges and universities in the state (Peterson Guide, 1998).

Teaching and learning at a distance is demanding. However, learning will be more meaningful and "deeper" for distance students, if the students and their instructor share responsibility for developing learning goals and objectives; actively interacting with class members; promoting reflection on experience; relating new information to examples that make sense to learners; maintaining self-esteem; and evaluating what is being learned. This is the challenge and the opportunity provided by distance education (Gottschalk, 2003).

A study conducted by Schutte (1996), randomly assigned students in a course on social statistics to face-to-face or virtual classes. Lectures and exams were standardized between the groups. The study found that the student's participation in the virtual class produced better results on tests. Schutte concluded that the performance difference could be attributed to the enhanced ability for students to collaborate in the online class (as cited in Palloff, & Pratt, 2001).

Electronic mail and Internet discussion groups provide new and limitless opportunities for communication and collaboration with colleagues from around the world.

Telecommunications is an important communication tool for individuals with disabilities, which make communicating in other ways difficult because of social isolation and difficulties speaking, hearing, and/or moving. The inability to speak, hear, see, or move is not a limitation in electronic communication (Burgstahler, 1995).

Research indicates that the instructional format itself (e.g., interactive video vs. videotape vs. "live" instructor) has little effect on student achievement as long as the delivery technology is appropriate to the content being offered and all participants have access to the same technology. Other conclusions drawn from this line of research suggest:

- Achievement on various tests administered by course instructors tends to be higher for distant learning students as opposed to traditional students, yet no significant difference in positive attitudes toward course material is apparent between distant education and traditional education.
- Conventional instruction is perceived to be better organized and more clearly presented than distance education.

- The organization and reflection needed to effectively teach at distance-learning often improves an instructor's traditional teaching.
- Future research should focus on the critical factors in determining students' achievement: the design of instruction itself (Gottschalk, 2003).

Use of the Internet for distance learning can benefit both students and administrators in the rehabilitation field. The Internet is a flexible medium for instructional delivery, information access, and communication between all participants, including those with disabilities (Burgstahler, 1995).

The use of information technology services both the research program of the institute and the course programs of schools. For this reason research and development program will continue. Further development in the co-operation with the schools can be expected if the development of software and courseware can profit from improved communication networks (Dijkstra, & Krammer, 1995).

In the 1999 the Department of Education study indicated that the percentage of institutions using asynchronous Internet-based technologies to deliver

courses essentially tripled between 1995 and 1997-98. Also, in 1999, a study conducted by the American Association for History and Computing suggests that the most successful course outcomes are being seen in classes that are small and combine face-to-face with online interaction (as cited in Palloff & Pratt, 2001).

For anyone who doubts that much can be learned outside the walls of a university lecture hall, look at the alumni of some of the simplest mail-based correspondence programs that have operated for over a century in the United States. Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenwald, founders of Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream, the Vermont based company that revolutionized the gourmet ice cream market in the early 1980s, learned how to make their famous ice cream by completing a \$25 non-credit, mail based correspondence course from Pennsylvania State University's distance-learning program (Phillips, & Yager, 1998).

Summary

Distance learning takes place when the teacher and student(s) are separated, and technology is used to bridge the instructional gap. It has created a paradigm in our educational system.

Distance learning began in the mid 1700s, with correspondence courses using regular mail and later expanded in other areas of technology. It has allowed the unreachable the opportunity to receive education that may have not been possible otherwise.

In distance learning there are a variety of different types of technologies that are used, the computer being one of them. The computer is perhaps one of the most well known types of technology in a distance-learning program. It was design in the late 1800s, which has been improving every since by one mathematicians, science engineer or educators to another.

In a distance learn program, learning styles play a very big role. There are distance-learning programs for every learning style, but there is no one pure learning style for one person. Each of us has a unique combination of natural strengths and abilities. Some student's maybe a visual, auditory or a kinesthetic learner or perhaps a combination of these learning styles.

Teachers play a large part in distance-learning program, by helping students identify their learning styles and perhaps helping to explore new ones. Teachers as well as students benefit from a distance-learning program.

Teacher benefit by having the opportunity to meeting the needs of the students who are unable to attend the more traditional classroom, and being able to improve their overall teaching and empathy for their students. In order for the teachers to truly benefit the students, they must be knowledgeable in the subject in which they are teaching, and in the technology that they are using.

Students not only benefit from a well prepared and knowledgeable teacher, they have the opportunity to learn when and where they desire, get a degree without losing their incomes, immediate feedback and all the convenience of getting an education on their terms.

Therefore, in order for a distance-learning program to be successful, students and teacher alike have to play an active role in the learning success.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Chapter Three documents the steps used in developing the project. Specifically, the development of the handbook process, including the resources and context validation was presented. Next, the population served was discussed. The chapter concludes with a summary.

Population Served

The project was developed for students with an interest in attending a distance-learning course with little or no knowledge of how to be successful in a distance-learning program. It is recommended that each student have access to a computer with basic computer skills, as well as access to the Internet. Further, it is recommended that students are familiar with electronic mail in order to communicate with the teacher and other student in the class.

The handbook is appropriate for use in any distance-learning program or as part of the instructors' curriculum. It was developed to assist students become more successful in a distance-learning program in addition to showing the benefit of distance-learning program.

