Online/Distance Learning at USFSP

Presentation by Carol Hixson, Dean of Library
To USFSP Faculty Senate
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We operate independently, but within a state and USF System framework for some things.

State framework:

In February 2009, the Florida Distance Learning Task Force issued a report outlining state guidelines for distance learning. Of significance from this report are several things:

- Definition of an online course is one where **at least 80 percent of the direct instruction of the course is delivered utilizing some form of technology when the student and faculty member are separated by time, space or both.**
- institutions may only charge the distance learning fee if a course is listed in the Higher Education Distance Learning Catalog
- DL money may NOT be used for:
  - Instructional costs (no faculty salaries)
  - Any costs covered by other fees (health, activity, technology, etc.)
  - Costs not associated with the development and delivery of eligible distance learning courses
- Permissible expenses may include:
  - specialized technology and maintenance (e.g., hardware, software licenses;
  - technology consulting; hosting and network services)
  - development and/or acquisition (licensing) of instructional content for distance learning courses
  - distance learning program development and accreditation
  - distance learning program quality assessment and control
  - faculty development and support for distance learning courses
  - distance learning student support services
  - testing facilities and support
  - distance learning administrative & operating costs
  - course management system server, database, and support staff
  - instructional material

On July 1, 2012 the Florida Distance Learning Consortium officially became part of the new Florida Virtual Campus (FLVC). Joining FDLC in the transition were the Florida Center for Advising and Academic Support (FCAAS, aka "FACTS.org"), the Florida Center for Library Automation (FCLA), and the College Center for Library Automation (CCLA). Section 1006.73, Florida Statutes, establishes FLVC to provide access to online student and library support services, and to serve as a statewide resource and clearinghouse for technology-based public postsecondary education distance learning courses and degree programs. (*It remains to be seen what impact this will have on us.)*

System framework:

The amount of the DL fee is set at the System level and stands at $50 a credit hour for all online courses, whether graduate or undergraduate.

USF System maintains the learning management system (LMS), currently Blackboard. Sometime last year the System started a trial of the Canvas learning management system. A number of USFSP faculty took part, including faculty from the Department of Journalism and Media Studies and the College of Business. Mark Walters, Casey Frechette, and David Brodosi served on a systemwide group to evaluate the LMS and recommend whether the USF System should stay with Blackboard or move to another LMS. Faculty response to Canvas was favorable and the System made a decision to migrate all course content from Blackboard to Canvas, with support for Blackboard ending December 2013.

USFSP specifics:

Increasing number of courses, programs and students – with approximately ¼ of credit hours being generated by online courses.

Staffing support for online learning currently consists of:

- DL Team in Library: David Brodosi and four instructional designers
- Gary Austin as DL Librarian
- 2 COB instructional designers
- All faculty who are engaged in developing and delivering online courses
- Barry McDowell in Disability Services Office
- Other assorted staff in Student Services, Academic Affairs, Colleges, Registrar, etc.

Background:

In fall of 2009, with Dr. Noonan's support, I pulled together a group of faculty who were teaching online courses, along with the College Deans, to begin discussing the state of affairs for online learning at USFSP and what we wanted to occur. We met several times in the fall of 2009 and the spring of 2010 and made a number of recommendations that were followed up on by Dr. Noonan, including:
- establishing a program to support faculty professional development for online teaching
- establishing a program to provide better assistance to faculty preparing online courses
- bringing in an outside consultant to review where we were, where we wanted to be, and how we could get there

Blackboard Consulting, Inc. was hired in the fall of 2010 to undertake surveys, conduct interviews, provide some faculty development sessions, and make recommendations. They acquitted themselves well, working with faculty and a DL Steering Committee (established by Dr. Sullivan and expanded later to include more faculty) and issuing their final report in February 2011. http://dspace.nelson.usf.edu/xmlui/handle/10806/165 The DL Steering Committee met to review their recommendations and decide how to move forward. We made a number of efforts, some of which were more successful than others.

SOME of the key recommendations and follow-up efforts were:

Establish Course Design and Delivery Standards: Adopt Quality Matters as University course design standards. (Done)
1. Train instructional design staff to become QM certified reviewers and trainers; (DONE)
2. Provide QM training as part of the faculty development curriculum; (DONE)
3. Target a specific number of courses each year to be reviewed through the QM process; (UNDERWAY)

- USFSP joined Quality Matters in 2011. Also joined the Sloan Consortium and Educause
- Several faculty and instructional designers attended QM workshops and conferences
- The Library's Distance Learning team has established a series of workshops to introduce faculty to QM design principles.
- All the Instructional Designers working as part of the library's DL Team, David Brodosi, and Gary Austin have been QM certified as trainers in the QM rubric
- Dr. Steve Lang, COE, has been certified as a peer reviewer in the QM program
- The DL Team worked with Dr. Todd Shank, COB, to shepherd the first USFSP course through the QM certification process. They are now working with Dr. Varol Kahyan, COB. The goal is to get the QM stamp of approval on all USFSP DL courses.

