



# **DISTANCE EDUCATION PLAN**

**2017-2020**

SOUTHWESTERN COLLEGE DISTANCE EDUCATION TASK FORCE

Approved by the Academic Senate 2/21/17

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## About the Plan

Because of significant changes in the distance education mode of instructional delivery by the federal government, the Distance Education Task Force ad hoc committee was formed as a sub-committee of the Curriculum Committee to develop a comprehensive Distance Education Plan, Handbook, and curriculum processing procedure to meet instructional needs. This document is the result of careful research, collaboration with sister colleges, and attendance at Academic Senate for the California Community Colleges (ASCCC) workshops at Plenary and the Curriculum Institute. In addition, we would like to express our appreciation for the creators of the Cypress College Distance Education Plan 2011-2014. Rather than reinvent the wheel, we relied heavily on their plan in the initial development of ours.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When the Curriculum Committee was asked to update the college policy and procedure for distance education, an ad hoc task force was formed and worked tirelessly on behalf of the college. We owe a debt of gratitude to the original authors--Patricia Flores-Charter, Elisa Hedrick, Tom Luibel, Gail Stockin Ph.D., Leslie Yoder, and Susan Yonker—as well as the current task force members who have documented our progress and outlined our future: April Brenner, Gail Stockin Ph.D., Luke Cuddy, Mia McClellan, Patricia Flores-Charter, Somer Meade, Susan Yonker, Tom Luibel, Toni Pfister, and Tracy Schaelen.

### ABOUT THIS EDITION

This plan was originally approved by the Curriculum Committee in Spring 2014 and has been updated as goals are met. The current edition sets forth goals for academic years 2017-2020. It was approved by the Academic Senate on February 21, 2017.

## Southwestern College Mission Statement

Southwestern Community College District, the only public institution of higher education in southern San Diego County, provides services to a diverse community of students by providing a wide range of dynamic and high quality academic programs and comprehensive student services, including those offered through distance education. The College District also stimulates the development and growth of the region through its educational, economic and workforce opportunities, community partnerships and services.

Southwestern Community College District promotes student learning and success and prepares students to become engaged global citizens by committing to continuous improvement that includes planning, implementation and evaluation. The College District provides educational opportunities in the following areas: associate degree and certificate programs; transfer; professional, technical, and career advancement; basic skills; personal enrichment and continuing education.

### **SOUTHWESTERN COLLEGE DISTANCE EDUCATION MISSION STATEMENT**

Southwestern College supports faculty and staff in developing and delivering quality online learning for successful student outcomes.

## About the Distance Education Plan

The Distance Education (DE) Plan reflects the Southwestern College Mission, Strategic Plan, and Educational Master Plan. The purpose is to establish common goals and criteria for quality online instruction, identify facilities and infrastructure needs, set standards for training faculty and students, and make recommendations for faculty evaluation. This plan will guide online instruction over the course of the next three academic years, 2017-2020. It is available to the Southwestern College community on SharePoint and the [DE@SWC](#) faculty resource site.

The DE plan will be evaluated annually by the Distance Education Task Force. Updates will be available on SharePoint.

The Distance Education Task Force is responsible to evaluating the DE Plan at the end of its three-year span and creating--in consultation with the DE Coordinator, Academic Technology Committee, Academic Senate, and Instructional Support Services/Online Learning Center--a plan for the following three years.

Developing the DE Plan is a three-step process:

1. **Planning:** The current plan is presented at a DE Task Force meeting, where participants determine plan sections to be deleted, updated, or added. Suggestions for changes are documented. The DE Task Force chair establishes a timeline and guides preparation of the first draft of the plan revision by the group.
2. **Review:** This first comprehensive draft is presented to the Academic Technology Committee, online faculty serving as DE Mentors, and Instructional Support Services/Online Learning Center for review and feedback.
3. **Final Revision & Approval:** The DE Task Force prepares the final draft of the plan based on the feedback collected during the review process. The final draft is then submitted for approval to the Academic Senate.

## Distance Education in California

“People expect to be able to work, learn, and study whenever and wherever they want to. Life in an increasingly busy world where learners must balance demands from home, work, school, and family poses a host of logistical challenges with which today’s ever more mobile students must cope” (*Horizon Report*, Higher Education Edition, 2012, p. 4).

## ENROLLMENT GROWTH

Distance Education is an important part of California higher education. Of the state's three public higher education systems, the California Community Colleges are the largest provider of distance education offerings (Steenhausen & Boilard, 2010, p.3). According to the Chancellor's Office 2013 *Distance Education Report*, from 2005 to 2012 among the California Community Colleges, there was an overall enrollment growth in distance education sessions that exceeded growth in traditional sessions by over 14.45 percent (p.12).

Growth is fueled by demand. Students with ubiquitous access to web and mobile technologies value, and expect, the convenience of access to course content anywhere, anytime. This expectation has been met by the adoption of asynchronous communication methods for course delivery. According to the Chancellor's Office, "Online instruction using asynchronous time based delivery is by the far the most widely used method of conducting distance education because it offers students the greatest flexibility in taking courses" (*Distance Education Report*, 2013, p.9).

