Six Factors to Consider when Planning Online Distance Learning Programs in Higher Education

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Introduction

The Internet and the World Wide Web (WWW) have made the process of obtaining an education without regard to time or location easier for the student. At the same time, they have provided more challenges for the colleges providing this education. In online distance learning, not only does the instruction occur via a computer system, usually over the Internet, but other educational processes occur via the computer as well. These educational processes are student services, training, and support. The transition to online distance learning, primarily driven by social change, is creating a paradigm shift in the way colleges are viewing teaching and learning (Rogers, 2000). Administrators, faculty, staff, and students realize that in order to successfully implement ODL, their colleges will need to reassess their programs (Chen, 1997; Garrison, 1989; Inglis, Ling, & Joosten, 1999; Moodie & Nation, 1993; Rumble, 2000). This paper reviews the literature as it pertains to six factors to be considered when planning and developing an online distance learning program. These six areas are: vision and plans, curriculum, staff training and support, student services, student training and support, and copyright and intellectual property.

Statement of Problem

In 1998, 51% of the institutions of higher learning in the United States included a plan for information technology in their strategic plan. By 1999, this number increased to 61% (Council for Higher Education Accreditation, 1999). Yet, many of these same institutions have not made a similar plan for their online distance learning programs (Hache, 2000), and for those that have, many key components of the plan, such as plans for student services, training, and support, are missing (McLendon & Cronk, 1999).

The 2001 Campus Computing Survey (Green, 2001) found that 11.8% of the nation's colleges and universities included e-commerce, such as bookstores and online tuition payments, in their strategic plan. Colleges have done little, if any, planning as they implement online programs (Buchanan, 2000). Planning an online distance learning program needs to become a central focus of a college's strategic planning process because student expectations regarding ODL programs will continue to grow (Boettcher & Kumar, 2000). Colleges need to be prepared to react to the internal and external changes caused by technological advances while maintaining the mission of their college (Hache, 2000).

Until the first online class was offered in 1994, the schools that participated in distance learning used taped lectures for video or TV classes (Daniel, 1997). The development of personal computers led to a sudden increase of campus financial resources being used to support technology. Technology needs continued to dominate as the Internet and the World Wide Web

came into being. It was not until online classes started to exist that the educational issues came into focus for the online classroom instructor. Technology is important, for ODL cannot be implemented without it, but curriculum development and student support are just as important and need to be considered (Daniel, 1997). Given that online classes have been taught for less than a decade, few studies have been done on the factors that have influenced the successful implementation of an ODL program (Stone, Showalter, Orig, & Grover, 2001). Crumpacker (2001) stated that hardly any successful models for ODL programs are available due to its relatively new nature. Kriger (2001) has been concerned with the way ODL is organized and being conducted. Therefore, knowing what makes ODL successful and having considered ODL when developing a strategic plan is essential in order to avoid unnecessary costs, wasted time, confusion, frustration, and stress for those who are involved with ODL. A successful ODL program needs to focus not on computers and networking in the technology infrastructure that simply support the educational process (Chute, Thompson, & Hancock, 1999; Noble, 2002; Rogers, 2001), but on six distinct and specific areas that are part of the total education system.

The Six Areas of Consideration

Vision and Plans

Many authors have written about the necessity of having a vision and plan for the implementation of ODL (Aoki & Pogroszewski, 1998; Hache, 2000; Miller, 1998; Moore, 1994, Richart, 2002; Saba, 2000). Hache (2000) made it clear that when college faculty, staff, and administration start with a vision, it is necessary for them to understand that this vision will result in a change in the organizational culture. ODL cannot be molded into the image of existing campus-based programs (Miller, 1998; Saba, 2000) in which administrative and support systems were built for the traditional on-campus student (Aoki & Pogroszewski, 1998; Moore, 1994). Administrative support structures, student services, technology support, and faculty training and support needs are all areas that need to be analyzed and perhaps changed in order to successfully implement ODL. By accepting a vision statement and its implications, those at the forefront of ODL at the college acknowledge that physical, organizational, and programmatic changes will be occurring, with the inevitable shift of resources (Bloomfield, 1993).