As educational institutions extend their campuses, as the population ages, and as the advance of technology requires a greater need for worker retraining, colleges increasingly, have to cater to a different type of student in order to stay ahead and serve their communities.

Distance-learning student are usually older students and most work during traditional classroom hours; therefore requiring a more flexible learning schedules, in addition to demanding a professional development opportunity and classes to help them keep up with today's ever-changing work environment.

The main reason students choose to attend a distance-learning program is that they want to learn at their own pace, and at a time and location that is convenient to them. Other reasons could be because of a physical disability, not being able to afford childcare for a single parent, time, money or educational background to attend a more traditional campus.

Distance learning can capture an audience that has been virtually untapped for many years. It makes education accessible and available.

Handbook Development

The next section of the project provides an overview of the handbook development process. Specifically, the

handbook structure, and the resources and content validation process are reviewed.

The development of this handbook started with a search on the Internet on how to be a successful student in a distance-learning course and how to create a distance-learning handbook. I then called local distance-learning schools and inquired and requested information on their distance-learning programs.

Handbook Design

This handbook was developed in alignment with the concepts and skills based on the information provided by colleges and university. During the research it was identified that numerous of colleges offered similar handbooks, however each covered only information specific to their colleges. Through careful review of existing outlines of these handbooks, research has identified the areas of the basic skills needed to be successful in a distance-learning program.

The handbook contains a brief description of the benefit of distance learning and how to succeed in a distance-learning course. This handbook will include ways in which to assist students on how to become successful online students, a self-assessment test to determine if

distance-learning is right for them, how to stay motivated, and the most frequently asked questions.

Handbook Content

1. Introduction
 - A. What is Distance-learning?
2. Brief History of Distance-learning.
3. How will distance-learning benefit students
4. Steps in succeeding in a distance-learning program.
5. Internet (email)
6. Staying motivated
7. Self-assessment test
8. Frequently Asked Question
9. Student Services
 - A. Admissions
 - B. Financial Aid
 - C. Library
10. Additional Resources
11. Handbook Reference

Resources and Content Validation

This section describes the resources used to develop the handbook and the content validation process. A variety of resources were used to collect and develop information for this handbook. Some of the information for this

handbook was extracted and adapted from Hope International University; Internet searches; distance-learning web sites; and guild lines on how to succeed in a distance learning course from How To Be A Successful Online Student by Gilbert (2001). Reviewing and comparing other colleges and university distance-learning handbooks validated the content of this handbook.

Summary

The steps used to develop this project were outlined. The target populations for this course are students with an interest in taking a distance-learning course due to the need for flexibility. However, this handbook will be very useful to colleges and university professors as part of their curriculum to increase the success rate of their students in their distance-learning courses. The handbook development process including the handbook structure and contend was presented.

CHAPTER FOUR
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Included in Chapter Four was a presentation of the conclusions gleaned as a result of completing the project. Further, the recommendations extracted from the project are presented. Lastly, the Chapter concludes with a summary.

Conclusions

The conclusions extracted from the project follows.

1. During research for this project, the conclusion was made that not only is distance-learning a benefit to students and teachers alike, it is also well needed to meet the needs of all students (disable and the unreachable) wishing to attend colleges and university.
2. Teachers and students alike have to equally participate in order for the distance-learning experience to be successful.
3. It is concluded that learning style play large part of distance learning and that there are learning style that can fit every distance learner.

Recommendations

The recommendations resulting from the project follows.

1. It is recommended that the project handbook be provided to all colleges and university distance-learning professors to aid them in assisting their students to becoming more successful in a distance-learning program.
2. It is recommended that the project handbook be provided to school administrator and counselors to inform them of the benefit of distance-learning and the step that students will need to take to be successful when taking a distance-learning course, when they are advising students on what classes will be helpful to them in their career goals.
3. It is recommended that the project handbook be provided to student services and academic advisor offices as well as on the school web site.
4. It is recommended that the project handbook be reviewed annually to keep current with technology and trends in distance-learning programs.

Summary

Chapter Four reviewed the conclusions extracted from the project. Lastly, the recommendations derived from the project were presented.

APPENDIX
THE BENEFIT OF DISTANCE LEARNING AND
HOW TO SUCCEED

The Benefit of Distance Learning and How to Succeed



By

Mary Porter



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Introduction

This handbook will provide students with the information they need to feel comfortable and competent as a distance-learning student. Distance-learning takes place when a teacher and student(s) are separated by physical distance, and technology (computers) is used to bridge the instructional gap.

Distance-learning classes are nontraditional courses designed around the needs of independent learners. Colleges and universities are offering more and more classes online as part of their distance-learning course. These courses provide students with the opportunity to pursue their education without the constraints of place and time. For many students it provides the most effective and efficient way to learn.

This handbook is designed to empower students and to help them become more successful in this new environment. This handbook will be helpful to teachers who must adapt their teaching styles to the conditions of distance learning, and students having to study and learn away from the traditional classroom environment.

Technology is a very important part of distance learning, the instructor is the key factor in making an online course work regardless of the technology being used and the student must be the focus. The instructor has to have an effective way to teach the students, by providing printable syllabus and a day-to-day schedule, electronic mail to send messages, feedback on assignments and questions, and communication between students. Classes taught using nontraditional delivery modes maintain a level of academic quality comparable with classes taught via traditional means.

Distance learning can enhance the learning experience and increase access to higher education for a wide variety of potential students, especially those who have not been able to take advantage of the traditional on-campus experience.

