

Education and Student Affairs Committee Memorandum
Board of Regents, State of Iowa

Subject: Distance Education Strategic Plan

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Date Submitted: March 2, 2005

Recommended Action:

1. Receive the distance education strategic plan for review and comment prior to final approval at a later committee meeting.
2. Provide feedback to the Council of Provosts regarding the plan.

Executive Summary:

At the request of the Board of Regents, the Regent universities have collaborated in developing a strategic plan for distance education. The plan, and an executive summary of the plan, are attached. The plan is submitted to the committee for review and comment. The Board Office recommends the plan be considered for final approval by the Education and Student Affairs Committee in June, 2005.

The plan provides a framework for the ongoing development, administration, and delivery of distance education, and includes statements of mission, vision, values, and goals. The plan also lists eleven strategic initiatives for distance education.

The plan states the mission for distance education as, in part, to extend the campus beyond its physical limits to meet the learning needs of state, regional, national, and international audiences. The plan's vision statement highlights cooperation among the Regent universities and the appropriate use of technology to extend the reach of the campuses. The vision statement also expresses the aspiration that the Regent universities will be the premier providers of distance education in targeted programs and content areas.

In addition to the strategic plan, the universities have provided to the board office a document providing substantial discussion of background issues affecting distance education. The background document is on file in the Board office.

There are two attachments to this memo:

- A. Executive Summary of the Strategic Plan
 - B. Strategic Plan
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Background:

Planning followed
Work Plan

In August, the Board of Regents requested that the provosts develop a strategic plan for distance education. The universities' planning process followed a work plan submitted to the Education and Student Affairs Committee in September, 2004 which included:

1. collection and review of relevant information;
2. two planning group meetings;
3. progress reports to provosts and preliminary discussion with the provosts;
4. submission of a plan to the Education and Student Affairs Committee in March 2005.

Documentation
includes
discussion of
background
issues

In addition to a strategic plan, the universities submitted a report of background issues affecting distance education. These include the following:

- organizational and administrative issues;
- issues of competition in the market for postsecondary distance education;
- audiences and constituencies for distance education;
- cooperative programs;
- faculty issues;
- the relationship between distance education and state economic development.

Use of the ICN in
Regent University
distance
education

Use of the Iowa Communications Network (ICN)

The universities' discussion of background issues also covers their reliance on different methods for delivering distance education; e.g., the Iowa Communications Network (ICN), and web-based instruction. It indicates that UNI plans to continue to rely heavily on the Iowa Communications Network (ICN), with WebCT enhancement, to provide distance learning opportunities. Both SUI and ISU have reported a shift away from ICN video delivery towards web or web-supported methods.

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ATTACHMENT A

Distance Education Strategic Plan Executive Summary February 4, 2005

The strategic plan, developed at the request of the Board of Regents, provides a framework for the development, administration, and delivery of distance education. Specifically, the plan provides statements of mission, vision, values, goals, and strategic initiatives for Regents universities' distance education.

Mission (Summary)

The enterprise-wide mission for distance education is to extend the campus beyond the physical limits of the campus to meet learning needs of state, regional, national, and international audiences.

Vision (Summary)

The enterprise-wide vision for distance education is for

- knowledge to be shared among the Regent universities;
- technologies to be used to reach beyond the physical limits of the campuses;
- the Regent universities to be the premier providers of distance education in targeted programs and content areas.

Values (Summary)

The values underlying the ongoing development, administration, and delivery of Regents' distance education include:

- dedication to the public good;
- student access to teaching, learning, and auxiliary resources;
- stewardship of programming quality and the efficient use of resources;
- respect for student diversity;
- regard for technology as a tool in the service of educational objectives.

Goals (Summary)

Goals highlight the role of distance education in state economic development and call for greater collaboration among the Regent universities in selected areas. Specific measures associated with these indicators (to be developed after the adoption of the strategic plan) would address the extent to which strategic initiatives are being achieved. Goals include:

- contribution to state economic development;
- selection and use of appropriate strategies for instructional delivery;
- cooperation among the Regent universities in distance education delivery;
- community service and research projects to enhance distance educational offerings;
- providing continuing education or career development opportunities for professionals;
- providing college-level courses to motivated high school students

Strategic Initiatives (Summary)

Strategic initiatives call for increased partnership among the Regent universities with respect to:

- marketing and other efforts to meet available opportunities;
- administrative processes for registration, enrollment, payment ;
- content development and conversion for distance delivery;
- technical support for distance delivery.