Berge and Mrozowski (2001), Care and Scanlan (2001), Chute et al. (1999), Robinson (2000), Verduin and Clark (1991), Walton (2001), and Willis (2000) stated that the planning phase is of major importance in ODL, and Gellman-Danley and Fetzner (1998) agreed that advanced planning and policy development are the key to a well-run distance learning program. This planning will allow money to be spent more efficiently such as buying one software package to serve multiple purposes, rather than several packages over several years. Planning will also facilitate better use of existing resources and time, for example, developing technical training programs for all faculty rather than having faculty contacting technical support one at a time. Most plans for ODL are incorporated into existing strategic planning documents at colleges and are not separate documents. Hache (2000) studied ODL strategic planning and determined that it is a vital tool for growth that will integrate technology into teaching and learning without having to sacrifice the foundations of education. Stone et al. (2001) also found that an ODL program will be more successful if it is strategically planned. A systematic approach to planning must be taken in order to provide a quality education for the diverse learning community of the 21st century (Frances, Pumerantz, & Caplan, 1999; Kemp, 2000).

In creating the college's vision and plan for ODL, the respect, value, and experience of all the stakeholders should be considered (Drucker, 1986; Hache, 2000; Morrow, 1999; Ohler & Warlick, 2001). Many ODL programs are implemented based on a vision that is not universally

shared and where the goals are not clearly stated (Bothel, 2001). By including administration, faculty, staff, and students in this process, it will be easier to obtain a campus-wide consensus on the vision (Bloomfield, 1993; Hughes, 2001). Tosh, Miller, Rice, and Newman (2000) verified this in reporting that faculty should be involved in determining the priorities, policies, and procedures for implementing ODL from the very beginning. Without the commitment of those involved in ODL, many issues may not be resolved, and questions may remain unanswered, causing frustration, confusion, and discontentment (Collis, Veen, & De Vries, 1993).

The WWW has caused the biggest change in education and learning since the advent of the printed book a little over 500 years ago (Draves, 2000). It is often difficult for people to adapt during times of rapid change. People tend to defend their methods, values, and beliefs and are not willing to take risks, so a solid resistance to the changes that may be created by implementing an ODL program should be expected (James, 1996; Robinson, 2000). Draves (2000) declared that the rate of adopting ODL would improve if revised policies and procedures and strategies to address critical issues existed. By involving all the stakeholders, determining the purpose or goal for an ODL program (Kemp, 2000), and understanding the issues concerning ODL from everyone involved, administrators can determine the priorities and constraints with ODL that will lead to strategies to minimize the resistance to the changes being made. Yet, who should take the leadership role in developing a vision and plan for ODL is disagreed upon within the literature. According to Care and Scanlan (2001) and Mills and Paul (1993), the academic administrators must provide the guidance and leadership to developing a plan for ODL. Strategic planning is proactive, dynamic, and directed toward a culture of change (Hache, 2000), so the processes involved in planning need to be led by administrators whose job it is to facilitate change. On the other hand, in order to move forward with ODL, others believe that the plan needs to have a commitment of everyone involved. Schifter (2000), Kriger (2001), Myers and Ostash (2001), and Rockwell, Schauer, Fritz, and Marx (2000) argued that without faculty leadership, faculty would tend not to be supportive. Weigel (2000) believed that faculty leading change would only work if the academic quality of the courses were improved. George and Camarata (1996) felt that leadership, and therefore, ownership of ODL, should come from all areas of the college, and not rely simply on administration leadership or faculty leadership.

Husmann and Miller (2001) studied what academic administrators believed to be necessary for an effective ODL program. The administrators claimed that the program needed faculty support and a quality, customer orientation. What the administrators did not see was their role in making ODL effective. Administrators have the potential to greatly impact the overall effectiveness and quality of an ODL program (Husmann & Miller, 2001), yet they are often unaware of the opportunities afforded to their colleges through ODL (Garrison, 1989; Moore & Kearsley, 1996). Busy administrators do not take the time necessary to understand the new terminology, technology, and the issues facing instructors and students (Garrison, 1989; Wenzel, 1999). Husmann and Miller (2001) concluded that administrators see their role as administering the program, not owning the program. They are not aware of the impact they have on creating positive changes in ODL (Dillon & Cintron, 1997; Dooley & Murphrey, 2000). Yet, administrators have the potential to greatly affect the effectiveness of such a program by securing resources, influencing potential participants (McAlister, Rivera, & Hallam, 2001), supporting the changes, and implementing processes that will overcome the barriers that affect instructors and students (Berge, 1998). Administrators who have educated themselves about ODL will be able to create a positive culture that will support others on their campus as they learn and adapt to the new technologies (Robinson, 2000).