Brief History of Distance Learning

Distance learning takes place when a teacher and student(s) are separated by physical distance, and technology (computers) is used to bridge the instructional gap.

Distance learning has been around for centuries, beginning with correspondence courses. An early recorded effort at using the new technology of regular mail services as an aid to education. An advertisement in the Boston Gazette in 1728, in which teacher Caleb Philips a teacher offered to send weekly shorthand lessons to prospective students.

In 1878, John Vincent created a home reading circle for adults. Vincent became one of the founders of the Chautaugua movement, a popular education society based on the idea of expanding access to education to all Americans (Verduin & Clark, 1991).

New technology in distance education has evolved. In 1928, the British Broadcasting Corporation was using radio for adult education (no credit or degrees were granted, but it was seen as a way people could increase their knowledge). Television was another form of distance education by the late 1950s, television channels dedicated to instruction had been established in many American cities (Mehrotra, Hollister, & McGahey, 2001).

By the mid-1990s, the digital revolution had developed the personal computer, the Internet, the World Wide Web ("www or the web) and the CD-ROM to the point where it became feasible to deliver educational content directly to student's homes and offices. Geographic location ceased to be a major consideration in that Web-based courses could be taken anywhere an Internet connection existed and anytime of the day or night (Mehrotra, Hollister, & McGahey, 2001).

The Benefit of Distance Learning

Educational institutions around the world are offering distance-learning courses, for the working adult, the unreachable, and the disable that are unable to attend the more traditional classrooms.

There are great benefits in taking a distance-learning course or courses such as for the purpose of career advancement, and the demand for flexible scheduling. The demand on learning has led many institutions to revise the ways in which they offer traditional classroom courses.

Many educators ask if distance students learn as much as students receiving traditional face-to-face instruction. Research comparing distance education to traditional face-to-face instruction indicates that teaching and studying at a distance can be as effective as traditional instruction, when the methods and technologies used are appropriate to the instructional task; there was student-to-student interaction, and timely teacher-to-student feedback (Verduin & Clark, 1991).

The reason students become distance-learning students is because of convenience, it is easy to study at home when you work and have other responsibilities. In some areas the weather is a factor. Studies have shown that distance students sign up for a course for a specific reason: to gain promotion at work, to learn a particular skill that will assist them on their job, or to sample an academic area before committing to it full time. Most people experience with distance learning is limited to courses taken with a specific, short-term intent.

When a student is trying to determine whether or not to take a distant learning class he or she should look at the type of technology that would be need and used. They should also take into consideration their individual learning styles.

Learning Styles

Learning styles focus on the individuals' ability to learn by direction, interaction, inquiry, or creation, and although learners may have a preference or strength, the effectiveness of the learning environment increases when all learning styles can be accommodated (Meyer, 2002).

The different learning styles should be considered when a student is planning to attend a distance-learning program. With all the different learning style it is best if the student could identify his/her learning style, because this could complicate the students studies if the instructor cannot accommodate each students learn style.

There are three types of learning styles--visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. In general, people use all three, but most individuals favor one style over the others. If you are familiar with your own learning style, you will be able to study more effectively and reach your educational goals.

According to researchers, visual learners process new information by reading and watching. These learners relate best to written information, notes, diagrams, and pictures. Seeing a teacher's body language and facial expressions often helps them understand a lecture's content. They may think in pictures and learn best from visual displays and handouts. Visual learners may take detailed notes during a lecture because it helps them absorb the information.

Auditory learners process new information by hearing. They learn best through lectures and discussions. Often, information written down is confusing and has little meaning until it is heard. It may help auditory learners to use a tape recorder or read written information out loud.

Kinesthetic learners process new information by imitation and practice. They relate best to a hands-on approach, actively exploring the physical world around them.

They may also find it difficult to sit still for long periods and may become distracted by their need for activity and exploration (ICN, 2003).

Identifying your learning style will assist you in being successful in selecting classes that are suitable for you in a distance-learning program. Table A, shows a test to determine your learning style.

According to researchers visual learners make up around 65% of the population; auditory learners make up about 30% and kinaesthetic learners make up 5% of the population (Mind Tools, 2001). Educators must place emphasis on intuition, feeling, sensing, and imagination, in addition to the traditional skills of analysis, reason, and sequential problem solving.

Teachers should design their instruction methods to connect with all learning styles, using various combinations of experience, reflection, conceptualization, and experimentation. Instructors can introduce a wide variety of experiential elements into the classroom, such as sound, music, visuals, movement, experience, and even talking. Further more teachers should employ a variety of assessment techniques, focusing on the development of “whole brain” capacity and each of the different learning styles (Funderstanding, 2001).

