DISTANCE EDUCATION POLICY

Foreword.

An awareness of regional, state, and national technology trends and initiatives for distance education are included in distance education planning for the college. Local and state initiatives which affect the college are the Virginia Distance Education Network (VDEN), Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center (HEC), Southwest Virginia Education & Training Network (SVETN) and Network Virginia. Other initiatives impacting planning of instruction delivery for distance education include the growth of broadband internet access in homes, high schools, business, other colleges in the VCCS, Public Broadcasting System(PBS)and the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB). Virginia Community College System (VCCS) policies and procedures which provide guidance to the college are the VCCS Policy Manual, VCCS Distance Learning Management Model, Virginia Distance Education Network (VDEN) Administrative Procedures, VDEN Academic Standards, and the VCCS Distance Learning Quality Assurance Plan for Asynchronous Courses.

Overview.

The college's program for distance education is an alternative instructional delivery which includes distance education and independent learning methods. The courses are designed for students who need or desire to work outside the traditional classroom to pursue academic goals or to take specialized classes not traditionally offered on the VHCC campus. Distance Education courses offer a flexible, convenient alternative to courses taught on campus and require a strong commitment by the student, faculty and administration. Distance education courses are coordinated through the Division of Library and Instructional Services (LIS) in cooperation with the academic divisions of the College. Working with faculty the Instructional Services (IS) component of LIS has major responsibility for faculty training, instructional design and educational technology, course delivery via Blackboard and instructional television, course and faculty evaluation, academic computing, and other areas associated with alternative learning modes.

All distance education courses are part of the academic divisions and are equivalent to or exceed their more traditional counterparts. Distance learning courses represent a wide variety of non-traditional courses. Class materials and instruction are delivered using several different technologies including the internet, interactive television, DVD, CD, videotape, multi-media packages and computer conferencing software. The courses and materials may be produced on campus, drawn from other colleges in the VCCS or elsewhere, depending on the needs of the students and the available options, including PBS, SREB, and commercial providers.

Selection of distance learning faculty follows the same college procedures as selection of on campus instructors.

Instructional Services (IS) assists faculty with the development of distance learning courses and/or identification, purchasing, or selecting courses from other sources. Academic integrity and quality of all distance education activities are ensured through the active participation of full-time program faculty and administration in the College's distance learning efforts and evaluation.

Mission of Distance Education.

1. Provide quality courses required by students for the completion of a program of study.
2. Increase student access to courses without faculty, time or location constraints.
3. Provide flexible learning opportunities for students with special needs.
4. Maximize use of specialized expertise of faculty and staff.
5. Model collaborative and innovative uses of instructional technology.
6. Maximize use of technology available for cost-effective instruction.
7. Increase college enrollment by meeting instructional needs of students.

Needs Assessment.

In order to create and maintain a dynamic and educationally sound distance education program, a needs assessment concerning student requirements for alternative courses and methods of instruction delivery is conducted by the Coordinator of Distance Education and Educational Technology. Data collected about students' needs and responses for selecting various courses and delivery systems are used to make decisions about these variables. Enrollment trends, other colleges' experiences, course availability and development, and faculty interest and expertise are considered in planning distance education opportunities.

Marketing.

The College uses traditional resources to recruit students and publicize courses. Instructional Services will assist marketing efforts using posters, flyers, brochures, direct mailings, the Internet and other advertising channels. All marketing efforts will be coordinated through the College's public relations and marketing department.

Presentation Methods.

Many different methods and technologies are available to provide distance learning opportunities. Methods currently in use at the college include using DVD, CD, videotape, computer based instruction, the Internet, course management systems like Blackboard, two-way, interactive television and computer conferencing. However, the needs of the student, the presence of qualified and trained faculty, course content, and availability of appropriate library and instructional services determine the most effective delivery method for distance education classes.

Faculty.

Requirements

1. Plan and develop course prior to delivery.
2. Schedule planning, training and practice sessions with Instructional Services personnel.
3. Prepare detailed syllabus including expected outcomes and assessment methods.
4. Develop content, proctored activities, learning activities, materials and assessments for the course.

5. Plan for faculty/student interaction (e.g., involvement of students).
6. Attend appropriate professional development opportunities.
7. Have course evaluated by administration to assure quality before the class is offered to students.
8. Evaluate course and plan for revisions as needed.

Responsibilities

1. Develop course by preparing materials or selecting course materials from other appropriate sources.
2. Select delivery method.
3. Ensure academic integrity of the course and provide positive and effective learning experiences to include proctored activities.
4. Participate in College's professional development distance learning activities.
5. Administer the course including:
   a. Evaluate student assignments and exams.
   b. Provide proctored or supervised learning activities (exams, quizzes, labs, demonstrations, etc.,) to demonstrate that the student has mastered the course content. Proof of student identify is required.
   c. Accurately maintain student records.
   d. Provide timely feedback to students.
   e. Monitor student progress.
   f. Respond to student inquiries.
   g. Coordinate activities with Instructional Services staff.
6. Evaluate course content and delivery method to ensure that academic rigor and student learning in programs or courses delivered by distance education are comparable to or exceed other programs or courses offered on campus through traditional delivery.

Instructional Support.

1. Inform divisions of courses availability.
2. Facilitate implementation of courses through synchronous and/or asynchronous delivery (e.g., instructional design, equipment, production services, training).
3. Schedule classes via VHCC class schedule, Distance Education webpage,VDEN and/or VCCS Online.
4. Provide technical assistance in development and presentation of course.
5. Provide training on use of selected technologies and appropriate teaching strategies and activities.
6. Provide access to learning resources required by classes through VHCC library, purchases, rentals, or cooperative agreements with other agencies, colleges or commercial vendors.
7. Assist in evaluation of distance education course technology and instruction.

Administration.

Responsibilities
1. It is the responsibility of the administration to insure that faculty meet the required minimum VCCS and SACS standards for Faculty Rank
2. Provide appropriate financial support for distance education including faculty incentives, equipment and technical assistance. For example, faculty members may receive a .5 overload workload credit for each new distance learning

course which they develop, the first time the course is successfully offered.

3. Ensure appropriate marketing, student services, assessment and course integrity.
4. Evaluate program and course effectiveness, student learning, and faculty satisfaction and training.
5. Evaluate efforts annually and make appropriate changes for improvement.

Selection of Distance Education Courses from Other Sources.

Procedures
1. When interested in receiving a course from another college, the Division Chair will first request course information, including a syllabus, copies of faculty credentials and other appropriate materials. The Chair then will request that all faculty in the discipline of the proposed course review the information. In the event that there are no such faculty, the chair will appoint an appropriate faculty review committee.
2. The review shall address concerns as faculty credentials and the appropriateness of the course objectives, assignments, and course rigor and requirements. The Dean of Instruction and Student Services and the appropriate Division Chair will examine the transcripts of the proposed instructor of the prospective course to verify the qualifications of the individual in question. Both the Virginia Community College System and Virginia Highlands Community College have implemented procedures to ensure that all official transcripts are required for all instructors.
3. The courses will be offered only upon favorable review by the faculty and the Chair. If the College then elects to receive a certain course:
   - the review then will be documented in the appropriate course folder stored in the respective Division office, and
   - the Coordinator of Academic Computing and Technologies, Assistant Registrar and other Student Information System personnel will be notified in writing so that courses can be scheduled appropriately and coded correctly.