The challenge to colleges in the 21st century is not to decide why they should have an online distance learning program, but to decide how to design and implement such a program.

Therefore, understanding how to plan a successful program will be essential to their success. Instruction is shifting from a model of individual use of technology to an integration of instruction and student services through technology. Yet, according to the California Community College Chancellor's Office, "the race among institutions to develop and offer new distance education courses and programs has surfaced issues which could overwhelm some of the colleges and derail their entire effort" ("A Workplan," 2001, p. 4). As Garrison (1989) acknowledged, "progress has been limited because few have the conceptual understanding to create a viable strategic plan for adopting distance learning methods congruent with their institutional values and goals" (p. 2). According to Bothel (2001) and McLendon and Cronk (1999), moving forward with a singular vision and the development of policies and procedures are the greatest challenges in planning for ODL.

Curriculum

Planning for ODL usually focuses on budget and personnel planning, not on critical pedagogic issues (Bates, 2000; Berge & Smith, 2000; Bothel, 2001; Fryer Jr. & Lovas, 1991). ODL is more than a teaching mode or method; it is a distinct and coherent field of education (Keegan, 1986), focused on new delivery methods and pedagogical philosophy. Administrators have tended to put narrow limits on ways to make technology effective while expecting broad outcomes (Hawkes & Cambre, 2000). Technology is only a means of achieving a goal, not a goal in itself (Frances et al., 1999). Overcoming barriers to access will not preclude that the barriers to student success have been surmounted (Verduin, Jr., & Clark, 1991). Administrators seem to believe that if they supply the technology, the courses and students will come. Yet, the technology infrastructure should not be built without considering the academic and educational requirements of an ODL program (Bates, 2000; Bunn, 2001; Gibbons & Wentworth, 2001; Rockwell, Furgason, & Marx, 2000; Rumble, 2000; Saba, 1999). Daniel (1997) feared that by letting faculty create their own classes without a plan, different delivery styles, course management techniques, and confusion for the students would ensue.

Many instructors do not want to change their style of instruction (Anderson & Middleton, 2002). Some feel that interactive lectures, small group activities, or closed labs are the only way that a subject can be taught. Others have not yet adapted their lectures to the advances provided by technology such as PowerPoint presentations and multimedia demonstrations and do not want to change their teaching style. These deeply held beliefs and long-established practices will be changed as courses are moved online, requiring new ways of thinking about teaching and learning (Bates, 2000; Burgess, 1994).

Staff Training and Support

Though the principles of instructional design are not altogether different in ODL than they are for the traditional classroom, instructors need training and support to be willing to adopt this new teaching paradigm. Instructors need to be cognizant of how the details of their course will be implemented in the new environment. Courses for ODL programs need to be clearly planned and designed (McNaught, 2002). Replacing the current educational model in digital format is not sufficient (Weigel, 2000).

This rapid evolution of knowledge requires innovative development in curriculum, and faculty need to have greater flexibility as they teach their courses (Trindade, Carmo, & Bidarra, 2000). Effective ODL requires the instructor to not only have knowledge of the content area, but also to have interpersonal skills to effectively communicate with their students online (White & Weight, 2000). Instructors will be assuming a broader role as planners, designers, guides, mentors, and

facilitators and will no longer be seen as leaders and lecturers (Gillespie, 1998; Young, 2002).

Due to of the current lack of adequate support at most institutions of higher education, ODL instructors must have adequate technology skills. They often need to upload their own files, deal with hardware and software problems, and help students overcome their own problems with the technology. Instructors must be able to design their courses, making sure they are accessible to disabled students under the American with Disabilities Act (1990, 42 U. S. C. A. 12101 et Seq.). Online lessons also need to run effectively on the student's computers. Instructors need to consider that computer memory and speed will vary greatly among students, lessons must not take long to download, web pages must be based on screen proportions, not inches, and colors must be chosen carefully. Instructors, who have the frontline contact with students, will be the ones who will be required to solve the problems as they arise. This requires technology training that is not available to most instructors.