State survey results show that California higher education students choose distance education because Internet-based courses facilitate access to a college education and integrate more easily with other aspects of their lives. Flexible learning schedules permit students to arrange work, family, and other personal obligations to suit their individual needs. According to the 2013 Chancellor's report on Distance Education, "California Community College distance education student survey data indicates that convenience is the number one reason why students take a course" (*Distance Education Report*, 2013, p.6). Students take distance education courses because they provide a more convenient way to manage both a heavy work schedule and personal and/or family needs.

## CHALLENGES TO DISTANCE EDUCATION

Distance education courses are required to maintain the same academic standards as traditional face-to-face courses and have many of the same challenges, especially as technology is increasingly infused in traditionally delivered instruction.

Recommendations to the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges found in the State Chancellor's 2011 *Distance Education Report*, as well as results from the Instructional Technology Council (ITC) survey, which looks primarily at public community colleges across the United States (ITC, 2010), and observations noted in the *Horizon Report* Higher Education Edition from the New Media Consortium and the EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative (Johnson et al., 2012-2016), all reiterate common challenges to post-secondary distance education.

Of the issues confronting distance education listed in these reports, the following are the most relevant to Southwestern College's DE goals and objectives for 2017-2020:

- Section 508 accessibility compliance
- Documentation of academic integrity, student authentication, regular effective contact, and last date of attendance
- Training of faculty, including quality course design, delivery, evaluation of teaching and learning, and professional development
- Training of students for online learning and digital literacy
- Effective evaluation of instruction and student learning, including student learning outcomes
- Success, retention, and completion rates
- Quality of course management system

## Distance Education at Southwestern College

Distance Education has quickly become a part of our college instructional delivery. The motivations (Howell, Williams, & Lindsay, 2003) to create and expand distance education offerings are strong across all levels of the college community.

- **Institutional Benefits:** The institutional and administrative motivators for offering Distance Education classes include the efficient use of physical space and the need to offer an alternative delivery method for those who cannot come to

campus. Special populations served by distance education include students with children, military students, and students with disabilities.

- **Program Benefits:** Southwestern College programs have implemented distance education for a variety of reasons, including improved access for students and efficient capacity utilization.
- **Student Benefits:** Student reasons for taking Distance Education classes include a flexible academic schedule, reduction of commuting time and transportation expenses, and, for students with physical disabilities, accessibility.
- **Faculty Benefits:** Faculty members decide to teach Distance Education courses for a variety of reasons, including the promotion of student success and enhancement of traditional instructional methods, such as transferring curriculum development and teaching techniques from online to the traditional classroom.

## Definitions

Distance Education at Southwestern College primarily refers to the delivery of online and hybrid courses. The College-adopted course management system is also widely used for web-enhancement of traditional campus classes.

### CCC CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE DEFINITION AND REQUIREMENTS

In its *California Community Colleges Distance Education Guidelines*, the State Chancellor's Office defines distance education as follows:

"Distance education means instruction in which the instructor and student are separated by distance and interact through the assistance of communication technology. All distance education is subject to the general requirements of [Title 5, Chapter 6] as well as the specific requirements of this article. In addition, instruction provided as distance education is subject to the requirements that may be imposed by the Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. §12100 et seq.) and section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of

1973, as amended, (29 U.S.C. §794d)” (Chancellor’s Office California Community Colleges, Academic Affairs Division, Instructional Programs and Services, 2008).

It is important to note that section 55206 of the Guidelines also includes specific curriculum procedures for hybrid as well as online classes: “If any portion of the instruction in a proposed or existing course or course section is designed to be provided through distance education in lieu of face-to-face interaction between instructor and student, the course shall be separately reviewed and approved according to the district’s adopted course approval procedures. NOTE: Authority cited: Sections 66700 and 70901, Education Code. Reference: Sections 70901 and 70902, Education Code” (p. 7).

### ACCREDITING COMMISSION DEFINITION

In its document, *Guide to Evaluating Distance Education and Correspondence Education*, the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) includes the federal definition of distance education for accreditation purposes as follows:

“Distance education is defined, for the purpose of accreditation review as a formal interaction which uses one or more technologies to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and which supports regular and substantive interaction between the students and instructor, either synchronously or asynchronously. Distance education often incorporates technologies such as the internet; one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communication devices; audio conferencing; or video cassettes, DVDs, and CD-ROMs, in conjunction with any of the other technologies.” (Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges Western Association of Schools and Colleges, 2013, p. 2)

## APPLICATION OF DEFINITIONS OF DISTANCE EDUCATION AT SOUTHWESTERN COLLEGE

Southwestern College Distance Education is defined as instruction where students and faculty are separated by distance and interact using a variety of technologies. There are three types of courses supported by the Distance Education Program.

### **Online Course**

An online course at Southwestern College is a class instructed entirely online. The class may meet online using the college adopted Course Management System (CMS), but not for face-to-face instruction. Instructional time follows the Carnegie Unit. This means the faculty must plan an approximate 1:2 ratio of instruction time to homework and study.

