



Closure of 2011-2014 Online Education Plan



MiraCosta College

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Background

MiraCosta's first Online Education Plan was written in 2011 and approved through the MiraCosta governance structure, including the Board of Trustees. During that process, responsibility for the Plan was routed to the Academic Affairs Committee.

By mid-2013 it was clear that a significantly revised Online Education Plan was needed to:

- reflect progress that occurred at MiraCosta between 2011 and 2013, as well as various changes;
- better address the expectations of external entities such as accreditors;
- more clearly connect online education with MiraCosta's mission, goals, and strategic plans;
- delineate concrete action plans based on collaborative input of all responsible parties; and
- address ongoing developments in higher education, online education, and the California Community College system.

The Vice President of Instruction asked the Faculty Director of Online Education (Jim Julius) to head up the closure of the 2011 Online Education Plan and writing of a new Plan.

Dr. Julius began the process in September 2013 by identifying approximately 30 individuals whose areas were addressed by the 2011 plan and soliciting feedback from them regarding status updates in accordance with the plan.

At the same time, in consultation with Instructional Services administrators and the MiraCosta Online Educators (MOE) committee, and with the approval of the Academic Affairs Committee (AAC), Dr. Julius formed a taskforce to accomplish the closure of the 2011 Plan and the writing of a new one, consisting of:

- Faculty Director of Online Education - Jim Julius
- Faculty / MOE representatives - Andrea Petri & Richard Ma
- Faculty / AAC representative - Christopher Sleeper
- Faculty / Student Services representative - Adrean Askerneese
- Classified / Academic Information Services (AIS) representative - Steve Schultz
- Administration / Instruction representative - Carlos Lopez

Dr. Julius also met with the Associated Student Government council in January 2014 to request that a student representative join the taskforce for the development of the new Online Education Plan.

This document was approved by the Academic Affairs Committee at its meeting on February 21, 2014, and by the Academic Senate Council at its meeting on March 7, 2014.

Introduction

The introduction of the 2011 plan described six key areas for MiraCosta to address in order to "meet the needs of students attending MiraCosta online":

1. Evaluate progress towards a comprehensive online site
2. Integrate online education explicitly within Program Review

3. Support and coordinate existing faculty and staff leadership
4. Commit resources for infrastructure, innovation, and development of our online campus
5. Identify and sequentially introduce complete degrees and certificates delivered 100% online, and ensure that these degrees and certificates are approved by the ACCJC for offering online
6. Provide the necessary and appropriate student services fully online

The introduction went on to provide somewhat more detailed examples of actions needed to fulfill the plan's purpose of increasing "access and success for online students." The remainder of the document was organized around six topics (student services, instructional support services, instruction and faculty, student issues, infrastructure, and administration) which elaborated upon the themes identified in the introduction, though without always explicitly connecting the detailed ideas and plans back to the six goals set out above.

This closure document will be organized around the six key areas identified above, briefly highlighting:

- ways the plan has been fulfilled; (Fulfillments)
- relevant accomplishments since 2011 that may not have been called out by the plan; (Other accomplishments)
- areas the plan called for which are unfulfilled but still important; (Ongoing needs)
- areas the plan called for which may no longer be relevant; (Changes)
- and, when relevant, areas which have emerged as needs which may not have been called out in the plan. (Emergent needs)

The document will conclude with a summary of accomplishments and discussion of ways that the 2011 plan may need to be expanded when developing the next Online Education Plan for MiraCosta College.

1. Evaluate progress towards a comprehensive online site

References: 2011 Online Education Plan sections Intro, III.D, F.1, F.2, G.1; IV.B; VI.A

Fulfillments

- MiraCosta has increased flexibility in course scheduling, and continues to investigate additional scheduling approaches to meet student needs.
- MiraCosta has made technical changes to enable proper authentication of students using MiraCosta's and Coast's Moodle systems.

Other accomplishments

- MiraCosta has significantly revised its [Distance Education policy \(AP 4105\)](#) to fully address regular & effective contact, monitoring student progress & attendance, authenticating students, and providing comparable student services online.

Ongoing needs

- Branding Online Education at MiraCosta as a fourth site along with the three physical campuses, and considering which elements are necessary to make the online site fully comparable to MiraCosta's physical campuses.
- Articulating a vision for MiraCosta's online site.

