

Online University Administration: Impacts on faculty management and course delivery

by

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Abstract

Although some ground-based academic institutions have pursued online education as a mechanism to more cost effectively provide learning and additionally to utilize this as a profit generating endeavor, they may be missing the additional costs in physical, administrative and faculty resources involved providing this method of education. This paper will examine some of the unique aspects of online course delivery from the administrative and faculty perspective to determine and elaborate on those perhaps underestimated aspects of instructor lead, web-based education. Throughout this paper theoretical perspectives surrounding online learning will be utilized to suggest ways to improve administrative process.

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Introduction

Distance education has been practiced for a considerably long time considering correspondence study, a form of different time – different place education, has existed for 160 years (Simonson, Smaldino, Albright, & Zvacek, 2003, p. 32). Unique characteristics of distance education that correspond to the unique nature of its delivery have fostered administrative processes and organizational structures that differ from those in traditional educational institutions. Williams, Paprock and Covington (1999,p. 25-32) list many key competencies and characteristics of traditional training programs and their relationship to equivalent distance education programs. Although there are many common characters between these modes of education, key differences exist that must be acknowledged by administrators of these programs.

The asynchronous learning network (ALN) model of education also has unique characteristics which differentiate it from other forms of distance education. This mode of delivery is also characterized by the different time – different place paradigm. However, the vehicle of the Internet has drastically changed the nature of the mode of learning from that of traditional correspondence study. But despite this change in the nature of course delivery, some researches have continuously reported that no significant difference exists in outcomes when an distance learning program is compared to a traditional program (Meyer, 2002, p. 13; Twigg, 2000). Twigg further explains that the lack of more positive results in online programs is related to "applying old solutions to new problems in the world of online learning" (p.4). By examining the characteristics of administering these programs we may be able to detect new processes that will move the effectiveness of these program beyond "no significant difference".

This electronic form of educational delivery has been acknowledged by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA) through the creation of a best practices document defining policies and practices of effective administration of online programs (The Higher Learning Commission, 2003). Each section of this document describes a best practice for electronically delivered courses and the administration of electronically offered degree programs. Each practice is further clarified by detailed questions which are useful in constructing or evaluating such a program. For example, in the area of faculty support a best practice is providing training for those responsible for program development to enable their proficiencies with the tools and technologies utilized in developing the program. A specific related question queries about the nature and availability of specific training programs (p. 8). This acknowledgment underscores that important differences exist between traditional educational programs, computer based training programs (CBT's) and electronically delivered degree program of the nature provided by Capella over the Internet. The remainder of this paper will explore some key aspects of ALN degree programs from the perspective of determining differences in administration techniques related to faculty and course development and processes that characterize these programs.

Impact of Online Learning on Faculty

Characteristics of the Online Environment

To be able to develop faculty development programs for an online education program it is crucial to determine the characteristics of teaching and course development that lead to successful learning experiences from the perspective of achieved learning outcomes and self-reporting satisfaction with the learning experience. Faculty can then be

taught those unique skills and perspectives essential to online instruction. This is particularly important for those faculty with extensive "traditional" teaching experience but little distance or online teaching experience. Mortera-Gutierrez (2002, p. 192) states that different perspectives must be taken when considering online instruction in the areas of interactions, skills, motivation and techniques used to engage learners. Faculty development for online instruction must strive to assist in developing a different, online persona which includes changes from the traditional teaching persona in the areas of formality, open-ended questioning, online community building, accessibility and authority. Tobin (2004) provides several case studies which compare behaviors of traditional instructors to classroom issues which require different techniques to achieve a satisfactory outcome in the online context. For example, online instructors must develop skills in communicating directly and accurately via email or through course room postings, but also be able to appropriately use humor in a fashion to not be misunderstood by most learners.

Facilitator role

A very common theme in online education is the change in role of the instructor from being the "Sage on the Stage" to the "Guide on the Side" (Miller & Lu, 2003, p. 167) which indicates that a key paradigm shift may be required of those faculty comfortable with the didactic role of a traditional lecturing professor. In the online context, the key difference in the characteristic of the instructional model is the shift from the recitation model to the learning facilitated model where the instructor behaves as more of a cheerleader than a lecturer (Rena M. Palloff & Pratt, 2001, p. 74-77).