*Definition for students in the College Catalog:* These courses are 100% online. Online courses are taught through the college's CMS with no face-to-face meetings; instruction, interaction, and assignment submission all take place online.

### **Hybrid Course**

A hybrid course at Southwestern College is a class that offers instruction both online and face-to-face on campus. Required face-to-face meetings are included in the schedule of classes following a predictable pattern (on the same day[s] of the week and at the same time). Online instruction uses the college-adopted CMS and also follows a predictable pattern. Instructional time follows the Carnegie Unit. This means the faculty must plan an approximate 1:2 ratio of instruction time to homework and study.

*Definition for students in the College Catalog:* Hybrid courses offer a mix of both online and on-campus instruction. Required face-to-face meetings are included in the schedule of classes and follow a predictable pattern. The online portion of the course uses the college's CMS and also follows a predictable pattern.

### **Web-Enhanced Course**

Web-enhanced courses at Southwestern College are face-to-face instructional courses that offer students access to class materials, grades, and resources online using the

college-adopted CMS. Web enhanced courses may offer supplemental activities and homework online, and they may include online communication and electronic submission of coursework. Web enhanced courses may **not** use Internet-based resources or activities to replace required on-campus face-to-face instruction or in-seat contact hours. Trained instructors may use the College Course Management System.

**Definition for students in the College Catalog:** These are traditional, face-to-face courses that meet 100% on campus but use the college's course management system to give students access to class materials, grades, activities, and/or resources.

## Distance Education Academic Attendance

For distance education auditing purposes academic attendance includes, but is not limited to:

1. Physically attending a class where there is an opportunity for direct interaction between the instructor and students;
2. Submitting an academic assignment;
3. Taking an exam, an interactive tutorial, or computer-assisted instruction;
4. Attending a study group that is assigned by the institution;
5. Participating in an online discussion about academic matters; and
6. Initiating contact with a faculty member to ask a question about the academic subject studied in the course; (DOE, 2010, 66952)

### SYLLABUS REQUIREMENT FOR ATTENDANCE

A Distance Education attendance statement, in accordance with the College's attendance policy and Department of Education regulations, must appear in each course syllabus specifying how absences are managed. Details and sample statements are provided in the Distance Education Handbook.

## LAST DATE OF ATTENDANCE (LDA)

The last date of academic attendance, commonly known as the Last Day of Attendance (LDA), is the date the college uses to determine the amount of financial aid, if any, that must be returned to the Department of Education due to student withdrawal. The Department of Education specifically requires “using a last date of attendance at an academically-related activity as a withdrawal date” and states that “it is up to the institution to ensure that accurate records are kept for purposes of identifying a student’s last date of academic attendance or last date of attendance at an academically-related activity.” (Dept. of Education, Reg. 66898).

Activities where students may be present but exhibit no evidence of academic engagement are excluded from determining First Date of Attendance and Last Day of Attendance, for example, “(3) Logging into an online class without active participation; or (4) Participating in academic counseling or advisement” (DOE, 2010, Reg. 66952).

## LAST DAY OF ATTENDANCE DOCUMENTATION

Faculty members must document student academic engagement via the CMS and record student withdrawals in WebAdvisor. This documentation must be stored with grades and other official course records following Southwestern College record keeping policy. Documenting engagement and recording withdrawals ensures that Southwestern College is in compliance with Title 5, Section 58004: “Districts shall, according to procedures adopted by the governing board, clear the rolls of inactive enrollment.” Inactive enrollment is defined as a “no show” or a “student no longer participating in the course.”

## Regular Effective Contact

Instruction for Distance Education must comply with all applicable Federal and State regulations. Title 5 section 55204(c) states, “Any portion of a course conducted through distance education includes regular effective contact between instructor and students, through group or individual meetings, orientation and review sessions, supplemental

seminar or study sessions, field trips, library workshops, telephone contact correspondence, voice mail, email, or other activities. Regular and effective contact is an academic and professional matter pursuant to sections 53200 et seq.” (*California Education Code*, Section 55204). Furthermore, any portion of a course provided through distance education must follow the guidelines issued by the Chancellor’s Office pursuant to Section 409 of the *Procedures and Standing Orders of the Board of Governors*.

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges specifically defines a distance education course as featuring “regular and substantive interaction between the students and instructor” (*Guide to Evaluating Distance Education and Correspondence Education*, p. 2). This requirement for regular instructor contact with students is affirmed in Southwestern College’s Procedure No. 4105, which states, “Each section of the course that is delivered through distance education will include regular effective contact (also known as regular substantive interaction by the Department of Education) by the instructor with the students.” Southwestern College’s Policy and Procedure 4115: Distance Education Regular and Effective Contact, details federal and state regulation as well as education code requirements. The procedure includes course standards, definitions of contact, documentation of regular effective contact required, instructor-initiated contact, frequency, expectations and instructor absences, examples of types of contacts, and suggestions for instructors.

## REGULAR EFFECTIVE CONTACT DOCUMENTATION

The College must be able to demonstrate how regular and effective contact is achieved and documented, per Southwestern College’s AP 4115. This documentation should be maintained in the Course Management System and must demonstrate that instructors are interacting with their students at least as frequently as they would in the equivalent face-to-face course to ensure that students are “accessing and comprehending course material and that they are participating regularly in the activities of the course” (*Southwestern Community College District Procedure No. 4115*, p. 2).