Despite the obvious advantages of making courses easily accessible to students through the Internet, many instructors and institutions are reluctant to make the move to ODL. The instructors are reluctant for many reasons, including what they perceive to be an increase in the time it takes to develop and deliver online courses (Clay, 1999; Georges, 2001), the lack of technical and administrative support available to them (Betts, 1998; Schifter, 2000), concern about copyright and intellectual property issues (Berge, 1998; Moore, 1994; Taylor, Parker III, & Tebeaux, 2001), concern about the quality of online courses (Betts, 1998), concern about incentives and obstacles to teaching online (Rockwell, Schauer et al., 2000; McKenzie et al., 2000), resistance to being told what to do by administrators (Noble, 2002), and inadequate training for the instructors who are being expected to write and teach these online courses (Schifter, 2000). Others are concerned that when administrators try to compare the effectiveness and cost benefits of ODL to traditional on-campus courses, this will put more pressure on instructors to teach more online courses (Armstrong, 2000).

Instructor training is particularly needed to support faculty in a field that is rapidly changing (Crumpacker, 2001; Diaz, 2001; Rockwell, Furgason, & Marx, 2000; Torrisi-Steele & Davis, 2000). Bennett, Priest, and Macpherson (1999) supported this claim with a study that concluded that staff development for ODL is currently very limited. In addition, providing technical support for faculty is challenging for many colleges because of limited resources. Traditionally, faculty have received support from three different areas of the campus: libraries, computing centers, and faculty development centers. Some schools are now combining these into one faculty resource center (Long, 2001). Institutions need to "strive to provide access to technology and tools that help members of the campus community reach their goals" (Lawlor & Bradley, 2002, p. 26).

Training instructors about the new technology and way to teach is essential to help them effectively deal with change (Lick, 2001). When an instructor's professional growth needs are met, student learning can be enhanced (Lockard, 2001). To gain the knowledge necessary to implement online curriculum effectively, instructors must have the necessary training, mentoring, and support, preferably on the equipment they will use. Faculty training must be considered when institutions plan for an online distance learning program.

Student Services

Though some say that technology should not be the impetus to drive organizational change (Brown & Jackson, 2001; Hughes, 2001), others state that technology cannot be introduced into teaching without changing the ways other things are done in the educational process (Moore & Kearsley, 1996). Therefore, more attention needs to be given to the organizational structures,

especially as they pertain to servicing students (Bothel, 2001; Morrow, 1999; Wilson, 1998). One problem with ODL planning is that too much focus is on instruction, and not on student services. Care and Scanlan (2001) did a fairly comprehensive study that focused on the issues facing administration, faculty, and staff in planning and delivering ODL courses, but it did not look at student services and technical support. Tinto (1993), Voorhees (1987), and others ("A Workplan," 2001) found that in order for students to be successful, they must have access to student services. Husmann and Miller (2001) agreed that a major problem is that an entire program is not being planned, and that most attention when planning is paid to individual course offerings. Planning for ODL must include fiscal, personal, academic, legal, technological, and support issues as a framework for future decision making (Fryer, Jr., & Lovas, 1991; Gellman-Danley & Fetzner, 1998). ODL is not just about teaching and learning, it is about giving students who are not able or not willing to come to campus an experience equivalent to the on-campus student (Berge, 1998) by providing the same types of student services online that an on-campus student has available.

A contributing factor to the fact that ODL planning is limited to instruction is that faculty have been the major force behind the implementation of ODL on most campuses (Husmann & Miller, 2001). The problems with ODL will become more significant if colleges continue to let individual faculty members and departments put classes online without planning to implement the support structure involved with teaching and learning (Daniel, 1997). The 2001 Campus Computing Survey (Green, 2001) supported this by finding that not many colleges provide access to student services online. According to Brown and Jackson (2001), administrators should not be concerned with how to get faculty to develop and teach courses online, but on how to deal with the need to support online students in other areas of education such as counseling, library services, and financial aid.

Sally Johnstone (2002), the founding director of the Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications at the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, stated that there are three stages to providing online student support. The first is to create web pages that provide information. The second is to add forms and communication methods to the web pages. The last stage is to offer services that can provide personal interaction, such as online counseling via chat rooms, or online access to student records. Many institutions are in a support service crisis because colleges are not planning for, and therefore are not finding the resources, to provide adequate student support (Daniel, 1997; Milliron & Miles, 2000). If colleges want to succeed in ODL, they must consider access, equity, and continued support and not treat ODL students as second-class citizens (Bothel, 2001; Buchanan, 2000; Hanna, 1998; Rumble, 2000; Schrum, 1999). Aoki and Pogroszewski (1998) claimed that by integrating online courses and student services, costs would be cut and productivity would be improved, and hopefully, according to Matthews (1999), the enrollment would grow.