Table: A. Identify your Learning Style

1. I can remember best about a subject by listening to a lecture that includes information, explanations and discussion.
 - A. Often
 - B. Sometimes
 - C. Seldom

2. I prefer to see information written on a chalkboard and supplemented by visual aids and assigned readings.
 - A. Often
 - B. Sometimes
 - C. Seldom
3. I like to write things down or to take notes for visual review.
 - A. Often
 - B. Sometimes
 - C. Seldom
4. I prefer to use posters, models, or actual practice and other activities in class.
 - A. Often
 - B. Sometimes
 - C. Seldom
5. I require explanations of diagrams, graphs, or visual directions.
 - A. Often
 - B. Sometimes
 - C. Seldom
6. I enjoy working with my hands or making things.
 - A. Often
 - B. Sometimes
 - C. Seldom
7. I am skillful with and enjoy developing and making graphs and charts.
 - A. Often
 - B. Sometimes
 - C. Seldom

8. I can tell if sounds match when presented with pairs of sounds.
- A. Often
 - B. Sometimes
 - C. Seldom
9. I can remember best by writing things down several times.
- A. Often
 - B. Sometimes
 - C. Seldom
10. I can easily understand and follow directions on a map.
- A. Often
 - B. Sometimes
 - C. Seldom
11. I do best in academic subject by listening to lectures and tapes.
- A. Often
 - B. Sometimes
 - C. Seldom
12. I play with coins or keys in my pocket.
- A. Often
 - B. Sometimes
 - C. Seldom
13. I learn to spell better by repeating words out loud than by writing the words on paper.
- A. Often
 - B. Sometimes
 - C. Seldom

14. I can understand a news article better by reading about it in the newspaper than by listening to a report about it on the radio.
- A. Often
 - B. Sometimes
 - C. Seldom
15. I chew gum, smoke or snack while studying.
- A. Often
 - B. Sometimes
 - C. Seldom
16. I think the best way to remember something is to picture it in your head.
- A. Often
 - B. Sometimes
 - C. Seldom
17. I learn the spelling of words by “finger spelling” them.
- A. Often
 - B. Sometimes
 - C. Seldom
18. I would rather listen to a good lecture or speech than read about the same material in a textbook..
- A. Often
 - B. Sometimes
 - C. Seldom
19. I am good at working and solving jigsaw puzzles and mazes.
- A. Often
 - B. Sometimes
 - C. Seldom

20. I grip objects in my hands during learning periods.
- A. Often
 - B. Sometimes
 - C. Seldom
21. I prefer listening to the news on the radio rather than reading about it in the newspaper.
- A. Often
 - B. Sometimes
 - C. Seldom
22. I prefer obtaining information about an interesting subject by reading about it.
- A. Often
 - B. Sometimes
 - C. Seldom
23. I feel very comfortable touching others, hugging, handshaking etc.
- A. Often
 - B. Sometimes
 - C. Seldom
24. I follow oral directions better than written ones.
- A. Often
 - B. Sometimes
 - C. Seldom

Scoring Procedures

DIRECTIONS: Place the point value on the line next to the corresponding item below. Add the points in each column to obtain the preference score under each heading. You may print this page to help you fill in the scoring table.

OFTEN = 5 points

SOMETIMES = 3 points

SELDOM = 1 point

VISUAL		AUDITORY		TACTILE	
NO.	PTS.	NO.	PTS.	NO.	PTS.
2		1		4	
3		5		6	
7		8		9	
10		11		12	
14		13		15	
16		18		17	
19		21		20	
22		24		23	
VSP =		APS =		TPS =	
VPS = Visual Preference		APS = Auditory Preference		TSP = Tactile Preference	

If you are a VISUAL learner, by all means be sure that you look at all study materials. Use charts, maps, filmstrips, notes, videos, and flash cards. Practice visualizing or picturing words and concepts in your head. Write out everything for frequent and quick visual review.

If you are an AUDITORY learner, you may wish to use tapes. Tape lectures to help fill in gaps in your notes. But do listen and take notes - and review your notes frequently. Sit in the lecture hall or classroom where you can hear well. After you have read something, summarize it and recite it aloud. Talk to other students about class material.

If you are a TACTILE learner, trace words as you are saying them. Facts that must be learned should be written several times. Keep a supply of scratch paper on hand for this purpose. Taking and keeping lecture notes is very important. Make study sheets. Associate class material with real-world things or occurrences. When appropriate, practice role-playing.

Succeeding in Distance Learning

Most successful distance-learning students are self-sufficient, self-directed learners. They are resourceful and independent individuals, who can balance family responsibilities, work duties, and their academic workload by exercising control and balance in their daily lives.

Successful distance learners appreciate the flexibility that distance-learning courses offer. Students can participate in an online class discussion at their convenience, yet they understand they must devote the same amount of time or possibly more time to participating in a distance-learning course as they devote to a traditional course. www.planet.tvi.cc.nm.us/distancelearn/handbook.htm

According to M. Shoe, a distance-learning professor at Hope International University, he stated that the skills that distance learners needs to successful in a distance-learning course they must possess, good writing skills, typing skills, discipline and have good time management skills.

Distance learners need to become more selective and focused on their learning. Although the instructor and students are unable to meet in person, appropriate

interactive technology such as e-mail, phone and fax will be utilized to encourage student-to-student and student-to-instructor communication. It is important to interact on a regular basis with your instructor, who will provide clear direction and set realistic goals.

A distance learner is more likely to be successful when they possess a serious attitude toward the course(s), take the initiative to communicate with the instructor, and realize the link between education and career advancement.