## Distance Education Enrollment Growth at Southwestern College

The Southwestern College Distance Education Program offers students both online and hybrid courses. As seen in Table 1, the pace of enrollment growth for Southwestern College Distance Education has been steady and consistent. From 2013 to 2016 there was a growth rate of 6% (from 2136 to 2272) in distance course FTES at Southwestern College. Hybrid courses experienced a similar growth rate: 1029 FTES to 1061 FTES, or approximately 3% growth.

**TABLE 1: FULL TIME EQUIVALENT STUDENTS (FTES) & COURSE SECTIONS, 2013–2016 (CUMMINGS REPORT, CENSUS DAY NUMBERS)**

### FALL 2013

	FTES Scheduled	FTES Earned	Efficiency	Courses Offered
Online	942	840	89%	257
Hybrid	453	366	81%	125

### SPRING 2014

	FTES Scheduled	FTES Earned	Efficiency	Courses Offered
Online	874	784	90%	244
Hybrid	507	406	80%	134

### SUMMER 2014

	FTES Scheduled	FTES Earned	Efficiency	Courses Offered
Online	320	271	85%	82
Hybrid	69	57	83%	18

**SUMMARY 2013-14**

	<b>FTES Scheduled</b>	<b>FTES Earned</b>	<b>Efficiency</b>	<b>Courses Offered</b>
Online	2136	1895	89%	583
Hybrid	1029	829	81%	277

**RATIO Distance Education vs. F2F**

	<b>Portion</b>	<b>Total DE Sections offered 2013-2014</b>	<b>ALL Sections offered 2013-2014</b>
Online	11%	583	5480
Hybrid	5%	277	5480
Total via DE	16%	860	5480

**FALL 2014**

	<b>FTES Scheduled</b>	<b>FTES Earned</b>	<b>Efficiency</b>	<b>Courses Offered</b>
Online	987	858	87%	277
Hybrid	452	345	76%	121

**SPRING 2015**

	<b>FTES Scheduled</b>	<b>FTES Earned</b>	<b>Efficiency</b>	<b>Courses Offered</b>
Online	960	825	86%	273
Hybrid	497	363	73%	129

**SUMMER 2015**

	<b>FTES Scheduled</b>	<b>FTES Earned</b>	<b>Efficiency</b>	<b>Courses Offered</b>
Online	349	287	82%	92
Hybrid	70	58	83%	19

**SUMMARY 2014-15**

	<b>FTES Scheduled</b>	<b>FTES Earned</b>	<b>Efficiency</b>	<b>Courses Offered</b>
Online	2296	1970	86%	642
Hybrid	1019	766	75%	269

**RATIO Distance Education vs. F2F**

	<b>Portion</b>	<b>Total DE Sections offered 2014-2015</b>	<b>ALL Sections offered 2014-2015</b>
Online	11%	642	5852
Hybrid	5%	269	5852
Total via DE	16%	911	5852

**FALL 2015**

	<b>FTES Scheduled</b>	<b>FTES Earned</b>	<b>Efficiency</b>	<b>Courses Offered</b>
Online	972	838	86%	271
Hybrid	496	364	73%	127

**SPRING 2016**

	<b>FTES Scheduled</b>	<b>FTES Earned</b>	<b>Efficiency</b>	<b>Courses Offered</b>
Online	961	824	86%	268
Hybrid	496	366	74%	123

**SUMMER 2016**

	<b>FTES Scheduled</b>	<b>FTES Earned</b>	<b>Efficiency</b>	<b>Courses Offered</b>
Online	339	301	89%	88
Hybrid	69	52	75%	17

**SUMMARY 2015-16**

	<b>FTES Scheduled</b>	<b>FTES Earned</b>	<b>Efficiency</b>	<b>Courses Offered</b>
Online	2272	1963	86%	627
Hybrid	1061	782	74%	267

**RATIO Distance Education vs. F2F**

	<b>Portion</b>	<b>Total DE Sections offered 2015-2016</b>	<b>ALL Sections offered 2015-2016</b>
Online	11%	627	5834
Hybrid	5%	267	5834
Total via DE	15%	894	5834

## FALL 2016

	FTES Scheduled	FTES Earned	Efficiency	Courses Offered
Online	907	802	88%	269
Hybrid	371	315	85%	115

Sources: Cummings Report at census for 2013-2014; 2014-2015, 2015-16  
Prepared by ISS Supervisor- Brian Ebaló; 1/10/2017

## Distance Education Success, Retention, and Persistence

### STUDENT SUCCESS

Successful student completion of a course is defined as performance with a passing grade or a grade of “C” or better (A, B, C, Credit, or pass).

Southwestern College parallels the patterns we see statewide and is above average for DE success rates. In 2011-2012, the DE success rate in the CCC system was 60%, compared with 69% for face-to-face courses. At Southwestern College, the DE success rate during this period was 61%, compared with 69% for face-to-face courses.