Strategic initiatives also call for exploration of opportunities related to the following:

- increased flexibility in new programming;
- market analysis;
- research on student learning in Regents universities' distance education programs;
- improving incentive systems for faculty participation in distance education;
- working with faculty advocates for distance education;
- communicating with distance education's constituencies.

ATTACHMENT B

Distance Education Strategic Plan

Mission Statement

The mission of distance education at the Regent Universities is to extend faculty expertise and other resources beyond the physical limits of the campuses to meet learning needs of the State, region, and national and international audiences. In addition, campus programs and courses will be enriched by these linkages, cooperative arrangements with other universities and the experiences of practitioners. This engagement will serve both distant learners and the Regent University communities

Vision

Knowledge will be shared among the three Regent Universities, their Colleges, other similarly situated universities, students, employers, and governments to the limit of existing and projected financial and technological resources. Current and emerging technologies will be used to reach beyond the physical campus and exchange knowledge to enable students, scholars and agencies to better meet individual needs and the goals of society. By engaging the larger society, both the campus community and the world beyond the traditional campus will profit from improved instruction and necessary services. The Regent Universities will be the premier providers of distance education at the baccalaureate and post-baccalaureate levels in targeted programs and content areas.

Values

1. Regent Universities, supported in part by public funds and in part by tuition and fees and other revenues, are dedicated to the public good. Through their distance education programs they increase access to the Universities and their teaching and learning resources for students otherwise constrained by obstacles of distance and schedule.
2. Stewardship requires that course and program quality be maintained and improved through the efficient use of resources.
3. Instruction is responsive to the diversity of students and respectful of their needs and the expertise of faculty providing instruction in a global society.
4. Technology, not an end in itself, should be used to enrich instruction and the curricula.
5. The organizational structure of distance education relies on highly prepared faculty supported by both institutional philosophy and services.
6. To be fully-effective, distance education programs and resources must include mentoring, library access, financial aid, advising, and employment services.

Goals

1. Contribute to economic development by delivering statewide graduate and baccalaureate programs which meet the needs of individuals and employers.
2. Demonstrate the appropriate use of alternative strategies in delivering instruction to distant learners.
3. Plan and cooperate in the delivery of distance education programs among the Regent Universities and other universities evidencing quality in similar programs.
4. Plan and deliver community service and research projects to complement distance education program offerings.

5. Deliver short-term continuing education or career development units to professionals throughout the State.
6. Deliver programs at selected international sites to foster cooperative relationships.
7. Contribute to economic development by delivering short-term online courses in topics such as leadership, workplace effectiveness, technology, and safety.
8. Provide selected collegiate-level courses to high school students enrolled in community schools.

Strategic Initiatives

Explore strategic opportunities for partnership among the Iowa Regent Institutions, their regional and national affiliate groups for:

1. Marketing and promotion, especially focusing on common target market groups. Create a shared market research group or purchase services to identify markets and meet needs.
2. Enriched curricula to meet opportunities, e.g., growing international markets, especially where a single institution does not have adequate resources to undertake the cost/risk.
3. A Web-based marketing and transaction system that permits students to enroll, pay for, and authorize access to distance education courses offered by all Regent Universities and their peer group institutions.
4. Content development and conversion. For instance, a shared instructional design staff that would produce content for use at all three institutions, or the use of developed content including courses from the other campuses within distance and campus degree programs, sharing content objects, and cross-hiring of faculty expertise for the development of digital content for use at another campus.
5. The use of technologies (hardware and software) and tech support services of each institution by other Regent Universities and their peer group institutions.

Exploring opportunities to collectively and/or individually to:

1. Increase flexibility in distance education offerings (e.g., time, place, delivery, methodology.) This will improve our competitive position, improve service, and improve quality of learning.
2. Improve market responsiveness through development of processes for market analysis, selection of product and promotion to targeted markets.
3. Conduct research concerning the effectiveness of distance education products, and particularly student learning in Regent institutions' distance education methodologies, at various locations and with peer affiliates.
4. Review the promotion and tenure benefits of participation in distance education. Improve systems for faculty compensation and incentives for development of distance education content.
5. Identify "faculty champions" at each University who will serve as advocates, a resource and point of contact regarding distance education.
6. Improve distance education communications with the Regents, students, and internal stakeholders. Present information about the environment in which DE operates, the success of programs, the cooperative efforts of the Universities, and the perceived market opportunities.