Dear Distance Education Instructors:

Welcome to the Fall 2012 semester. You may or may not know that I have been assigned as the Dean of Distance Education beginning last year. During the first year of this charge I established a Distance Education Committee. Some wonderful and concerned faculty joined this committee and together we have reviewed our current practices, and best practices for student success in distance education. We also looked closely at the needs of our faculty and students and the limitations we have in staffing support and technology. Together we created our goals, plans for the present, and the future. I’m writing now to share those goals and plans and our accomplishments with you.

Our Goal: Our greatest wish is to provide services and quality education in the distance education format that will enhance students' opportunities to be successful in their educational pursuits. We have established a goal to improve student success in distance education classes to equal that of face to face classes. Not a small task, as we currently have an average student success rate (C or higher grade) of about 10% less than like classes that are delivered face to face.

Accomplishments: During our first year together, working as a team, which includes the Distance Education Committee, Instructional Technologist and Instructional Designer, Library Services, and EAC services, we implemented a number of items.

- We purchased Smart Board technology for faculty capture their lecture notes from white boards. This is a portable device that can be used on any white board.
- We aligned ourselves with a grant that assists in captioning lectures, videos, and audio items that help make these additions to your classes accessible by those that may have hearing concerns.
- We purchased Turnitin for all to use, not just our distance education faculty.
- We purchased access to INTELECOM, a library resource of captioned videos covering multiple subjects.
- We purchased Respondus, a powerful tool for creating and managing exams that can be printed to paper or published directly.
- We purchased Tegrity, a video lecture capture technology tool.
- We revamped the Faculty Resource Room on the first floor of the library with all new computers (both Mac and PC) for your use.
- We implemented regular Student Orientations for students new to online learning. We offer these multiple times during peak registration periods.
- We implemented group trainings in Desire2Learn (D2L) tools such as gradebook, running effective discussions, and use of the tools we purchased that are listed above, enhancing Power Point, using Prezi, and more.
- We expanded the Distance Education web site with resources, links, best practices, listings of our orientations and trainings, tips for students, and more.
- We gave numerous demonstrations and presentations at the Presidents, All Campus Forum, Dean’s meetings, Department Chair Meetings, and in Professional Development offerings.
• We moved the Instructional Technologist and Instructional Designer’s offices to be housed next to the Faculty Resource Room so we have a Distance Education and Technology training and resource area.
• We fine-tuned the weekly schedule of both the Instructional Technologist and Instructional Designer to better manage our limited staff’s time (2 people.) This has increased our response rate to phone calls and emails for both faculty and students. And, by providing faculty training in group settings we have been able to decrease the amount of time of our previous practice of one-on-one training. Allowing us to better leverage time and put that energy toward much needed research and development as we continue to increase our services, tools, and training opportunities for faculty and students. See our distance education web site for schedules and office hours listing.
• We actively participated in district wide meetings concerning distance education and the soon to come upgraded Desire2Learn LMS.
• We created numerous videos and instructional guides to assist faculty in developing their online courses.
• We sent out regular tips to enhance technology use and increase awareness on best practices for online teaching.
• We collaborated with Instructional Technologists from our sister colleges, Oxnard and Moorpark, in creating numerous and extensive training sessions in a wide variety of new and even cutting edge technology that enhances online classes and the classroom, all of which were offered at the Summer Institute for Teaching Excellence 2012.
• Lastly, we create a fully online training program for faculty to learn the new version of Desire2Learn as well as some of the best practices in achieving student success in distance education courses. (Details on this training program are below.)
• Our support responses during Fall 2011 and Spring 2012 were a weekly average of 400 emails, phone calls, drop by office visits, and text messages.

Our plans for the present:

• As always our most immediate goal is to assure our faculty teaching with online format distance education courses and web shells are up and functioning. Currently that consists of:

  Fully Online or Partially Online/Hybrid Courses Fall 2012
  63 courses
  39 instructors
  Web Enhancement Fall 2012
  429 CRNs coded for D2L Web Enhancement
  98 instructors

• Increase group training and decrease one-on-one trainings so we can better meet the greater need with our limited staff of only two people.

• Create a training center for group trainings, and for faculty to have a sound proof space for video and audio lecture capture.
• Prepare faculty for the Desire2Learn new version 10.1. We will do this by launching the fully online training program we designed over the summer session. Our foremost concern is to train those faculty that are planning to teach either fully or partially/hybrid online in Spring 2013. Our secondary goal is to train faculty interested in becoming online instructors.