According to the most recent data for our college, we continue to improve success rates. From Summer 2014 to Spring 2016, SWC success rates were 61.2% for online courses, 66.4% for hybrid courses, and 70.1% for face-to-face courses. Although DE rates for DE did improve, we continue to aim for stronger gains as we work to narrow the gap between online and face-to-face success rates.

For improving student success, the California Student Success Task Force (SSTF) report from January 2012 recommends that community colleges develop and use a centralized, integrated technology which can be accessed through the campus or district web portals. This helps students to manage their educational plans, monitor their grades, and understand their level of technological skills in order to follow an appropriate pathway of success (SSTF, 2012, p. 27). Southwestern College has

followed this path and debuted its portal—MySWC— in Spring 2017. All courses with an online shell appear in MySWC for easy access.

Since SWC’s last Distance Education Plan, the state of California has implemented a statewide portal. The newly redesigned [California Virtual Campus](#) pulls information from each participating California Community College for display on its website. This empowers students to see at a glance courses offered throughout the entire community college system, which in turn is expected to provide greater access, ease of registration, and faster completion and transfer of degrees. (California Community College Online Education Initiative RFA, 2014, p. 23-25).

The Online Education Initiative has also been connecting colleges through the [OEI Course Exchange](#), an innovative arrangement allowing students from participating colleges to take DE courses at other participating colleges without registering at multiple institutions. The initial cohort of pilot colleges will begin using the exchange in 2017. A key component of the Exchange is course quality—each course is rigorously reviewed by a team of trained Peer Reviewers, and the instructor is provided assistance in instructional design and accessibility to get his or her course “Exchange ready.” This process is aimed at improving not just access, but also student success.

**Table 1:** The number of students in Table 1 is the total student headcount in all distance education (DE) and traditional education courses from 2009 to 2012. As shown, the DE headcount remained relatively consistent at around 25%.

**Table 2:** Table 2 is the total number of DE and traditional classes offered each year from 2009 to 2012. As shown in the table, DE increased in the total number of classes offered, while traditional education classes decreased.

**Table 3:** The number of students in Table 3 is a duplicated headcount, which means that students may be counted more than once. If they enrolled in two DE courses, they were counted two times, etc. The DE success rate rose slightly from 2009 to 2012, from 57 percent to 60 percent. This success rate compares to an increase from 67 percent to 69 percent for traditional education students. The gap for the success rate between traditional instruction and DE instruction closed from 10 percent to 9 percent. This

change is consistent with the previous three years as well, indicating steady progress in DE success rates. (Chancellor's Office, 2013, p. 52).

**Table 1: Total student headcount in all DE and traditional education course classes in California Community Colleges 2009-2012**

Fiscal year	Distance Education	Traditional education	Total	Percent of total headcount
2009-10	349,518	2,758,831	3,408,349	23.54%
2010-11	675,760	2,570,688	3,246,448	26.29%
2011-12	643,255	2,388,913	3,032,168	26.93%

Source: *Distance Education Report 2013* (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, 2013)

**Table 2: Total number of DE and traditional education course sessions/classes offered in California Community Colleges**

Fiscal years	Distance education	Traditional education	Percentage
2009-10	39,964	440,933	9.06%
2010-11	43,561	419,466	10.38%
2011-2012	41,246	391,191	10.54%

Source: *Distance Education Report 2013* (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, 2013)

**Table 3: Success Rates for Credit Distance Education and Traditional Education Course Sessions (Duplicated Headcount)**

Student Outcome	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
<b>Credit Distance Education Sessions</b>			
Completed	696,088	744,032	722,139
Not Completed	524,723	525,612	481,190

Total	1,220,811	1,269,644	1,203,329
<b>Success Rate</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>60%</b>
<b>Credit Traditional Education Sessions</b>			
Completed	696,088	744,032	722,139
Not Completed	524,723	525,612	481,190
Total	1,220,811	1,269,644	1,203,329
<b>Success Rate</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>60%</b>

Source: *Distance Education Report 2013* (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, 2013)

## RETENTION

State retention rates are calculated based on student drops. Students who drop a course with a "W" grade are counted as not having been retained. In recent years, the retention rate for DE courses has improved; in 2012, the retention rate improved 2.7% over the previous year. While DE registered an improvement in this area, face-to-face courses experienced a slight decrease in retention of .04%.

**Table 4: Distance Education Retention Rates Compared to Traditional Retention Rates 2009 - 2011**

Year	DE Retention Rate	Traditional Retention Rate
2009-10	78%	85.11%
2010-11	76.8%	85.2%
2011-12	79.5%	85.7%

Source: *Distance Education Report 2013* (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, 2013)

## PROGRAM PLANNING FOR RETENTION AND SUCCESS

While the data shows student success rates in traditional lecture courses are higher than in DE courses at Southwestern College and across the state, it is important to acknowledge both the improved success in DE courses and the decrease in the disparity between DE and traditional courses, especially in the hybrid delivery format. For planning purposes, it is also crucial to target the root causes of this disparity in order to find best practices that will improve success and retention.

Although there are strategies in place to try to determine how to improve retention and persistence in distance education, withdrawal from courses appears to be another key factor in the disparity of student performance.