Establish a Faculty Development Program: Create a Faculty Development Curriculum that provides a clear pathway for faculty to become effective online course designers and facilitators; Create a community of Practice for experienced online faculty to develop their skills and share teaching strategies and course design examples.

- **Distance Learning Course Development Program** is a multi-pronged program for the development and support of distance/online learning courses and course development. **Emphasis now is on QM training and certification and migration from Blackboard to Canvas.** Details are on the Academic Affairs website http://www1.usfsp.edu/academics/
- QM courses for our faculty have been developed by our instructional designers mentioned above
- Canvas transition courses have been developed by our instructional designers
- DL blog http://usfspdistancelearning.wordpress.com/ established by the Library

Establish a process for student support: Establish an online student services coordination team to develop service standards and coordinate efforts between service departments.
Leverage technology to support online students: Develop an enhanced website with support resources and links for online student services.

- We developed a website to collect all the student (and faculty) services related to DL http://www.nelson.usf.edu/dlearn/online.html
- We established an ADA Workgroup to develop standards for assuring that we were developing courses that would be readily adaptable for students with special needs. They have been working since the spring of 2012 and are currently preparing a project where two fully online courses that have been offered in a previous semester without captions will have all video and/or audio content closed captioned. This will allow for comparison of the student outcome data from both offerings of the course; with and without closed captioning. The information gathered from this project will be used to conduct an analysis of the costs and benefits of moving forward with adding closed captions to all audio and video content for distance learning courses. Members of the workgroup are: J. E. Gonzalez, Elizabeth Hanna, Karla Kmetz, Barry McDowell, Deni Elliott, Casey Frechette, Lyman Dukes, and David Brodosi.

Establish Operational Capacity: Establish an Office of Distance Learning to provide coordination and services for all online programs and for faculty developing online courses.

1. Create a Director of Distance Learning position with the chief responsibility to grow and develop new programs in partnership with College and Departments.
2. Locate this office with the Library, to provide central support for distance learning efforts and services.

Although this recommendation was endorsed by the DL Steering Committee, Dr. Noonan, and all the Deans we were not able to proceed until this fiscal year. This position has now been funded and we began recruiting for it September 24. It closes November 9. It is being widely advertised through Educause, QM, online sites, the *Chronicle of Higher Ed*, Careers, and the Library's website. It is an A & P position and is intended to supervise the Library's Distance Learning unit (David Brodosi and 4-6 instructional designers and two other staff) and work with the Colleges, individual faculty, and student support units to develop a coordinated approach to supporting online education at USFSP. It does not mean all faculty must do the same thing in designing and delivering their online courses. The search committee is being chaired by Lyman Dukes and includes Barry McDowell, Student Affairs Office of Disability Services, David Brodosi, Coordinator of Distance Learning, Karla Kmetz, one of the instructional designers, and Gary Austin, DL Librarian. Committee meetings will be advertised and open, as all search committee meetings are. When we get to on-site interviews, there will be public presentations and time slots scheduled for faculty to meet with candidates. The position description was developed in consultation with professionals who hold or have held this type of position at other educational institutions around the country.

Past, present, and future:

- A lot of activity from many deeply committed individuals.
- Many different approaches being pursued across campus.
- David Brodosi, Dr. Noonan, and I have jointly tried to provide some level of coordination and direction for online learning here at USFSP. Off the side of our desks is not ideal.
- We need one person focused on keeping track of and providing coordinated support for all the DL activity on campus. That person will need to have experience, credentials, and be committed to continuous consultation with faculty and student support services.
- Students are getting inconsistent outcomes.
- Need to review best practices such as the QM Bill of Rights for Online Learners

Background Information on Distance Learning at USFSP

Background information

- Florida Distance Learning Task Force Report, February 26, 2009:
  http://www.fldlc.org/taskforce/TFFinalRpt10FINAL.pdf
- Blackboard Consultation materials, including final report and recommendations,
  available at: http://dspace.nelson.usf.edu/xmlui/handle/10806/165 (will need to
  register and be added to group to view – email hixson@usfsp.edu)

Online programs at USFSP (many individual courses exist outside these programs)

- Psychology certificate program explained here:
  http://www1.usfsp.edu/coas/psychology/index.htm
- Digital Journalism program explained here: http://djd.usfsp.edu/
- Online MBA program explained here:
  http://www1.usfsp.edu/cob/graduate_studies/OnlineCourses.htm

Support for faculty and students

- Academic Affairs website with links to course development program:
  http://www1.usfsp.edu/academics/
- Faculty professional development offerings through the Library's DL Team
  http://www.nelson.usf.edu/dlearn/professional_development.html
- Online Learning web site: http://www.nelson.usf.edu/dlearn/online.html
- DL Blog: http://usfspdistancelearning.wordpress.com/

New position
- Assistant Director of Distance and Distributed Learning position
  http://www.nelson.usf.edu/npml/vacancy2.html