Unfortunately, colleges face a dilemma in planning for ODL because they are torn between wanting to serve students online and the need to continue to support their traditional student services (Collis et al., 1993; Dirr, 1999). Yet, it is important for administrators to consider the student who will never come to campus, and to provide the essential student services for that student. Inglis et al. (1999) stated,

> Delivering courses online at a distance calls for a reorganization of the ways in which support services are provided. This is important to ensure that the highest standard of support is provided for the resources available as well as to avoid the possibility of costs escalating. (p. 118)

Dennis Bancroft, Director of Oscail, the National Distance Education Centre in Dublin, Ireland, when interviewed by Savrock (2001), identified student support as one of three critical areas (the others being curriculum and technology) needed to maintain a successful ODL program.

Student Training and Support

Students who are not prepared for the online environment can have a negative impact on other students and the instructor in the online classroom (Fink, 2002). Most instructors will not be able to tell students why a file is not downloading, or how to access online tutoring or library resources, or how to extend the time limit to take a test, making student access to orientation and support even more critical. Lynch (2001) concluded that student orientation to online courses and student socialization with other online students greatly affected their success in the course. As indicated within the literature, students with support systems such as online tutoring, online counseling, and online study groups are more likely to succeed in their ODL classes (Mason & Weller, 2000; McLoughlin, 1999; Myers, 2001; Myers & Ostash, 2001; Savrock, 2001). Bennett et al. (1999) studied about the social isolation of students and came to the same conclusion. A study on technical support for students showed that students who needed the most help did not ask for it (Ehrmann, 1999). Moore and Kearsley (1996) observed that most research in distance learning focused on the effectiveness of the computers, the software, and the Internet.

The Internet has only been in existence since 1991, and online classes since 1994, so the majority of college students are probably not familiar with how to take a class online or even how to use the Internet. This is why training and support for students is so essential.

Copyright and Intellectual Property

Copyright law is a major area of law that affects higher educational institutions. The copyright law was totally revised in 1976 (Copyright Law, 1976), having undergone its last revision in 1909. This law allows the owners of the copyright absolute domain for the life of the author plus 50 years. The copyright holder has the right to reproduce the copyrighted work in any format; to prepare derivative works; to distribute copies of copyrighted work to the public by sale, rent, lease, or gift; to perform the copyrighted work publicly; and to display the copyrighted work publicly. Marcus v. Rowley (1983) affirmed that the sale of copyrighted material was illegal, even if there was no personal gain to the seller.

Copyright law seems straightforward enough; others cannot reproduce copyrighted works. In the university setting, though, the doctrine of fair use applies. Fair use allows copyrighted materials to be used without express permission of the copyright holder in an educational setting, provided that the use does not impair the marketability of the work, that only a portion of the original work is used and it is not a critical portion, that credit is given to the author, and, in the case of a performance, it is part of a systematic instructional activity related to the teaching content, and it is transmitted for reception in a classroom.

When the authors are employed as full-time instructors, in legal terms, they are considered "work-for-hire," and the college owns their work (lecture notes, exams, handouts) for 75 years from the date of publication or 100 years from the date the work was created, whichever is shorter (Janes, 1988). Part-time instructors are legally considered contract employees, not work for hire, and as such, own their own work. Full-time instructors, though, have operated under an academic exception to the copyright act in which faculty own their own intellectual property. This is based on tradition, or practice, and is not a legal requirement.

The issues of copyright, fair use, and work for hire are all being reconsidered in this era of online distance learning. Instructors have been accustomed to the idea that they "own" their own work, even if they did not own it legally. Traditionally, when instructors changed colleges, they got to take their lecture notes, too. They could give away their lecture notes freely. Given actual copyright law, though, a part-time instructor can use the same lecture notes when teaching at two different institutions, but a full-time instructor legally may not. This also applies to online courses; they belong to the institution when a full-time instructor creates them. As courses are being put online, thereby becoming marketable, institutions are beginning to claim their rights to the copyright. Full-time instructors have no legal authority to keep the classes they write unless they negotiate for that right. Lawyer Corynn McSherry, in an interview with Young (2001), claimed that instructors need to be careful how they negotiate copyright issues, for the results may infringe upon their academic freedom. Instructors need to be educated about their rights under copyright law (Simpson, 2001; Weigel, 2000). No studies or case law could be found to side with either the institution or the instructor on this issue; therefore, both parties should put their agreements into writing before proceeding with the production and distribution of online courses (Primo & Lesage, 2001).