The traditional schools will never go away, but the virtual classroom is a significant player in today's educational community. While the market for students are rapidly growing, the online student should possess the following qualities:

- 1. Take full advantage of online conferencing.**
Whatever you can do to avoid feeling isolated is extremely important, and participating in online who are taking the same course as you at the same time.
- 2. Participate!**
Whether you are working alone, or in a group, contribute your ideas, perspective and comments on the subject you are studying, and read about those of your classmates. Your instructor is not the only source of information in your course-you can gain great insight from your peers and they can learn from you as well.
- 3. Be able to communicate through writing.**
In the Virtual Classroom, nearly all communication is written, so it is critical that students feel comfortable in expressing themselves in writing. Many students have limited writing abilities, which should be addressed before or as part of the online experience. This may require remedial efforts on the part of the student.
- 4. Be Self-motivated and self-disciplined.**
With the freedom and flexibility of the online environment comes responsibility. The online process takes a real commitment and discipline to keep up with the flow of the process.
- 5. Take the program and yourself seriously.**
Elicit the support of your colleagues, family and friends before you start out on your online adventure. This built-in support system will help you tremendously

since there will be times when you will have to sit at your computer for hours at a stretch in the evenings and on weekends. When most people are through with work and want to relax is most likely when you will be bearing down on your course work. It helps to surround yourself with people who understand and respect what you are trying to do.

6. Make sure you have a private space where you can study.

This will help lend importance to what you are doing as well. Your own space where you can shut the door, leave papers everywhere, and work in peace is necessary. If you try to share study space with the dining room or bedroom, food or sleep will take priority over studying.

7. Be willing to “speak up” if problem arise.

Many of the non-verbal communication mechanisms that instructors use in determining whether students are having problems (confusion, frustration, boredom, absence, etc.) are not possible in the online paradigm. If a student is experiencing difficulty on any level (either with the technology or with the course content), he or she must communicate this immediately. Otherwise the instructor will never know what is wrong.

8. Be able to meet the minimum requirements for the program.

The requirements for online are no less than that of any other quality education program. The successful student will view online as a convenient way to receive their education – not an easier way.

9. Have access to a computer and a modem.

The communication medium is a computer, phone line, and modem; the students must have access to the necessary equipment.

10. Be willing and able to commit to 4 to 15 hours per week per course.

Online is not easier than the traditional educational process. In fact, many students will say it requires much more time and commitment.

11. Take advantage of your anonymity.

One of the biggest advantages of the online format is that you can pursue your studies without the judgments typical in a traditional classroom. Unless you are using video conferencing, no one can see you – there are no stereotypes, and you don't have to be affected by raised eyebrows, rolled eyeballs, other students stealing your thunder, or people making other nonverbal reactions to your contributions. You don't have to feel intimidated or upstaged by students who can speak faster than you because you can take all of the time you need to think your ideas through and compose a response before posting your comments to your class.

12. Be able to think ideas through before responding.

Meaningful and quality input into the virtual classroom is an essential part of the learning process. Time is given in the process to allow for the careful consideration of responses. The testing and challenging of ideas is encouraged; you will not always be right, just be prepared to accept a challenge.

The online learning process is normally accelerated and requires **commitment** on the student's part. Staying up with the class and completing all work on time is vital. Once student falls behind it is hard to get back on track, but not too impossible to get back on track if you work, hard. The best way to succeed in a distance-learning program is to never fall behind and have regular communication with instructor (ICN, 2003).

Internet

The Internet, because of its flexibility and accessibility, is in fact becoming the technology of choice for distance education in America. The American Journal of Distance Education, statistics reported by the US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) 1999, suggest that nearly 80% of public (US) post-secondary four-year educational institutions and more than 60% of public two-year educational institutions offered distance education courses in 1998-1999 (Reynord, 2003).

The Internet and two video technologies were most often used as primary modes of instructional delivery for distance education courses by institution during the 12-month 2000-2001 academic year. Among institutions offering distance education courses, the majority (90 percent) reported that they offered Internet courses using asynchronous computer-based instruction. In addition, 43 percent of institutions that offered distance education courses offered Internet courses using synchronous computer-based instruction.

Courses and programs offered on the Internet are destined to grow, and improvements in technology will break down more of the barriers that were keeping

many schools (and students) from participating in distance education. With careful planning, schools can reach students previously unreachable, offer learning opportunities to meet a broader range of needs and help students develop technological skills that will serve them well in the workplace (Zirkle & Guan, 2000).

There are advantages of deliver distance-learning on the Internet which includes the following: time and place flexibility, potential to reach a global audience, no concern about compatibility of computer equipment and operating systems, quick development time compared to videos and CD-ROMs, easy updating of content, as well as archival capabilities, and usually lower development and operating costs, compared to satellite broadcasting (Eastmond, 1995).

Staying Motivated

Study skills for distance learners are very similar to study skills for classroom learners. Students are often taking courses through distance education because of the increased flexibility involved. As a distance student you have a challenge in front of you because often you are juggling your courses on top of work and family responsibilities. As a distance student you may be very isolated from the university environment so to be successful you need to have special skills.

Many university students feel that lack of motivation is an obstacle for them. University has more independent learning compared to high school, and distance education is even more independent. You will need to be very self-motivated in order to succeed at university. Think about how important university is to you and how willing you are to do the necessary tasks to be successful. Motivation is highest when you make a strong commitment.

Some students have self-defeating attitudes that need to be replaced with more constructive ones. Successful students are more likely to believe that they can control their lives. Unsuccessful students tend to believe that events are beyond their control.

This type of student may say, “ I could have done better, but the professor was too boring.” A successful student may say, “ This lecture is boring. I wonder what I can do to make it more interesting.” Keep in mind that the professor is responsible for presenting ideas and information, but you are responsible for your own learning.

