Preconference Workshop I: Achieving Quality

Accreditation Perspective
Show how you measure the equivalency of outcomes -- but also show how you monitor your efforts and respond to student/faculty feedback. Show you have an holistic approach and that distance education is part of strategic planning, not an add-on. Be open in your self-study, not defensive: Accreditation process is an opportunity to learn, not a burden. In fact, distance learning can perhaps lead the way in accountability. It provides a documented measure of student engagement.

Institutional Perspective
Distance learning quality will benefit from the following:
• DL course designers articulate learning outcomes – how tied to competencies.
• DL courses built coherently and assessed by peers.
• Think of “curriculum design” (e-Portfolios might be an important tool in this area).
• Turn principles of good teaching into rubrics for measuring quality
• Create a “Quality Plan” for the institution – a continuous improvement model.

!Challenges to quality:
• Changing the culture of higher education
• Changing the public perception (especially in the legislature)
• Don’t “mainstream” distance learning to be just like traditional learning
• PT faculty may be too highly used
• Efforts not always scalable (what works for 25 students may not work for 1000)
• Define “quality” when entering into any consortia arrangements
• Have creative but valid assessments

Opening Session: A Wiki Wiki What?

Jimmy Wales, Wikipedia:
The wikipedia has versions in 48 languages with at least 10,000 articles; in 107 languages with at least 1000 articles. There are 347 languages which have at least 1 million speakers in the world and the goal is to have wikis in all these languages.

The wikipedia is a good example of neutrality and moderation. Any flaming, ranting or combative entries get weeded out naturally. If you submit something to wikipedia, the best philosophy is to “write for your enemy” so that you will have a balanced statement which everyone will agree on. Report specifics in a non-polemic way.
Finding Creative Ways to Increase Retention and Success for Online Learners
(Student Strand)

Muriel Oaks – WSU (see online handout at URL above):
“First Semester Experience” is the online alternative to the on-campus “Freshman Focus”. These modules are meant to develop skills for academic success and to provide interventions when deficiencies are identified. Variables include: Writing (formal and informal), critical thinking (rubric), diversity awareness, and technical aspects (such as how to use threaded discussion). Other skills are how to do small group projects (via collaboration), service learning (outside the class to meet course outcomes), media presentation, time management, communication, research. Ideally these modules/tools are integrated right into a course through course assignments.

Anita Crawley – Montgomery College, Maryland (see online handout):
Anita’s website is http://webct.montgomerycollege.edu. User name and password are guest_nb. Her online module to help students is called “Online Student Companion” and it is a virtual advising center and student training course. All students are loaded into a WebCT course one week before the semester begins. This “Online Student Companion” website has 12 modules: Getting started, Online learning success (which includes Goal setting, Education planning, Transfer planning, Career exploration and Personal barriers), Using the Internet, Online communication, Academic support, the Library. Students are also sent a broadcast email through WebCT 2 weeks into the term to see how they are doing. Send a broadcast email at the end as well to survey students.

Other colleges have different names for their intro materials such as “First Course” which addresses the question: “What does it mean to be an online learner?” Another module is called “Welcome Week”. Faculty are asked to put a notice of the support course in their syllabi.

Anita also uses a 3-4 week online faculty training course called “Supporting Online Students” (SOS). This can be tied into an “Online Faculty Companion” website that parallels the one for students. Faculty would automatically have accounts in this WebCT website which includes “best practices” (e.g. tips on how to run better online discussions).

Selecting and Training Adjunct Faculty for Online Instruction and Course Development (Institutional Strand)

Carole Hruskocy – Regis University, Colorado:
Carole discussed training and assessment of new online adjuncts. First step is “Training for Course Facilitation.” Candidates are put through a one week online assessment course (as students) before a final hiring decision is made. This course is used to screen them for potential to facilitate, technical and communication skills, ability to articulate, participation in discussions, etc.
Then they go through a two-week online orientation course called TOP (Teaching Online Preparation). Facilitator starts by modeling best practices and adjunct gradually takes over. A faculty coach checks in with the new online instructor during the first quarter of teaching. On-going and post-training support includes a faculty resources website, workshops and a newsletter.