Assistant Director of Distance and Distributed Learning

Reports to: Dean, Nelson Poynter Memorial Library, USFSP

Expected Salary Range: $65,000 - $75,000

The Nelson Poynter Memorial Library of the University of South Florida St. Petersburg (USFSP) seeks an entrepreneurial, collaborative, innovative and service-oriented leader for the new position of **Assistant Director of Distance and Distributed Learning**. USFSP is a separately accredited university within the University of South Florida System. USFSP offers bachelors and master's degrees in Business, Education, and Arts & Sciences to approximately 6000 students, with a growing number of courses and degrees being offered fully online. This position will provide leadership and vision for USFSP's distance and distributed learning efforts, working collaboratively with academic units to identify programmatic opportunities for online degrees, certificates, and courses. Develops external collaborations for online learning content and partnerships. Has responsibility for monitoring the financial stability of the distance learning program at USFSP. Develops and coordinates business processes to support online learning efforts. Coordinates instructional support for distance learning with academic units to provide faculty and student training, support, and resources for online academic offerings. Responsible for expanding high-quality online learning efforts. Seeks grant funding for online learning projects. Supervises assigned personnel. Interacts professionally with all internal and external customers using strong interpersonal skills.   Provides administrative backup for the Library Dean when appropriate and serves as a member of the Library Leadership Team.

Reporting to the Dean of Library and working closely with other members of the Library's Leadership Team, the **Assistant Director of Distance and Distributed Learning** will embody the Library's mission to be an active partner in the teaching, research, and learning at USFSP.   Salary range: $65,000 - $75,000 depending on experience and qualifications.

 Position Responsibilities:

- By embracing the transformative role of information technology and online, distributed learning, provides leadership for the University's distance and distributed learning efforts.
- Builds relationships with the Colleges and other functional units within the University to refine or design processes that support online learning students and enrollment growth for the University through online learning.
- Coordinates instructional support for distance and online learning.
- Responsible for maintaining high levels of quality in distance and online learning programs that support growth in University enrollments and retention.
- In conjunction with Library Systems and Campus Computing, designs and develops an online learning infrastructure and long-term technology plan.
- Works to secure grant money for funding of new and ongoing distance learning projects by identifying sources and writing proposals to secure grants or contracts from private and public funding agencies.

- Represents the University on designated internal and external committees and organizations.
- Supervises assigned personnel in the Library's Distance Learning and Instructional Media Services unit by providing orientation, guidance, and professional development as required. Provides assistance in analyzing and resolving complex issues. Approves or makes recommendations regarding employment, performance appraisals, salary changes, promotions, transfers and terminations.
- Incorporates principles of teamwork and customer service with all organizational levels in the resolution, completion and follow-up of various responsibilities. Facilitates the creation of a team, service-oriented environment.
- Remains current with technological, pedagogical, and policy trends in online learning through participating in continuing education courses, professional organizations, seminars and workshops; reading current literature; and maintaining professional contacts in the community.
- Provides administrative backup for the Library Dean when appropriate and serves as a member of the Library Leadership Team.

Required Qualifications:

- Master's degree in Instructional Design and Technology, Instructional Systems, Educational Systems, Educational Technology, or a related field.
- Five years of experience directly related to distance learning and/or instructional technology.
- Experience in online course development and/or in teaching in an online environment, including assessment of student outcomes.
- Three years of supervisory experience.
- Strong verbal and written communication skills.
- Ability to handle multiple projects and deadlines.
- Demonstrated student focus and an understanding of managing a service organization.
- Experience managing departmental budgets.

Preferred Qualifications:

- Familiarity with academic library services and processes.
- Previous experience in an administrative role in an accredited higher education institution.
- Experience managing a distance learning organization within higher education.
- Familiarity with processes for admissions, marketing, financial aid, program development and assessment in higher education institutions.
- Marketing and market research experience. Grant writing experience.
- Ph.D. or Ed.D.

Quality Matters™ Bill of Rights for Online Learners

Whereas, the online learner is expected to:

- o   Communicate regularly with faculty

- o   Be an active course participant

- o   Seek out campus resources to resolve any technical difficulties

- o   Meet course deadlines, and

- o   Act with academic integrity.

Therefore, the online learner in a fully online or blended course should expect:

- o   A course designed with logical, consistent, and efficient navigation.

- o   Clean and readable screen design.

- o   Clear and sufficient instructions on how to
    - o   get started in the course,
    - o   find various course components,
    - o   access online resources, and
    - o   meet the course learning objectives.

- o   An instructor who honors clearly stated response times and availability (office hours, etc.).

- o   A grading policy including clearly stated, descriptive, and specific criteria for how work and participation will be evaluated.

- o   Clear explanation of the requirements for interaction with the instructor, content and other students.

- o   Learning objectives that are appropriate for the level of the course.

- o   Instructional materials that
    - o   contribute to the achievement of the course and module/unit learning objectives
    - o   are clearly related to learning activities, and
    - o   have the breadth, depth, and currency to enable him or her to learn the subject.

- o   Required course components, technologies, tools and media that are
    - o   web-based or easily downloaded,
    - o   readily available, and
    - o   appropriate for the content delivered.

- o   A variety of assessments distributed throughout the course, that are
    - o   appropriate to the content being assessed,
    - o   consistent with course activities and resources, and
    - o   focused on the stated learning objectives.