• Hire a replacement for our now vacant Instructional Technologist position.

More about the fully online training program for Desire2Learn Version 10.1: We have developed a 4 week training program. We expect this to take approximately 60 hours to complete. It is to be done much like a regular online class with a beginning date and an ending date. There are modules for each of the four weeks. You will have 24/7 access to this fully online course but you will be expected to work with a cohort week by week throughout the course. The outcome of this course is that faculty participants will build a full, but basic, online course in this new LMS. For those of you who have been teaching online or with web enhanced shells you will be able to use your valuable materials already compiled. The course you develop as an outcome can then be used in the future for teaching with. Please note that taking this course does not guarantee you will receive online assignments. Additionally, as with all software, ongoing upgrading of ones skills is necessary when the online tools upgrade or change. Taking this course does not provide a lifetime training to teach online.

It is our wish that each of you planning to teach online in Spring will choose to take the online training course. We believe this course will not only teach you what you need for the new version of the LMS but will also expose you to many of the best practices in teaching online. However, we cannot nor will not be forcing this course. If you believe you do not need training and will be fine without it you may instead choose to attend one of two upcoming face to face introductions to the new LMS system. These will not be interactive. They will simply display the changes and what those changes in the system look like and where they are located. The dates and times of these information sessions are located below.

It is important to note that our college does not have the distance education staffing to support one-on-one training. We are also not staffed to create your online classes for you. If you are scheduled to teach online it is important for yours and your student’s success to be well trained and informed about the components of the LMS system and the best practices for teaching online. The training course we have developed for you will provide you with those resources.

The launch of D2L Version 10 and the training schedule is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 16</td>
<td>Fall Semester Starts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date Range</td>
<td>Training Details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 7 – Nov 3</td>
<td>1st training class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 4 – Dec 7</td>
<td>2nd training class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 4th</td>
<td>D2L Version 10 presentation only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:30-6:30pm, LRC 205</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 7th</td>
<td>Version 10 Upgrade (faculty access)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:30-2:30pm, LRC 205</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 20</td>
<td>Students have access to Spring DE course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(winter break)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 14</td>
<td>First Day of Spring classes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you wish to take part in one of the two online trainings please sign up at: [http://www.venturacollege.edu/online_services/online_classes/faculty_resources.shtml](http://www.venturacollege.edu/online_services/online_classes/faculty_resources.shtml)

**Our plans for the near future:**

Offer more fully online faculty training courses in Spring 2013.

“Wind Down Wednesday” on-campus (optional) portion of our fall training course, for users who deem training too basic and would like to challenge themselves and enhance their skills.
“Therapy Thursday” for trainees who need more assistance as they work through the course.

Offer more group trainings and less one-on-one trainings. With our limited staffing this is necessary for our meeting the greater need.

Focus on students. We plan to create a fully online self-assessment and online orientation for the student population and housing it on our web site for easy access by potential and continuing students.

We are exploring how to increase online tutoring.

We are exploring how to increase access to student services online.

We are working now on a project to redesign the student portal in conjunction with the entire district that will provide more online services and enhance the look and navigation of the student portal.

We hope to see an increase in web enhanced, fully online, and partially online courses as we are able to increase our efficiencies in services.

We hope to foster a mentoring program that brings faculty together to support each other in the development of improved teaching and classroom management methods with a goal of increasing student success in the online environment.

We hope to reach our goal of online student success equaling the same level as like face to face classes.

Closing: One might see this as an ambitious plan. To us it is a necessary plan. Our students success in online courses depends on all of us (students included) investing and committing our time, and attention to quality online learning. I hope you find this message informative and helpful. I hope this dispels any rumors or concerns you may have about what we as a distance education team and committee are currently doing, planning for the future, and what goals we are setting. If you have questions please feel free to send me an email.

My regards and best wishes for your teaching success.

Dr. Huddleston

Gwendolyn Lewis Huddleston, MA, MFA, Ed.D
Dean of Social and Behavioral Sciences, Humanities, Distance Education, Professional Development, and Director of the Title V Cooperative Grant
Ventura College
805-654-6400
glewishuddleston@vcccd.edu