Goals give direction and meaning to your life. You should choose a goal by narrowing down what you value most in life. Goals help you focus your efforts on things you have decided are important to you. If you have no goals for the future it is difficult to be enthusiastic about studying. Career counseling is available on campus so if a lack of a career goal is a concern for you, take advantage of these services.

Frequently Ask Question

What is Distance Education or Distance Learning?

Distance education, or distance learning, is simply learning from a distance - learning from a location and at a time that is convenient for the student or, put another way, when students are separated from faculty by time and/or place. Distance-learning allows students to earn college credits, even entire degrees, virtually anytime, anyplace.

What is accreditation?

You can do well in distance-learning courses if you: Accreditation is a consumer seal of approval on instructional institutions that award university degrees. It is an independent review for instructional quality and fiscal soundness to establish that the learning offered is of a uniform and sound quality.

Why is accreditation important?

Accreditation gives you a public record of your learning that will be widely accepted by employers, professional associations, by other colleges and universities, and will be recognized in and out of state as well as internationally.

What do you mean by “anytime, anyplace?”

Students have the flexibility in distance learning to choose the location and time they wish to devote to advancing their education. While courses at traditional colleges are rigorous, and maintain deadlines for homework and exams, the technology employed allows students to complete course requirements according to their own unique schedules. Distance students start and end the college semester at the same time as campus students, but have the flexibility of deciding when during the week they want to study their lessons.

How effective is Distance Learning?

Many studies (refer to U.S. News & World Report, October 15, 2001) have been conducted on the quality and effectiveness of distance-learning and they conclude that, regardless of the technology used, there is no significant difference between the learning outcomes of students using technology to learn “at a distance” compared to the learning outcomes of students who participate in conventional classroom instruction. The attitudes and satisfaction of students using distance learning are characterized as positive as well.

How is studying at a distance different?

The major differences are location and time. Students do not have any on-campus or residency requirements. They can participate in their courses and interact with other students and faculty from their homes or offices, and even while traveling. Yet, it is an integrative and interactive experience - students discuss course material with both on-campus and with peers, and work together through the web to solve problems and work on projects.

What do the terms asynchronous and synchronous communication mean?

These are technical terms that describe two distinct forms of communication. Asynchronous communication does not happen in real time, it occurs when the sender and receiver are involved in the process at different times such as posting a message on

either an Internet based or actual bulletin board. Synchronous communication occurs when the sender and receiver are involved in the process at the same time as in a face-to-face conversation or an electronic chat room. For synchronous communication, people must be located in the same physical or virtual place so they can 'talk' back and forth while for asynchronous communication they do not. Distance-learning programs can take advantage of both forms of communication.

Does distance learning mean students will not interact with other students or faculty?

No. Through communication channels such as e-mail, discussion boards, chat rooms, facsimile and telephone students regularly talk and develop a rapport with instructors and fellow classmates. In fact, many of our distance students say they participate more in their distance classes than they ever did as an on-campus student.

Is it difficult for busy professionals to fit distance education programs into their hectic schedules?

No. With both full- and part-time schedules available, ADLN students are afforded the opportunity to study and learn on their own schedule while still working fulltime. In addition, ADLN provides students the opportunity to meet and interact with other professionals from a variety of backgrounds and geographic locations. This is all done at their convenience. Many busy professionals find that distance education provides them with the flexibility they need to be able to pursue an advanced degree.

What can you tell me about web-based courses?

First, it is important to understand what we mean by the phrase "web-based" course. Many colleges and universities claim to offer web-based courses, but these are often nothing more than conventional courses conveyed through online text. Often these programs also include some form of residency requirement. We believe that course material in distance courses needs to be conveyed differently than in face-to-face courses. Our distance faculty works closely with an instructional design team who

assists them with new techniques and technologies to adequately convey the material. This results in effective programs available completely from a distance.

What degree can I earn via distance learning?

You can earn a variety of degrees and certificates as a distance-learning student. You can earn a bachelor degree, master's degrees, certifications, and even doctorates in various areas.

Where do I go to find out about how schools are ranked?

Nine sources for the ranking of higher education institutions in the United States are available at "America's Best Colleges and Universities."

Self-Assessment Test

1. My need to take this course now is:
 - a. High - I need it immediately for a specific goal.
 - b. Moderate - I could take it on campus later or substitute another course.
 - c. Low - It could be postponed

2. Feeling that I am part of a class is:
 - a. Not particularly necessary to me.
 - b. Somewhat important to me.
 - c. Very important to me.

3. I would classify myself as someone who:
 - a. Often gets things done ahead of time.
 - b. Needs reminding to get things done on time.
 - c. Puts things off until the last minute or doesn't complete them.

4. Classroom discussion is:
 - a. Rarely helpful to me.
 - b. Sometimes helpful to me.
 - c. Almost always helpful to me.

5. When an instructor hands out directions for an assignment, I prefer:
 - a. Figuring out the instructions myself.
 - b. Trying to follow the directions on my own, then asking for help as needed.
 - c. Having the instructions explained to me.

6. I need faculty comments on my assignments:
 - a. Within a few weeks, so I can review what I did.
 - b. Within a few days, or I forget what I did.
 - c. Right away, or I get very frustrated.