Many faculty have noted that online development improves face-to-face teaching. Online faculty must map outcomes to course content and assessment. Where specifically are these outcomes addressed in the online course material and features?

Beyond Discussion: Community Building in the Classroom (Faculty Strand)

Carol Gering, University of Alaska, Fairbanks:
Carol uses four free entry-level social tools in her class:
(1) The del.icio.us tool for social bookmarking. It hosts your resource bookmarks quickly and publicly so you can share them with students immediately. Your URL becomes, for example, http://del.icio.us/tbraziunas, etc.
(2) The flickr tool for adding photos quickly such that everyone can add comments.
(3) Blogging tools like edublogs which can be used for student reflections. The difference from websites is that postings are in reverse order. It is more organic, not linear. You can lock down a blog so only students can comment.
(4) The wiki tools like PMwiki -- free software which can be downloaded onto your own server. Resources and assignments can be built into group projects.

Carole’s presentation is at http://community.uaf.edu/~cde/wiki/WCET06.

Mary Clerkin, Berkeley College, New Jersey (see online handout):
Mary discussed more tools:
(5) Visual Communicator – creates videos quickly. She uses it for her welcome video and lectures which can be saved as small Quicktime or flash files.
(6) Wimba Voice – easy way to leave voice emails. Mary uses this to respond to students’ homework with voice messages which are easy for them to listen to. They can also download these messages to their ipods.
(7) Camtasia Studio – screen action captures. There are Camtasia Tutorials on her Berkeley College website.
(8) Publisher Interactive Learning Centers – that supplement the textbook like the wonderful audio glossary http://mhhe.com/socscience/comm/lucas/flashintro.html
(9) Webcams – required for her courses and sold along with text materials in the bookstore. The videos can be uploaded easily into Blackboard and/or incorporated in the discussion board. You can create small group discussion rooms where students use webcams to communicate to one another.

Sheri Denison – University of Alaska, Anchorage (see online handout):
Sheri teaches ENG 101 and discussed how she handles the process of online draft writing and evaluation. Sheri uses Eluminate Live with audio and video options. She meets
with students synchronously and each student reads each paper, on paragraph at a time, and comments.

Caucus Breakfast Meeting for Public Two-Year Institutions

Issues considered:
- Student Retention
- Blended Learning – how to define it, how to do it.
- Workforce Training
- Transferability – especially of lab science courses
- Off-campus FT Online Faculty – issues and solutions. Some institutions use polycoms so off-campus faculty can participate in meetings. Others require that the issue be broadened to whether all faculty are participating, whether online or on-campus.
- Open Entry / Completion Issues – especially related to Financial Aid
- ADA Compliance -- Check out [http://web.aim.org](http://web.aim.org). About 5% of college websites are compliant.
- Best Practices

Maximizing Your Internet Marketing Results (Institutional strand)

**Adam Haber, CUnet:**
Vendors usually charge on a cost per lead basis. This is cost effective for the institution. The cost can be around $45 per lead. You can expect a 2-5% lead conversion to enrollment which is typical. Budget accordingly.

**Tips:** Respond to leads quickly. Also consider “stitching emails” which are those which are automatically sent to leads after they have first been contacted as reminders to register or to survey why they haven’t registered. Also, you want to send emails after the leads have registered to remind them how to start.

The Joy of Multimedia: Converging Technologies in Distance Learning (Faculty strand)

**Richard Lillie, California State University, San Bernardino:**
Richard uses multiple approaches to reaching the learner: text, sound, video. He provides learner with alternatives. I like his standard course tutorial web page. His website is [http://www.drlillie.com/Impatica/wcet.html](http://www.drlillie.com/Impatica/wcet.html). He has his tools listed there.

Richard pays for annual licenses of Skype ($14/yr for voice mail feature) and other tools himself. Feels it is well worth it. Really likes GoToMeeting ($400). He lists 14 tools at his website. He provides video feedback in emails to students on their homework.
Natalie Lupton (Central Washington University):
Podcasting: Natalie simply purchased a 20 GB memory MP3 digital recorder and records all her lectures and puts them up immediately for students.

