

eLearning and Academic Support Strategic Plan 2007-2008

General Overview

eLearning and Academic Support (eLAS) is a centralized resource and service organization committed to the management of technologically mediated education. It supports the University's colleges by offering access to a broad spectrum of instructional technology resources as well as consultation, design, and production services. Resources and services are organized to enhance the teaching and learning experiences for faculty and learners of all ages, both on and off campus.

Mission Statement

The mission of eLearning and Academic Support is to enhance and support teaching and learning through innovative and effective use of both new and traditional educational methods, tools, and technologies.

Vision Statement:

The vision for eLearning and Academic Support is to:

- Help faculty create learning environments that are truly student-centered by removing the traditional barriers of place and time-bound instruction, and respecting differences in individual learning styles by focusing on the needs of individual learners.
- Play a leadership role in assisting faculty and staff in envisioning, planning, creating, researching, implementing and evaluating technologically enhanced and pedagogically sound educational environments.
- Provide "safe" environments that encourage faculty to explore, innovate, and experiment with educational tools, technology, and pedagogy and encourage partnered research studies therein.
- Assist and collaborate with other University-wide information technology units in the performance of their missions and objectives.
- Serve as an advocate for faculty and students in matters related to the academic application of technology.

Support Services for Faculty and Students

Faculty Services

Objective: To provide systematic support, training, and assistance for faculty in the development and teaching of both traditional and elearning courses and adapt to faculty's emerging needs over time.

Implementation Strategy:

1. Conduct a bi-annual study that benchmarks this University's faculty support services with those of comparable institutions.
2. Continue to refine a quantitative system to evaluate the amount time needed to develop online courses in order to derive the development costs.
3. Update annually the faculty handbook that delineates institutional policies and procedures for course development, intellectual property, explanatory guidelines for effective online teaching, and also classroom technology.
4. Explore and pilot a software product that monitors academic honesty in distance learning courses and placement exams by the end of Spring Semester 2009.
5. Continue to provide up-to-date information to faculty regarding the Section 110(2) of the U.S. Copyright Law and the TEACH Act through webinars and faculty development sessions.
6. Provide mechanisms by which departments may monitor academic integrity of distance learning courses and degree programs through the review of syllabi, assignments, and evaluative instruments, comparing content and rigor to courses and programs delivered via traditional (face-to-face) methods.
7. Extend the complete photographic and graphic design/production services including instructional media, multi-media, illustration, animation, and poster services to the Health Science Campus.
8. Design, locate, and develop a faculty support lab on the Health Science Campus to provide training for online course design and teaching.
9. Extend current classroom technology standards to include both the Scott Park and Health Science campuses.
10. Establish more venues with faculty for exploring educational tools and technology and introducing selected products into curriculum.
11. Encourage faculty to use distance learning for joint research studies by suggesting they submit proposals to distance learning conferences.
12. Offer faculty new course and program evaluation/assessment tools (ePortfolios and Learning Matrices) and the opportunity to create virtual learning communities by supporting and promoting the use of the Epsilon Environment.
13. Extend the front office support of eLearning and Academic Support to the Health Science Campus so that the office functionality and services offered mirrors that on the Main Campus.
14. Continue to assess classroom and elearning services.

Student Services

Objective: To use current and emerging technologies to create both physical and virtual learning environments which are pedagogically effectual, accessible to students, adaptive to different learning styles, and responsive to the time and place limitations of students.

Implementation Strategy:

1. Assess annually the online practice course and the DL only orientation so that the students' chances of academic success are optimized by providing interactive descriptions of typical activities, tips for success, technical requirements and tutorials, and various other resources.
2. Strengthen existing partnerships and form new ones with other colleges and universities to build enrollment among students who cannot relocate to the Toledo area.
3. Continue to increase the number of DL only FTEs as per the charge to the DL Workgroup.
4. Continue to be responsive to student with special needs by working with the Office of Accessibility.
5. Update annually the student handbook for online learners.
6. Strengthen student services by continuing to collaborate with offices across campus so that recruitment, admissions, financial aid, registration, academic advising, library resources, textbook purchasing, and tutoring appropriately meet the needs of distant learners.
7. Examine technical support for distance learning and web assisted courses as we continue to move forward with the Student Technology Assistance Program.
8. Examine and continue to implement the mechanism for evaluating the support services for students enrolled in distance learning and web assisted courses.
9. Expand the use of Epsilen's ePortfolio and social networking tools to help create a sense of community.

Budget and Finances

Objective: Continue to develop and implement a long-term budget process that incorporates funding strategies, an equipment replacement plan, and a staffing model to meet the increasing demand for elearning courses, degree programs, classroom technology, and related support services.