7. Considering my professional and personal schedule, the amount of time I have to work on a distance-learning course is:
 - a. More than enough for an on-campus course.
 - b. The same as for a class held on campus.
 - c. Less than for a class held on campus.

8. Coming to campus on a regular schedule is:
 - a. Extremely difficult for me - I have commitments (work, family or personal) during times when classes are offered.
 - b. A little difficult, but I can rearrange my priorities to allow for regular attendance on campus.
 - c. Easy for me.
9. As a reader, I would classify myself as:
 - a. Good - I usually understand the text without help.
 - b. Average - I sometimes need help to understand the text.
 - c. Slower than average.
10. When I need help understanding the subject:
 - a. I am comfortable approaching an instructor to ask for clarification.
 - b. I am uncomfortable approaching an instructor, but do it anyway.
 - c. I never approach an instructor to admit I don't understand something.

Scoring

Add 3 points for each "a" that you circled, 2 for each "b," and 1 for each "c." If you scored 20 or more, a distance-learning course is a real possibility for you. If you scored between 11 and 20, distance-learning courses may work for you, but you may need to make a few adjustments in your schedule and study habits to succeed. If you scored 10 or less, distance learning currently may not be the best alternative for you; talk to your counselor.

Explanations

1. Distance-learning students sometimes neglect their courses because of personal or professional circumstances. Having a compelling reason for taking the course helps motivate the student to stick with the course.
2. Some students prefer the independence of Distance-learning; others find the independence uncomfortable and miss being part of the classroom experience.
3. Distance-learning courses give students greater freedom of scheduling, but they can require more self-discipline than on-campus classes.
4. Some people learn best by interacting with other students and instructors. Others learn better by listening, reading and reviewing on their own. Distance-learning

courses provide less opportunity for group interaction than most on-campus courses.

5. Distance-learning requires you to work from written directions.
6. It may take as long as two to three weeks to get comments back from your instructor in distance-learning classes.
7. Distance-learning requires at least as much time as on campus courses. Students surveyed say that distance-learning courses are as hard or harder than on-campus courses.
8. Most people who are successful with Distance-learning find it difficult to come to campus on a regular basis because of their work, family or personal schedules.
9. Print materials are the primary source of directions and information in distance-learning courses.
10. Students who do well in distance-learning courses are usually comfortable contacting the instructor as soon as they need help with the course.

Student Services

Admissions:

Students planning to seek a degree in a distance-learning program must apply for admission, speak with an academic advisor, and register online. This can be accomplished by anyone regardless of his or her level of computer skills or Internet savvy. The student will first choose the classes they wish to take by viewing the school catalog.

Enrolling in a distance-learning course may simply involve filling out a registration form, making sure that you have access to the equipment needed, and paying the tuition/fees by check, money order, or credit card. In these cases your applications may be accepted without entrance examinations or proof of prior educational experience.

Some distance-learning courses have mandatory in-person attendance requirements. The distance-learning office makes every effort to publish the in-person

attendance requirements for each course. It is vital to check the specific course syllabus for attendance requirements.

In many distance-learning courses, regular communication with the instructor and/or participation in course discussions is considered “attendance.”

Online courses enable students and instructors to exchange course materials and assignments, do collaborative projects, hold discussions, and provide Internet links to worldwide information and resources. Access instructions are sent to each student’s mailing address prior to the start of the semester or quarter.

Financial Aid:

How Do I Apply For Financial Aid?

The first step in applying for aid is to complete the Free Application for Student Aid (FAFSA). Submit the FAFSA as soon as possible on or after January 1. Don’t wait until you complete your tax return. Use estimates of income. Most states need to receive the FAFSA by March 1 to qualify for state aid. You can complete a paper application of the FAFSA or file electronically on the Internet. You’re working with the government, so make sure to make copies and obtain a dated receipt for proof of mailing.

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Library:

Distance-learning experts note that not only does this kind of education required basic access to, and understanding of, workable information systems, including the technology by which instruction is received, but students also often require some form of access to library systems. This might be electronic (and even on-campus students can access many distance libraries electronically), or some other technique needs to be developed and the online searching capabilities of statewide library networks enhanced.

Library resources and services in institutions of higher education must meet the needs of all their faculty, students, and academic support staff, wherever these individuals are located, whether on a main campus, off campus, in distance-learning.

Today, most standard library research can be done at a distance. Many (but not all) university libraries' resources are available electronically, and with a computer and the Internet connection you'll have connections to libraries of other colleges, as well.

Additional Resources

California

Bureau for Private, Postsecondary and Vocational Education

1027 10th St., 4th Floor

Sacramento, CA 95814

Phone: (916) 445 3427

Fax: (916) 323 6571

Web site: www.dca.ca.gov/bppv

Distance-Educator.com

www.distance-educator.com

Distance Learning Resource Network (DLRN)

www.dlrn.org/

The Educator's Reference Desk - Resource Guides

www.eduref.org/cgi_bin/res.cgi/Educational_Technology/Distance_Education

eLearning

<http://agelesslearner.com/intros/elearning.html>

eLearning Centre Library

www.elarningcentre.co.uk/eclipse/resources/index.html

General Distance Learning Information

www.wcet.info/resources/electronicresources/generalinformation.asp

Global-Ed

www.globaled.com/

International Centre for Distance Learning

www.icdl.open.ac.uk/

Learning Resources

www.adec.edu/online-resources.html

Librarians' Index to the Internet - Distance Education

www.lii.org/search?basic_search=1

Online Education Resources

www.ion.illinois.edu/resources/

TeleEducation New Brunswick

www.teleducation.nb.ca/

California Virtual Campus

<http://www.cvc2.org/>

The Distance Learning Resource Network (DLRN)