Positive aspect of podcasts: they are especially useful for ESL students. Negative aspect: podcasts are static and can become dated if not constantly replaced. Once downloaded, you don’t know how long someone will use them (with outdated info).

Mark Sunderman, University of Wyoming:
To create lessons, Mark uses the combination tablet PC and screen action capture approach using http://www.screenwatch.com. By setting up video-streaming, you can prevent downloading. This ownership protection feature may be important to us.

Improving Academic Quality through Peer Review Evaluation Systems (Faculty strand)

Rick Aman, Portland Community College:
Peer “evaluation” is tricky; best organized around a nationally-researched best practices rubric to drive quality into course offerings. Quality Matters was created via FIPSE grant and is a formal process. Develop the process through the faculty so it is considered a team concept which is faculty-driven. Accreditation makes it important that we do this.

Three levels of assessment: To assist, to advance and to adapt. The goal is to offer the best course – not to ding an instructor who is struggling. Consider it a way to have a feedback cycle followed by improvement. No one “fails.” The question is sometimes how much remedial action is too much? When do you give up on a particular course?

Quality courses should have (see Quality Matters rubric): course overview and introduction; learning objectives; assessment and measurement of learning objectives; resources and materials, learner interaction (faculty/student, student/student, student/material); appropriate use of technology; learner support and ADA compliance.

Barry Dahl, Lake Superior College, Minnesota:
Barry’s approach was to get 5 good online faculty to review the Quality Matters rubric and refine it for his college’s use. These five faculty “beta-tested” the rubric by using it initially to review each other’s online courses.

Marthann Schulte, Park University, Missouri:
Marthann calls their process OIES: Online instruction Evaluation System for Adjuncts. The course development is based on QM but assessment of instruction itself is separate. The OIES process is to “insure instruction facilitation quality” and to “enhance student satisfaction.” There are two review steps. The formative review includes the instructor self-review. The summative review includes peer recommendations.
Course Management Systems: Futures and Options (Tech strand)

Scott Leslie, WCET:
The promise of tool interoperability is coming to fruition with Web 2.0. This is creating potential for personal learning environments which puts power back into the users’ hands. We need a change of attitude to trusting the user, letting the user build her/his own set of tools, modify those tools and share modifications with others.

Becoming important are “aggregation” services which help put these tools together such as http://www.agrssive.com. A good resource book: “Course Management Systems for Learning: Beyond Accidental Pedagogy” Chapter 4.

Jared Stein, Utah State University:
Web 2.0 has great pedagogical value: it is dynamic (instantly updated information), authentic (relates to students everyday learning experience), permeable (connects with the outside world), and integrated (using the tools that are part of students’ daily lives).

We are heading toward personal learning environments which are decentralized and learner-orchestrated. Student may pick supplements to their “official” course management system such as del.icio.us, flickr, google docs, wikis, and blogs. These tools are already a part of students’ lives.

The downside for educators is convincing other educators to use these tools. Their value has not been researched and documented yet so they have “unsubstantiated value.”

John Krutsch, Utah Valley State College:
If we want to make learning available anytime and anywhere then we need to make it available on the tools people are using. John is currently working to make the CMS environment available on a variety of handheld devices. One server holds one copy of course content. Shadow file scripts are be able to determine how a user is trying to access material (e.g. via palm pilot, laptop, etc.). The “contact file” packages the generic content and sends it to user appropriately (even uploading it into WebCT or Blackboard if the user is in those CMS systems).

SCORM compliant materials are used in order to do this. But the SCORM problem is that it does not allow collaborative feedback. User her/himself cannot manipulate the static content to fit her/his needs. This will be next generation of learning. Users will be able to collaborate back and forth in changing tools for one another as needed.