There are many reasons that retention and persistence remain a challenge for distance education. Students tend to withdraw from their online/hybrid courses for a range of reasons, including personal and professional issues (California State Chancellor's Office, 2013). In fact, DE students tend to have more personal and professional obligations than traditional students, which may cause them to drop classes at higher rates than others (Steenhausen, et al., 2010). While a heavy work schedule and "personal circumstances" were the top two reasons students gave for taking online courses, they were also the top two reasons students gave for dropping a DE course (California State Chancellor's Office, 2011, p. 35).

The highest percentage of DE withdrawal calculations were for personal problems including family, health, job, and childcare. Secondary reasons were inability to combine study and work responsibilities and the course was too difficult. Tertiary reasons were student course load mismanagement, inability to devote time and attention to the online class requirements, and lack of instructor feedback (California State Chancellor's Office, 2011).

Research identifies the following factors as significant in motivating students to persist in online education: satisfaction with online learning, a sense of belonging to a community, peer and family support, time management skills, and communication with the instructor (Hart, *Factors Associated With Student Persistence in an Online Program*

*of Study*, 2012). Hart's review of current literature speaks to the importance of regular effective contact, and it has been a foundation of this college's approach to faculty training.

It is also important to ensure that DE students have access to online student services, which include counseling, personal instructor feedback, academic advising, and career services (Pullan, 2011). Student services play a direct, vital role in success, including academic performance, psychological growth and program or certificate completion (Pullan, 2011). Additionally, research has shown a correlation between online retention, student orientation and feedback from instructors (Weng, Cheong & Cheong, 2009).

Research has also shown a correlation between retention, self-efficacy, and the effective use of learning strategies in postsecondary education (Weng, Cheong & Cheong, 2009). College-wide surveys have targeted learning strategies, motivation, and self-regulation in order to improve curriculum development, create a more engaging experience, and improve retention and participation in DE classes. Additionally, the DE Plan includes program objectives designed to give DE students equal access to online materials and services, increase participation in online learning orientation, and increase the engagement and readiness to learn that may improve retention and persistence.

## Distance Education Management and Support at Southwestern College

Canvas, the CCC system's new Common Course Management System, was adopted by Southwestern College in April of 2016. By Spring 2018, all distance education and web-enhanced courses offered at Southwestern College will be in Canvas. The migration to Canvas started in Fall 2016 and will continue until all courses have been adapted into the new system.

The Distance Education program hosts web-enhanced courses on the college CMS for all instructors in addition to hosting all online and hybrid courses. By definition and

according to the official designation in the curriculum process, web-enhanced courses are considered traditional courses rather than Distance Education, and yet they represent a growing area of responsibility for the Distance Education program.

## **DEPENDABLE COURSE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM THROUGH MANAGED HOSTING**

Blackboard and Canvas are currently the official course management systems for DE classes at SWC. When the Canvas migration is complete in Spring 2018, Canvas will be the sole CMS for the college.

Southwestern College Board Policy No. 4105 requires DE courses be conducted in the college's official course management system. System maintenance, monitoring, upgrades, technical support, and systems administration support are all part of the managed contract for both Blackboard and Canvas.

Canvas was thoroughly vetted by a statewide committee of CMS administrators, faculty, and students. Before being selected, Canvas was rigorously reviewed for compliance with federal regulations, including Section 508 compliance. The state contract with Canvas includes 24/7 access to Canvas experts for system admins, faculty, and students. This expertise has proven invaluable for the sound implementation, troubleshooting, and swift resolution of issues. In addition, managed hosting guarantees against network outages through the use of redundant servers and industry standard safeguards from threats to physical and data security. Remotely hosting the system also protects against data loss through natural disasters.

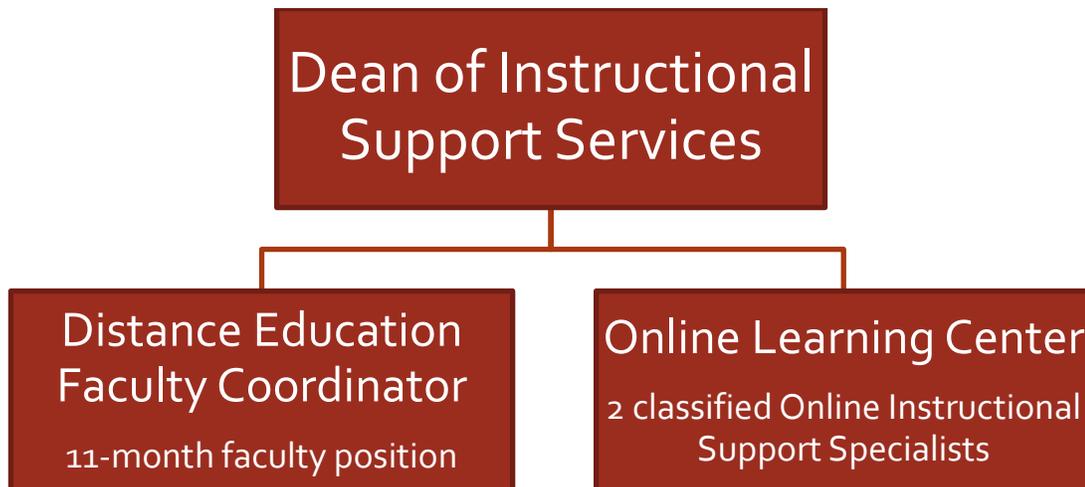
## **SOUTHWESTERN COLLEGE SUPPORT FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION**