The doctrine of fair use is also challenging to online instructors. In the past, instructors could copy and distribute articles, provided that the articles were less than 2,500 words or 10% of the original work. They could copy one illustration, chart, picture, or diagram per work, and no more than two works from one author. The copied material could only be used for one course and needed to show the original copyright notice from the work (Simpson, 2001). As more and more information goes online, instructors and students may be under the misconception that this work is being distributed freely. In reality, if the site that is hosting the article or illustration has advertisements on it, then using that work can affect its marketability and therefore may be an infringement of copyright.

Until very recently, the interest about copyright was an even greater concern for faculty who used video or music clips in their online classes (Technology, Education and Copyright Harmonization (TEACH) Act, 2001). As explained earlier, copyright law allowed these clips to be used within a classroom. That meant that the same clip could not be transmitted online, even if for educational purposes with proper copyright notice attached. In March 2001, legislation was submitted to allow faculty members to use many of the same copyrighted works in online courses that they have long been permitted to use in traditional courses. In the case of dramatic and musical works, this legislation requires safeguards such as passwords to ensure that only eligible students view the copyrighted material. This legislation, the Technology, Education and Copyright Harmonization (TEACH) Act (2001), was passed by the U. S. Senate in June 2001, and by a committee of the House of Representatives in October 2001. As of this writing, it is still waiting to be heard in front of the full House.

Institutions need to protect their interests while maintaining academic freedom for their instructors. Therefore, establishing a copyright/intellectual rights policy is necessary to deal with issues before a problem occurs (Gasaway, 2002).

Change in Organizational Structure

"American higher education is in the midst of a virtual revolution" (Kriger, 2001, p. 3). The structure of higher education in America has been relatively unchanged since the first university opened in the 1600s (Farrington & Yoshida, 2000). This structure has been based on the age of mass-production, limited information, vast sources for funding, and little technological change (Richart, 2002). As the ease of access to higher education allows institutions to come under

greater scrutiny (Prestera & Moller, 2001), and as innovation and competition influence the learning environment (Farrington & Yoshida, 2000), society will have a more direct effect on higher education, and society's expectations of these institutions will increase (Carr-Chellman, 2000). Institutions of higher education need to be ready for major challenges and possible structural change (Bates, 1997; Kriger, 2001). Colleges may find that the goals, and therefore the structure of the organization, may be realigned when incorporating ODL into their plans (Hanna, 1998; Prestera & Moller, 2001; Saba, 2002).

Marketplace demands will affect education in ways that they have not been affected in the past (Hanna, 1998; Thompson, 1999). Higher education is entering a global economy with intense competition and commercialism (Bates, 1997; Rumble, 2000; Taylor & Swannell, 2001; Turoff, 1998). The power distribution of higher education will be realigned, with the individuals and organizations who are controlling higher education today not being the ones who will develop and control it in the future (Carr-Chellman, 2000; Hughes, 2001). Higher education will depend more on partnerships and outside vendors.

Partnerships will be formed to make weaker institutions or departments stronger, combine resources, and save duplication of costs. Consortiums will be formed so that those colleges who provide similar services for students can pool their resources and expertise for the online student (Farrington & Yoshida, 2000; Hanna, 1998). Students will be able to put together their own individualized programs for what will be known as a virtual degree. That is, they will combine courses or programs from various institutions to make each student's degree program unique (Garrison, 1989; Hawkins, 2000).

Curriculum and instruction face changes, as well. The role of the instructor will be unbundled in the online environment (Young, 2002). Unbundling means that different people will do different parts of the work of a traditional instructor. Content specialists will decide what material needs to go online. An instructional designer will design the presentation of this material, and a technical specialist will actually create the online course. Instructors will interface with the students who are taking the online course (Grunert, 1997; Kriger, 2001; Taylor & Swannell, 2001; Young, 2002). Since the instructor will not be spending time writing lectures and creating course materials, more time will be spent interacting with online students to challenge them individually (Farrington & Yoshida, 2000; Reigeluth & Avers, 1997). Education will become a more individualized process where instructor and student will never miss a class (Darnell & Rosenthal, 2000; Rogers, 2001).