My question: Will we need to wait for students of today to become faculty of tomorrow (which will be in only a couple years) to lead the way? How many of us who have learned under the old paradigm of learning can transition to teaching in the new paradigm?
True or False? We Can Effectively Assess Online Learning (Roundtable)

Judie Rhoads, Western Oregon University (moderator):
We discussed different levels of assessment: assessment within online and on-campus classrooms, showing equivalency of learning outcomes, measuring learning outcomes at a program and institutional level too.

Does blended learning better help to achieve outcomes? The student may be having a blended learning experience by combining fully on-campus and fully-online classes without using hybrid courses directly. There are many variables.

E-Portfolios are a great outcome assessment tool. But we often impose the assessment tool on the student. Why not let the students decide how to show (in the ePortfolio) that they have achieved the requisite learning outcomes?

Many faculty report than online teaching has made them better on-campus instructors.

Utilizing Re-Usable Learning Objects in Building a Foundation for Online Programs (Faculty strand)

John Ruttner, California State University, San Bernardino:
What are RLOs? They might be defined in terms of being potentially reusable components which are smaller than a learning unit, self-contained, can be adapted, aggregated and are durable (able to be used on the fly), available anytime/anywhere. An extension to this definition, which is not true for some RLOs, is that an RLO should be considered “reusable” only if it can be updated and modified after downloading it.

Positive aspect: RLOs are better investments than unique designs which can only be used in one specific course. They are likely to be economical especially if they are being used, and thus paid for, in collaboration with other institutions.

Negative aspect: We faculty are not used to sharing. The old 19th century model of teaching is that individual faculty experts are responsible for instruction in specific individual courses in their fields of expertise. Every teaching approach is “unique.”

What is happening today? Standards are being developed, best practices are being developed, research and assessment of RLOs are happening, and collaboration and archiving is taking place. Simon Fraser is doing research Merlot has 13,000 objects.

Jeff Borden, eCollege:
Jeff includes in his definition that RLOs should also facilitate scholarship. Examples if learning objects he utilizes in all of his courses include:

• The Learning Style RLO that allows students to determine their own learning style. Jeff builds in alternative approaches to learn the material and students can then knowledgeably pick the ones that fit their learning style.
• RLO “learning trees” which send students in different directions depending on their choices.
• The citation RLO that produces correct citation formats).
• The non-verbal dictionary for those who need visuals (such as ESL students).
• “Edheads” -- a nice dissection website.
• “OWL” -- the online writing tutor RLO.
• RLO Readiness quiz to help students know if they are ready for online learning.

Many RLOs use Flash and they can be reconditioned to fit with other courses. Find many learning objects by just using Google and typing in your subject along with the words “learning objects”. Sometimes you link to them at 3rd party sites and sometimes you can download them to your own server. RLOs are good steps toward standardizing quality in curriculum.


_Terry Anderson, Athabasca University, Canada:_

“Is Social Software Online Education’s Killer App? Yes – student control and freedom is integral to 21st Century learning. Web 2.0 tools allow students to create, not just consume, content. Student need to learn skills, not content anymore. This may be hard on us expert content-providers!

_Resources:_ George Siemens’ book “A Learning Theory for the Digital Age.” An important source of tools: [http://Me2u.athabascau.ca](http://Me2u.athabascau.ca). Also, check out [http://elgg.net](http://elgg.net) which is like MySpace for adults – a great place to share information.

_Chris Lott (Disruptive Technologist & Post Modern Romantic), University of Alaska:_

We are trying to tie in social and academic areas while also not invading and disrupting students’ personal spaces. Learning now means user-generated content.

To keep up with the latest developments in Web tools, check out Dana Boyd’s blog; also [http://solutionswatch](http://solutionswatch). All these resources can be found on Chris’s website: [http://community.uaf.edu/~cde/wiki/SSW/](http://community.uaf.edu/~cde/wiki/SSW/).

Three terms which you will hear a lot of in the next year: Open Identity; Social Search; Gestures and Attention Economy.

_Richie Boyd, Montana State University-Bozeman:_

We ended by watching Steven Colbert on Motherload explaining the wikipedia and the new concept of “wikiality” to replace “reality.” His tongue-in-cheek riff argues that if enough people say something is true on wikipedia, it becomes a fact.