- Ensuring that the online site is congruent with the MiraCosta mission, and in turn that the online site is fully represented in MiraCosta's strategic planning processes and documents.
- Considering enhancements to course assignment procedures/resources for online faculty.
- Determining how best to market online courses and programs.

Changes

- Investigation of alternative scheduling in summer and winter intersession revealed that implementing these ideas would be extremely challenging.

Emergent needs

- Monitoring implementation of the CCC ID for single or same sign-on across the CCC system in conjunction with the Online Education Initiative, and working with AIS to determine how that will impact MiraCosta systems and students.

Summary/Remarks

In addition to the important technical and policy-level groundwork achievements mentioned in this section, other areas of progress on the institutionalization of Online Education systems and services are described throughout this document. Collectively, these have helped move MiraCosta closer to offering and supporting sufficient services in a systematic manner to consider MiraCosta's online programs as a fourth site. However, clear articulation of a vision for this "fourth site" and obtaining buy-in from all stakeholders is a significant step still to be taken. Development of the next Online Education Plan could serve as the catalyst for that step.

2. Integrate online education explicitly within Program Review

References: 2011 Online Education Plan sections VI.D.1-2

Fulfillments

- In 2013, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) and Instructional Services cooperated to produce Program Review data that included disaggregated information on success, retention, and other key areas for DE course sections.
- OIE is completing work on a Success System, scheduled to be available in early 2014, that will make regular reporting and analysis of DE data easier.
- The Program Review Handbook was updated in 2011 with the recommended changes to better recognize program elements related to online education.

Other accomplishments

- Online Education is now recognized as a program for Program Review purposes, and participated in Program Review for the first time in fall 2013.
- TracDat was modified in 2013 to enable association of CSLOs with course modalities.

Ongoing needs

- Academic departments and student service areas need to continue to evaluate outcomes in online education and plan/budget accordingly via the program review process.

- Determining transfer and completion of “primarily or exclusively online students” should be enabled when the Success System becomes operational in 2014.

Changes

- None.

Emergent needs

- Online Education needs to establish Service Area Outcomes as well as other benchmarks and metrics to assess progress. These should be considered in the next Online Education Plan.
- Continued updating of the Program Review REFLECT form to fully address distance education outcomes data.

Summary/Remarks

With a heightened awareness of accreditation requirements, it is becoming more widely understood how MiraCosta can meet the distinct expectations and requirements regulators have established for distance education. Now that some of these distinctions have been institutionalized in (1) the success and retention data departments analyze in Program Review; (2) the inclusion of Online Education as a hybrid program for Program Review; (3) a more robust DE policy; and (4) the disaggregation of course SLO data by course modality, it is critical that MiraCosta faculty and staff recognize the value in this shift and take the opportunity to use the new information to enhance the quality of MiraCosta’s online education. The new small-scale data warehouse tool (“Success System”) that the Office of Institutional Effectiveness will be bringing on in the near term further extends the opportunity to engage in data analysis. The next Online Education Plan must ensure that this progress continues, while also considering how to enhance the college’s culture of innovation and continuous improvement in online education.

3. Support and coordinate existing faculty and staff leadership

References: 2011 Online Education Plan sections III.G.2-9; VI.B-C

Fulfillments

- Online Education has supported faculty development through new workshops and resources, funding for attending conferences, and access to online webinars.
- The Program for Online Teaching (POT) continues to offer professional development opportunities through PDP.
- Many MiraCosta faculty are involved in POT’s Online Teaching certification programs and/or have earned certificates through it.
- Online Education has facilitated MiraCosta’s participation in CCC Chancellor’s Office institutional and student surveys on distance education.
- MiraCosta hired a Faculty Director of Online Education, who is now serving as chair of the MiraCosta Online Educators committee.

Other accomplishments

- None of note.

Ongoing needs

- Considering changes in course assignment & evaluation procedures/resources for online faculty, full- or part-time.
- Considering alternatives for course evaluation formats/approaches for online courses.
- Developing a comprehensive workshop series on technology/pedagogy to prepare and support faculty for online teaching.
- Establishing annual reports on DE to the board and other governance bodies.
- Establishing permanent responsibility for online education and other technology/education issues within the shared governance structure.