Many student services can be served by outside vendors. For example, virtual bookstores already exist for many colleges. Technical specialists who put classes online do not have to be employees of the college. Short-term marketplace pressures may mean that the institutions will outsource more of their student services (Darnell and Rosenthal, 2000; Graves, 2000; Lloyd, 2000; Turoff, 1998). This interface between internal and external resources will cause new administrative procedures and possibly new management structures to develop (Hanna, 1998; Taylor & Swannell, 2001; Turoff, 1998). Administrators will need to run their institutions more as businesses (Green, 2001; "Online Learning," 2002).

In order for ODL to be successful, it must be integrated into the organizational structure and vision of the college ("A Workplan," 2001; Bates, 1997; Bothel, 2001; Morrow, 1999; Rahman, 2001). The challenge to higher education is to design an organization that will continuously reform itself (Carr-Chellman, 2000). Traditional campuses may not go away (Hanna, 1998), but organizational change is likely to occur because of the changes and advances ODL brings to teaching, learning, and meeting student needs.

Colleges are finally beginning to realize that planning for a comprehensive ODL program is necessary if they want to provide the same type of educational opportunities to the ODL student that they provide to the traditional on-campus student. The problem is that planning is not happening often enough. So where should colleges begin?

Recommendations for Practice

The primary question colleges should ask themselves is, why do they want an ODL program? Determining the purpose of an ODL program will enable the college to proceed with the process of planning. De Neufville (1986) stated, "planning is a set of activities intended to improve the quality of decisions for a community and help prepare for its future" (p. 46). Planning should allow for adequate budgeting for staff, technology, student services, and training for all of the areas of ODL in meeting the needs of the institution. This raises a dominant recommendation: The institution needs to decide what it needs by deciding why it wants an ODL program. In order to make this decision, there are six questions that administrators and planners should be asking:

Vision–All organizations have a vision statement that describes where they want to be and a mission statement that tells what they do currently. Are colleges considering this vision and/or mission when planning for ODL, or is ODL being integrated into the vision and/or mission of the college?Curriculum and programs–Curriculum refers to all coursework offered by a college, and the programs are the formal degrees, certificates, etc., that are offered. Are courses, labs, and degree programs offered online, or will they be offered online?Staff training and support–Faculty and staff continually need to retrain to keep their skills current, and this is even more important when it comes to technology. Is training available for faculty in developing, implementing, and teaching online classes? Is support provided for faculty in developing, implementing, and teaching online classes and for technical (computer-related) issues?Student services–Student services are the non-instructional activities provided by a college to support a student's education, such as catalogues, schedules, admissions, assessment and placement, registration, financial aid, scholarships, billing, bookstore, degree requirements, grades, transcripts, student clubs, counseling, faculty office hours, tutoring, labs, and library resources. Are the same services for on-campus students available for online students, and has the college determined regular effective contact for faculty office hours as required by state law?Student training and support–Students with limited computer skills who are taking an ODL class for the first time may not know what they are getting into; therefore, an ODL orientation and technical support are essential. Is training currently available for students to prepare them for taking an online class, and is technical support available?Policies–Federal regulations, such as copyright, have an impact on the online environment. Colleges also have to look at existing policies and procedures to make sure they are consistent with ODL. Have policies for online distance learning been developed, especially regarding copyright and intellectual property issues?

It is recommended that the institution give equal consideration to all six areas as their ODL program is designed and developed, and to not let the development of the program be driven by those instructors who want to teach online or the software that is the most readily available for student support services.

Conclusion

Online distance learning programs and the technology and staff supporting them can undoubtedly be a costly venture for an institution. A lack in appropriate planning will only cause problems, both budgetary and otherwise, to occur as an ODL program is being implemented. The time it takes to appropriately plan for all areas of ODL will aid the institution in using its limited

resources effectively, efficiently, and wisely.

The purpose of planning is to develop methods to align an institution with the environment (Rowley & Sherman, 2001). We are now in the information age where many aspects of our environment, especially in education, are moving online. Planning helps a college to grow and change in an organized, meaningful process (Rogers, 2001). Colleges that want to have an effective ODL program need to consider all aspects of providing an education, which are much more than simply putting classes online.

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