The Distance Education program requires current and stable infrastructure, which is reliant upon funding allocation and assignment of sufficient personnel to manage the program and technological upgrades and changes. The technical personnel in the Online Learning Center are responsible for maintaining the course management system, providing stable access, continually monitoring all technical systems related to online program delivery, and supporting faculty, staff, and students with technical

aspects of the CMS. Currently, two classified employees provide technical support for students and faculty in the use of the College's Course Management System.

Instructional support is provided to faculty by the Distance Education Faculty Coordinator in the form of workshops, webinars, the HOW TO Academy, custom training, and weekly instructional design office hours. The DE Faculty Coordinator also administers the Distance Education Faculty Training Program, which provides training and feedback to DE faculty through a 5-week, 40-hour online course taught in Canvas. Faculty support is also provided through the DE Mentor Program, also administered by the DE Faculty Coordinator.

Canvas training is also offered to all college employees. Workshops, webinars, open labs, and one-on-one training are offered through the Online Learning Center and the DE Coordinator's office. In addition to local training, employees can take @ONE's Introduction to Teaching with Canvas and access unlimited Canvas Subscription Training at no cost.



## BUDGET

Independent budget unit designation is necessary for the Distance Education Program to guarantee program quality. Full independent budget unit designation would afford the program permanent funding, as opposed to the blend of line item and one-time funding upon which much of the program currently relies.

The position of Distance Education Faculty Coordinator is currently funded through reassigned time. A permanent position is desired to ensure program stability.

## DISTANCE EDUCATION AND ACADEMIC SENATE

The Education Code recognizes the right of Academic Senates to assume primary responsibility for making recommendations in the areas of curriculum and academic standards (California Code of Regulations Title 5. Education Division 6. California Community Colleges Chapter 4. Employees Subchapter 2. Certificated Positions Article 2. Academic Senates § 53200. Definitions. 5 CA ADC § 53200, 2009). California Code of Regulations Title 5 further defines these areas to include "curriculum ... standards or policies regarding student preparation and success, ... policies for faculty professional development activities ... [and] processes for program review." This Distance Education Plan recognizes the role of the Academic Senate in these areas, and the DE Program works with the Academic Senate to ensure that goals, objectives, and final outcomes in these matters receive the Senate's approval.

## TECHNOLOGY AND DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Instructional Support Services is responsible for Blackboard and Canvas, both of which are hosted off site. Information Technology provides automated transfers of student enrollment information from Colleague to Blackboard and Canvas.

## Distance Education Program Level Learning Outcomes

The Distance Education program-level learning outcomes address student technical competency and academic support awareness:

1. Distance Education students will use the basic features of the Southwestern College CMS at a proficiency level sufficient to access course materials, actively interact with the instructor and fellow students, complete course assignments and assessments, and monitor learning and grades during the semester.

2. Distance Education students will be aware of student academic and support services as a result of direct access to links to those services available on Southwestern College CMS course sites or the Distance Education web site.

### A NOTE ON COURSE-LEVEL STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (SLOS)

Southwestern College instructional programs incorporate student learning outcomes into each course during the curriculum approval process. Distance Education course SLO assessment occurs as part of a department's established course-level SLO assessment process. The process of instructional assessment is not part of the Distance Education program review or this plan.

## Program Goals and Objectives

Distance Education goals and objectives direct the program's development and improvement process. The DE Program is committed to offering only those new products and services that can be fully supported and funded with the technical, financial, and staffing resources available. As the College migrates from Blackboard to Canvas, many objectives are being revisited and updated.

### GOAL 1: STUDENT SUPPORT & SERVICES

Provide the support and services necessary to students for successful distance learning. This goal includes objectives that ensure student access to existing college services as well as services designed to meet the special needs of distance education students.

**1.1. Objective:** Facilitate student awareness of student services and important dates using the tools in our new CMS, Canvas. Targeted strategies include scheduled global announcements for students, global emails to students via Canvas, and college use of the Canvas Calendar to embed important term dates and deadlines into all student calendars in Canvas.

1.1.a Person(s) responsible: Online Learning Center

1.1.b Timeframe: Summer-Fall 2017

1.1.c Additional fiscal resources needed: None

**1.2. Objective:** Offer students an online readiness assessment test and/or CIS 90: Introduction to Online Learning (one unit), prior to the first week of class. Consider the use of the OEI's Quest for Success modules, which have recently been released to non-pilot colleges.

1.2.a Person(s) responsible: DE Task Force, Dean of ISS, Dean of Student Services, Assessment Center

1.2.b Timeframe: Spring 2018-Fall 2019

1.2.c Additional fiscal resources needed: Tenure track faculty

**1.3 Objective:** Create a Distance Education student handbook and/or webpages to provide basic information needed to be a successful distance learner as well as Canvas-specific information to aid students in the transition.