Changes

- There does not appear to be a means for establishing a credit-bearing online teaching “course.”
- Online course class size is not an issue for C&P; it is instead a working conditions matter. Note that reducing an online section size for a first-time online instructor is left to department chairs and deans to consider on a case-by-case basis rather than enacting any changes to policy/procedure/contracts/working conditions agreements

Emergent needs

- Revising the Faculty DE Handbook to include more comprehensive and up-to-date information and resources regarding online education, especially in regard to the revision of AP 4105 and the inclusion of DE in Program Review.
- Revising C&P DE course approval form to align it with the updated AP 4105.
- Considering the increasing accreditation expectations for course and instructor quality assurance for distance education.
- Considering a more comprehensive technology governance approach.

Summary/Remarks

MiraCosta has a strong tradition of faculty-led support for distance education through POT/PDP and through the shared governance structure. This tradition continues to be developed with the addition of the Faculty Director of Online Education and the forms of support offered through that office. MiraCosta also has a strong culture of departmental rather than institutional standards for online course design, instructor assignment, and evaluation. The new Online Education Plan must, however, consider that not all departments may be aware of accreditation expectations in these areas. The revision of the Faculty DE Handbook will present an opportunity to adopt baseline standards/guidelines for these areas. Finally, MiraCosta needs to at minimum establish MOE as a permanent committee, and ideally to develop a more comprehensive approach to technology governance.

4. Commit resources for infrastructure, innovation, and development of our online campus

References: 2011 Online Education Plan sections V.A-C, VI.D.3

Fulfillments

- Most Moodle users have been consolidated onto a Moodlerooms system which is now integrated with SURF. Work is ongoing to integrate the Coastline Moodle for authentication purposes.
- MiraCosta discontinued support for ETUDES NG (June 2011).
- AIS is completing a major Internet connection to SEC separate from the OC connection in January 2014, allowing for redundancy and continued access to online systems in the case of failure of one connection.
- The Faculty Director of Online Education (FDOE) was hired in summer 2011.
- Online Education is supporting pilots and exploratory projects of emergent technologies.
- AIS maintains and upgrades the MiraCosta systems supporting online education in a timely fashion.
- Virtualization software is in place providing access to specialized software for faculty and students.
- The FDOE has worked with other campus personnel to obtain grants enabling new forms of support for faculty and students involved in online education.

Other accomplishments

- Online Education purchased and outfitted a soundbooth in the Teaching/Technology Innovation Center (TIC) for high-quality multimedia production of online course materials.
- MiraCosta now supports Camtasia Relay, providing simple screencasting for all faculty, staff, and students from anywhere.
- DSPS coordinates the captioning/transcribing of online audio and video.

Ongoing needs

- Investigating the need for a student portal.
- Monitoring the need for adding an Instructional Designer to MiraCosta's staff.

Changes

- Online Education is now reporting to an instructional dean rather than AIS.
- Challenge questions may be useful but are not a requirement for authentication at this time.
- Institutional support for special technology needs for individual faculty associated with teaching online is unlikely; this support needs to come from the instructor's department.

Emergent needs

- Ensure accessibility in development of all online instructional materials and MiraCosta's web-based resources in general.
- The Online Education Plan should be developed in coordination with other planning documents, especially the Technology Plan, not only for support of distance education but also in support of emergent hybrid/blended models that might require more in-classroom lecture capture, live simultaneous in-person and online instruction, etc.
- The Online Education Plan should consider emerging statewide initiatives that may provide new resources and opportunities for online education.
- The Online Education Plan (and Technology Plan) should consider how best to investigate and support key emerging technologies supporting student success including learning analytics and adaptive learning.

Summary/Remarks

MiraCosta is fortunate to have an excellent technology infrastructure in place in support of online teaching and learning. Further, support for this infrastructure is strong, and opportunities for innovation abound. Highlights over the last two years include consolidation of course management systems and greater compliance with federal requirements for authenticating students, as well as addition of new technologies supporting innovation.

At the state level, new infrastructure may emerge through the Online Education Initiative and its related Education Planning and Common Assessment projects. When considering new technologies such as a student portal, the possibility of taking advantage of state-provided resources must be considered.

Online Education must also work with AIS and the shared governance structure to establish and adhere to clear guidelines for adopting and evaluating its online education technologies. As innovations continue to emerge throughout higher education that involve online education, from MOOCs to flipped classrooms, MiraCosta's technical and curricular systems should support an active engagement of faculty and students with such opportunities.