A project of the U.S. Department of Education disseminate distance learning information www.dlrn.edu

Department of Education Home Page

<http://nces.ed.gov/>

The United States Distance Learning Association

P.O. Box 5129 San Ramon, CA 94583 Phone: 1-800-275-5162 or 510-606-5160
email: charles@usdla.org

Pennsylvania State University

www.outreach.psu.edu/users/atb/main.htm

The Teletraining Institute

A practical laboratory where teachers, corporate trainers, government instructors, and others can learn and explore skills and methods. www.teletrain.com and www.distance-educator.com

International university

www.searchedu.com

Online series of papers, and reports

<http://www.uidaho.edu/evo/distglan.html>

eCollege.com

www.ecollege.com

Blackboard

www.blackboard.com

For lists of accredited distance courses

Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA)

One Dupont Circle NW, Suite 510 Washington, DC 20036-1110 Phone: 202-955-6126
Fax: 202-955-6129 email: mailto:chea@chea.org

United States Department of Education

Office of Postsecondary Education

Accreditation and State Liaison Division

ROB-3, 7th and D Streets SW

Washington, DC 20202

Phone: 202-708-7417 Fax: 202-708-9469

Distance Learning Program



University of Phoenix
ONLINE

Criminal Justice, Business, MBA, Technology, M.Ed.
<http://www.accredited-online-college-degrees.com/>



Kaplan College

Online Programs

Criminal Justice, Business, Technology, Paralegal
www.kaplancollege.com/

aiu Online

Criminal Justice, Business, MBA, Technology, M.Ed.
www.aiuonline.edu/

KW

Kennedy-Western University

Business, Health Administration, Technology, Engineering
kw.edu/

NYIT
Ellis College

Accounting, Behavioral Science, Business, Computer Science, Finance,
Human Resources Management, Labor Relations, Marketing, Social Sciences,
Technology
visit ellis.nyit.edu/3/index.jsp



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Figure 1. Student Participation in Distance Education

Student Participation in Distance Education

Table 38-1 Percentage of undergraduates who participated in distance education classes at postsecondary institutions, by type of institution and selected student characteristics: 1999–2000

Selected student characteristics	Total	2-year public	4-year		
			Total	Public	Private not-for-profit
Rates	7.8	9.0	6.6	6.9	6.1
Sex					
Male	6.6	7.3	6.7	6.7	6.2
Female	8.7	10.4	7.1	7.5	6.0
Age					
24 or less	6.2	7.8	5.2	5.7	4.4
More than 24	10.3	10.2	10.3	10.3	10.3
Attendance status					
Full-time	5.9	9.8	3.6	5.2	3.0
Part-time	8.8	8.2	9.0	8.9	8.9
Students role					
Students who do not work	6.1	8.3	4.7	5.1	3.8
Students who work	7.5	9.9	6.8	6.7	5.3
Employees who study	9.5	9.2	10.3	10.2	10.4
Hours per week worked					
Less than 20	5.9	8.2	4.8	5.1	5.1
20 or more	8.8	9.5	9.4	8.7	6.2
Distance from home*					
20 miles or less	7.7	8.7	8.2	6.4	6.2
More than 20 miles	8.3	11.6	7.3	7.8	6.8

* The distance between the student's home and the institution at which the student was primarily enrolled, not necessarily the distance between the student's home and the location of the distance education class.

NOTE: Includes students who participated in distance education at either the institution at which they were enrolled or both the institution at which they were enrolled and another institution. Students who participated in distance education only at an institution other than the one at which they were primarily enrolled were excluded. Percentages may not add to 100.0 due to rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, NCES. National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:2000).

Figure 2. A brief description of online course processes:

ASSIGNMENTS: For each week of the term, you may be asked to complete readings, writing assignments, projects, and other activities. You can work on your own time, but you must submit the assignments when they are due. To see what is due and when, please refer to the syllabus or the course calendar.

SUBMITTING HOMEWORK: There are a few ways to submit homework online. If you don't see anything in the course about it, check with your instructor.

LECTURES: Online lectures are often provided to supplement the textbook chapters assigned. Links to online lectures, whether PowerPoint presentations, RealAudio, text, or others are usually provided in the course syllabus or calendar

DISCUSSION: You may be asked to participate in forum discussion every week or at specific times throughout the term. Many instructors give points for active participation. Maintain frequent "contact" with your instructor and peers in the discussion forum by asking questions, reflecting on your learning, and sharing ideas. The more involved you are, the more you will learn.

QUESTION: In an online course, you can't raise your hand to ask a question. However, you can post a question. Your instructor will respond to your question. You may also use e-mail, telephone or fax. Posting questions is preferred because everyone can benefit from the response.

TESTING: At different times during the term, your instructor may test your understanding of the material. The quizzes may be timed or activated during a specific period only. The instructor reserves the right to require a proctored test.

GRADING: You will be assessed and graded on a combination of factors. For grading policies and grading criteria, please refer to the syllabus of your online course.

Sources: Kentucky Community and Technical College System www.kctcs.net/distancellearning/orientation7.htm

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