1.3.a Person(s) responsible: DE Coordinator, DE Task Force, Online Learning Center

1.3.b Timeframe: Spring 2017-Fall 2018

1.3.c Additional fiscal resources needed: None

## **GOAL 2: FACULTY SUPPORT & SERVICES**

Provide the support and services necessary to faculty for successful distance instruction.

**2.1 Objective:** Provide training, instructions, and support for migrating course content from Blackboard to Canvas.

2.1.a Person(s) responsible: Online Learning Center

2.1.b Timeframe: Spring 2017-Fall 2018

2.1.c Additional Fiscal resources needed: None

**2.2 Objective:** Negotiate permanent faculty position for Distance Education coordinator.

2.2.a Person(s) responsible: Dean of ISS, Senate President, SCEA and District

2.2.b Timeframe: 2017 – 2019

2.2.c Additional Fiscal resources needed: New faculty position

### **GOAL 3: FACULTY TRAINING**

Provide comprehensive faculty training for successful distance education instruction. Ensure that the College's online and hybrid courses are taught by DE-trained instructors.

**3.1. Objective:** Expand offerings of the Distance Education Faculty Training (DEFT) course to offer year-round opportunities for faculty, including during the summer. When all DE instructors have been trained, continue to offer DEFT so that instructors interested in teaching online can become DEFT certified.

3.1.a Person(s) responsible: DE Coordinator

3.1.b Timeframe: Summer 2017-Ongoing

3.1.c Additional fiscal resources needed: facilitator compensation

**3.2. Objective:** Expand role and use of the DE Mentor Program to provide individual and small-group mentoring for faculty teaching online or preparing to teach online. Increase awareness of the program through departmental outreach, global email, and increased integration into current training.

3.2.a Person(s) responsible: DE Coordinator

3.2.b Timeframe: Fall 2017-Spring 2018

3.2.c Additional fiscal resources needed: None

## GOAL 4: LEGAL COMPLIANCE

Continually monitor and revise program requirements to meet state and federal laws and guidelines that apply to distance education in California higher education.

**4.1 Objective:** Work with campus groups including Disability Support Services (DSS), Student Support Services, Institutional Technology, and Professional Development to develop an accessibility review process for DE courses and course materials.

4.1.a Person(s) responsible: DE Coordinator, Dean of ISS, DSS Director, Technology Specialist for Accessibility and Compliance

4.1.c Timeframe: Fall 2017-Fall 2018

4.1.d Additional fiscal resources needed: Technology Specialist for Accessibility and Compliance position

**4.2 Objective:** Work with the Curriculum Committee to lift the moratorium on new DE curriculum, using the revised Curriculum Handbook and new DE Addendum, both of which address key areas of compliance.

4.2.a Person(s) responsible: DE Coordinator, Curriculum chair

4.2.b Timeframe: Spring 2017-Fall 2018

4.2.c Additional Fiscal resources needed: Technology Specialist for Accessibility and Compliance position

**4.3 Objective:** Evaluate College compliance with FERPA, Section 508, and Title 5 in regards to requiring students to

- a) purchase publisher access codes and complete work in a publisher's course management system;
- b) use OER (Open Educational Resources) online textbook, materials, and/or activities; or
- c) complete work on an instructor-created website.

Work with Academic Senate's Bookstore Textbook Committee, DSS, Technology Specialist for Accessibility and Compliance, Risk Management, academic deans and chairs, Dean of Student Services, and Dean of Instructional Support Services to evaluate current use of publisher access codes, OER, and instructor sites; develop a process to determine legal compliance; create an approved list of compliant products; and develop guidelines for faculty who propose the use of non-CMS web-based applications and sites.

4.3.a Person(s) responsible: DE Coordinator, Technology Specialist for Accessibility and Compliance, Academic Senate representative(s), Cognizant Administrators

4.3.b Timeframe: Fall 2017-Spring 2018

4.3.c Additional fiscal resources needed: Technology Specialist for Accessibility and Compliance position

## GOAL 5: PROGRAM QUALITY

Maintain a quality program through continuous program improvement based on the evaluation of instruction, procedures, practices, and accessibility.

**5.1 Objective:** Evaluate facilities, staffing, and resources currently used for Distance Education proctoring. Explore options provided by the CCC's Online Education Initiative.

5.1.a Person(s) responsible: Dean of ISS, Learning Assistance Services Coordinator, DE Coordinator

5.1.b Timeframe: Fall 2017-Spring 2018

5.1.c Additional fiscal resources needed: Unknown--potential contract with online proctoring service

**5.2 Objective:** Create a process for capturing data from students withdrawing from online and hybrid courses. By determining the reasons students withdraw, the College can better target support and assistance to address these reasons, and faculty training can incorporate this data as well.

5.2.a Person(s) responsible: Dean of ISS, Online Learning Center, and DE Coordinator

5.2.b Timeframe: Spring 2018-Fall 2018

5.2.c Additional fiscal resources needed: Unknown