5. Identify and sequentially introduce complete degrees and certificates delivered 100% online, and ensure that these degrees and certificates are approved by the ACCJC for offering online

References: 2011 Online Education Plan sections III.A-C, F.3

Fulfillments

- Significant work has been completed on a substantive change proposal to be submitted to the ACCJC in spring 2014 for over 90 degree and certificate programs approved for offering at least 50% via DE.
- Based on a thorough reassessment of DE course approvals, it has been determined that many programs (Plan A degrees and numerous certificates) are, at least in theory, available 100% via distance education.
- The Faculty Director of Online Education has been added as an ex-officio C&P member.

Other accomplishments

- A fresh look at MiraCosta enrollment data reveals that a significant portion of the MiraCosta student population (over 10%) takes only DE courses.

Ongoing needs

- Monitoring status of programs with regard to being available over 50% via DE. (C&P plans to address this during spring 2014.)
- Communicating with department chairs (and deans) about DE program/quality issues.
- Marketing of DE programs.
- Identifying additional courses not yet online which would expand opportunities for online program completion; helping to remove barriers to developing and approving those courses for online offering.
- Scheduling of courses to enable timely completion of DE programs.

Changes

- The Communication department in 2013 decided it is not interested at present in developing an online version of the oral communication course, which is a required component of CSU transfer programs (i.e. Plan B and Plan C degrees).

Emergent needs

- Approval of DE status doesn't mean that courses are actually being offered as DE, or that DE courses are being offered as 100% online. We need to assess how these DE-approved courses and programs are actually being scheduled - i.e. the extent to which they actually could reasonably be completed from a distance. We also need to assess the extent to which students actually are completing these programs via DE. That data would inform efforts to make programs truly completable via DE and marketed as such.
- Seek state authorization for offering DE in states where DE students are resident.
- Provide course quality baseline standards/guide to ensure compliance with accreditor expectations and to assist departments that have not established their own standards.
- Provide instructor selection/evaluation baseline standards/guides to ensure compliance with accreditor expectations and to assist departments that have not established their own standards.
- Monitor the adoption and implementation of new systems at MiraCosta such as CurricuNET and the OIE's Student Success database to ensure that MiraCosta faculty and staff understand how to make use of them in regard to DE course and program approval status, as well as DE course and program outcomes.
- Monitor local and statewide initiatives to provide course exchanges facilitating student enrollment in online courses from other institutions. Determine the extent to which MiraCosta participates in such programs.

Summary/Remarks

This section closely relates to section #1. For MiraCosta to fully transition from a college that offers many online courses to a college that truly supports students seeking to complete online programs, a more systematic approach to online education is needed. This approach will include data-informed shared decision-making, transparent quality assurance, and sustained involvement of multiple stakeholders to ensure that MiraCosta's online site provides comprehensive support for student success. All of these efforts must be unequivocally aligned with MiraCosta's mission and strategic plans.

6. Provide the necessary and appropriate student services fully online

References: 2011 Online Education Plan sections I; II; IV.A, C-G

Fulfillments

- There has been a general expansion of student-facing online resources, services, and communication through multiple media in many student service areas.
- Online tutoring was introduced in fall 2012; after extensive piloting the Writing Center is offering online services in spring 2014.
- The matriculation process (except placement testing) is now online; the scholarship application system is also now online.

- Counseling offers online advising and online sections of Counseling 110 every semester. Counseling 110 includes elements related to online student success. Counseling is piloting additional forms of online synchronous counseling and mobile advising.
- An orientation to online learning for students was developed and piloted in fall 2013 and offered in spring 2014.
- There has been a dramatic expansion of available eBook titles; all bookstore services are now available online at a unified site; textbook information is linked into SURF; EOPS offers a new online process for textbook lending.
- The library continues to expand its collection of online resources; the library site has been made mobile-friendly; links to library resources are now embedded in Blackboard and Moodle; an online self-paced information literacy tutorial is available through the library site.
- Student surveys conducted in 2012 and 2013 assessed student support needs, focusing especially on online tutoring in 2012 and student orientation to online learning in 2013.
- Student help desk support continues to expand in terms of hours and resources.