Implementation Strategy:

1. Communicate effectively to the Dean and University decision makers our budgeting requirements for enhanced and expanding services in the areas of personnel, technology, physical environment, and collections.
2. Advocate through the Dean for the University to return 25% of the revenue returned from distance learning courses to eLearning and Academic Support.
3. Ensure accountability for budgetary allocations through periodic assessment of positions and services.
4. Work with the Development Office and Capital Campaign to actively identify and engage philanthropists for the financing needs that support an infrastructure for online learning and classroom technology mediated instruction.
5. Continue to seek and pursue state and national grant funding opportunities to enhance and support the mission of eLearning and Academic Support.

Physical Facilities Infrastructure and Environment:

Objective: Provide adequate space allocation for program growth and protect the University's investment in its physical infrastructure and the technology to support it.

Implementation strategies:

1. Collaborate with Facilities Management to conduct a space utilization assessment by June 2009 for the development of current and future services and resources.
2. Address deferred maintenance of facilities, particularly in areas where there have been no renovations.
3. Ensure that classroom renovations and new building projects address both current and future teaching needs.
4. Protect the University's investment in technology by securing the physical plant against potential disasters including theft and vandalism and develop disaster recovery protocols.
5. Review, revise, and distribute emergency and disaster plans annually.
6. Ensure an environment that is conducive to work and learning by evaluating the physical space for personnel health, safety, and accessibility with the assistance of appropriate University offices.
7. Work with the Dean to design and develop additional state-of-the-art studios with videoconferencing equipment and facilities on both campuses.

Personnel

Objective: Develop and promote a long-term plan for staffing and increased student employment in identified selected growth areas.

Implementation Strategies

1. Ensure adequate leadership and support staff necessary to keep eLearning and Academic Support at the University at the level of its peers and to guarantee/promote responsiveness to technological changes over time.
2. Assess personnel skills to ensure optimal utilization and determine the need for staff training and cross-training.
3. Review job descriptions annually for currency and relevance.
4. Assess use of part-time and temporary employees as a response to growth.
5. Provide opportunities for personal and professional development and advancement.
6. Expand the Student Technology Assistance (STA) program.
7. Provide encouragement and adequate funds for career development opportunities for faculty and staff.
8. Increase the diversity of our personnel and include best practices for ensuring a diverse pool of applicants.
9. Require that the staff's proficiency and knowledge base remain on the cutting edge.

10. Maintain the human and technical resources and network infrastructure necessary to reliably support and deliver elearning and traditional courses.
11. Ensure that there are adequate classroom support personnel to support both existing classrooms as well as the large number of new mediated classrooms coming on line with projects such as the Field House Renovation Project.

Courses

Objective: Continue to align course offerings and their support services with the University's strategic plan.

Implementation strategies:

1. Continue to maintain compliance with NCA's Higher Learning Commission accreditation standards for distance learning degree and certificate programs.
2. Continue to support an environment in which the *Distance Learning Workgroup Plan* is implemented.
3. Continue to maintain an organizational role in OLN (Ohio Learning Network).
4. Continue to maintain efforts that maximize the University's collaborative efforts with other institutions of higher education and seek affiliations with business and industry.
5. Continue to implement an assessment process for distance learning courses and degree programs that is equivalent to that for face-to-face courses and degree programs.
6. Promote an environment in which efforts by faculty to upgrade their online courses with technical enhancements are supported and rewarded.
7. Encourage monitoring of the academic integrity of distance learning courses and degree programs through the review of syllabi, assignments, and evaluative instruments, comparing content and rigor to courses and programs delivered via traditional (face-to-face) methods.

Technology:

Objective: To provide state-of-the-art elearning and mediated classroom environments that meet current demands and anticipate the future requirements of the University's faculty and students.

Implementation strategies:

1. Expand the options for use of Epsilon as an ePortfolio and social networking tool.
2. Maintain the human and technical resources and network infrastructure necessary to reliably support and deliver elearning and classroom courses.
3. Provide reliable support and data including contact with state organizations and vendors regarding technology for the delivery of elearning and classroom courses.
4. Provide a CMS solution (for example, WebCT and Luminis) that is seamless, transparent and dependable, allowing the students and faculty to focus on the elearning experience and implement upgrades to provide the latest features.

5. Upgrade technology continually and identify the hardware and software that best meet student and faculty needs.
6. Require system redundancy and resource monitoring for elearning courses with provisions for automated assumption of services by a secondary fail-over system.
7. Implement the chosen solution for capturing presentations—synchronized audio, computer screen images, and video (for Echo 360) that interfaces with our chosen CMS.
8. Develop and adhere to a replacement plan and funding model for the support and the periodic replacement (3 to 5 year cycle) of all workstations and instructional technology.
9. Develop a replacement plan and funding model for all software products necessary to develop and deliver elearning and traditional courses.