Other accomplishments

- A unified website directing students to the various academic support services is now available at <http://www.miracosta.edu/instruction/tutoring/>
- Instructor updating of the online course schedule (www.miracosta.edu/OnlineClasses) to provide more thorough information about online and hybrid classes to prospective and enrolled students has increased from less than 50% in spring 2011 to nearly 95% of all online/hybrid course sections in fall 2013.

Ongoing needs

- Offering online placement testing. The statewide Common Assessment initiative promises to provide this.
- Offering asynchronous online counseling. Privacy issues are challenging but can be addressed with sufficient resources and attention.
- Offering online education planning. Both locally and at the state level this is currently being addressed.
- Enabling online bookstore voucher redemption.
- Providing synchronous counseling/support in areas such as DSPS and career services.
- Expanding proctoring services; investigation of remote proctoring possibilities.
- Developing a central resource site aimed at providing students with a gateway to all online support services, which could take the form of a student portal.

Changes

- Health services deemed it unnecessary to provide all health service handouts in PDF form.

Emergent needs

- Monitor the statewide Online Education Initiative's development of a portal. As planned, this will be available to all CCCs and will include many support services, along with the ability for each CCC to brand/customize the portal for its own specific context.
- Expand use of available technologies, and develop protocols & procedures, to support text messaging, social media, email, and other forms of communication for various student interests.

- Develop a communication plan that will keep students informed about MiraCosta online education.

Summary/Remarks

MiraCosta has made remarkable progress toward offering comparable student services for online students. MiraCosta's student services leaders understand that these efforts potentially benefit not just "online students," but increase access to support for all MiraCosta students. As these efforts continue, it will also be important to monitor the progress of the CCC Online Education Initiative which is intended to provide many desirable student supports, including tutoring, counseling, tech support, and a portal site to enable easy access to both statewide and local services. As online student services expand and mature, it is important that all MiraCosta faculty, staff, and students are aware of their utility rather than considering them exclusive to DE courses and students.

Conclusion

The 2011 Online Education Plan called out many important areas for growth and change in order to increase student access and success via online education. Many of these areas have been addressed and fulfilled or are actively being worked on. Other areas remain for continued work.

The overarching notion of the 2011 Online Education Plan - that MiraCosta should work toward enabling students to complete educational programs through online learning - has not become a compelling goal for many at MiraCosta. Rather, the focus for offering fully online and hybrid classes at MiraCosta continues to be to provide flexibility and convenience to all MiraCosta students. Furthermore, the growing understanding of the importance of making student services available in formats other than face-to-face is not driven primarily by a desire to serve fully online students. Important as that may be, it is increasingly recognized that providing student support services online is likely to benefit many MiraCosta students, not just those students who take most or all coursework online.

Nevertheless, over the last two years it has also become apparent that MiraCosta is closer to offering fully online programs than it has realized. Course approvals have made it possible, at least in theory, for many programs to be completed entirely via distance education (DE). And an analysis of student enrollments reveals that more than 10% of MiraCosta's headcount consists of students taking only DE classes. Still, deeper investigation is needed to determine whether students are actually completing programs via DE, and whether courses are actually being scheduled in such a way as to enable this. The next round of college strategic planning should explicitly consider the role of online education in general, and especially the coordination and promotion of DE programs.

Another key theme of the 2011 Online Education Plan was the establishment of MiraCosta's online programs as a fourth "site" comparable to the three physical campuses in terms of providing comprehensive educational opportunities and student support services. This, too, has not been widely adopted as an ideal, but should be carefully reconsidered in the development of the next Online Education Plan. As the next institutional strategic planning cycle unfolds, it is critical for this concept to be carefully reconsidered in that wider context.

Many emergent needs that should be addressed in the next Online Education Plan are called out in this document. Some of these relate to issues growing in significance to accreditors such as institutional

policies and practices for evaluating the quality of DE instructors, courses, and programs. Others connect to CCC statewide initiatives that may provide new resources and opportunities in support of online education. Still others address emergent technologies and course designs that MiraCosta should consider as it further develops and articulates a vision for online education.

Given MiraCosta's strong history in offering online learning, and its resources and commitment to supporting student success in any modality, opportunities for MiraCosta to continue, create, and share effective practices will abound. MiraCosta can become a leader in online education at state and even national levels. As the 2011 Online Education Plan is closed and a new one developed in 2014, MiraCosta should embrace these opportunities.