Simonson et al (2003,p. 151-152) further emphasizes the change in perspective that some

faculty must make if they harbor philosophies of realism, idealism or essentialism that emphasize the instructor as the authority, knowledge deliverer in the course room. Such faculty must be encouraged to see that in the online learning context facilitating learner discovery is more effective than solely providing information.

The characteristics of the online facilitator include roles that are similarly played by the traditional instructor but which include aspects that support the online learning paradigm and particularly adult learners. This facilitation includes utilizing techniques that stimulate further discussion not only by the targeted learner but also by other course learners who find the extension of the topic useful and interesting. Socratic questioning is an effective mechanism for stimulating further discussion and has been listed as a key category of online instructional postings (Blignaut & Trollip, 2003). This type of questioning is characterized as expansive questioning by Palloff and Pratt (2001, p. 119) who indicate that if instructors effectively model this behavior, learners will develop the capability of querying each other in this fashion resulting in an enhanced learning experience.

Characteristics of good online instruction

The key role characteristics include: cognitive, affective and managerial aspects which must be molded to the online environment through training and experience in teaching in this context (Coppola, Hiltz, & Rotter, 2002). For example, the cognitive aspects of online instruction are represented through the increased level of formality reported by online faculty (p. 177). The textual communication mode of interaction supports interactions that are more reflective both on the part of learners and faculty. Faculty reported they must be more precise in their course room interactions. (Tobin,

2004, p. 6). This emphasis on formality was reported by Coppola et al (2002, p. 179, 182) as a mode of expressing their online persona. They also indicated that more precision was required to develop an authentic intimacy online. This precision was required to prevent misinterpretation of expressions of humor or other emotions in the relatively clueless online context. In distance learning environment this precision can be reflected through additional efforts that assure accuracy of communication. It is crucial for many learners that faculty communicate their status (i.e. are they accomplishing course learning objectives) early in the course and frequently throughout the course.

Three aspects of management of online courses seem to predominate compared to traditional education. The first aspect of online management centers around the technology delivering the course. Chou and Tsai (2002, p. 180) indicated that faculty must engage in tasks related to administering the course itself. They must plan and structure the course for online delivery, or if the course has already been developed, they must ensure the course content is delivered to learners at the appropriate time and that the assignments delivered to the learners are indeed correct. Since Internet links within a course will likely change or become inactive during the delivery of an online course, an instructor must verify links in the course content are accurate prior to the delivery of the assignments to the learners.

Leading and Controlling

Controlling the discussions within the online course room also varies from managing a traditional course room setting both in the amount of time required to conduct the discussion and in the setup or configuration of the discussions. The time involved to respond to learner discussions and to monitor learner process has been

reported to be three times that required for a traditional course room (Coppola et al., 2002, p. 181). Collis and Nijhuis (2000, p. 89) supported Coppola's (Coppola et al., 2002) notion that considerably more effort was required by online faculty by specifying the many unique tasks required of online instructors. An instructor must spend additional time structuring the discussions, particularly if these discussions involve collaborative subgroups of the class. Some of this time will be spent in manipulating the course delivery system to set up the groups and assign group membership. As the discussion within the groups progresses, the instructor will also spend time monitoring group activities.

Supporting affective communications

The affective aspect of online learning is important since it provides the support for those learners who particularly need the warm supporting feeling they may receive from the presence of a physical instructor. Humor is a unique characteristic of affective communication in the online context. Although humor seems to have an impact on the quality of online interaction, it has been difficult to quantify and analytically verify its impact as Rourke, Anderson, Garrison & Archer (1999, p. 14) discovered in analyzing social presence in the online context. It is also difficult to provide this type of affective support in an online context due to the lack of facial, auditory and other cues which provide the key mechanisms for effectual supportive communication. Complicating matters further, supportive communication of this nature, particularly if it utilizes humor can easily be misinterpreted because of the lack of cues from the recipients of the communication for whom the message may be culturally offensive (Tobin, 2004, p. 9). Faculty must learn ways of unambiguously expressing humor and of being immediately sensitive to learners' responses to this type of communication.

Assuring Effectiveness of instruction

Faculty Monitoring

Why is monitoring of performance essential for online faculty? In a traditional university setting it is easy to determine if a faculty member is present in the classroom simply through visual observation. The recitation type of interaction of lecture followed by some discussion is also readily monitored. However, in an online asynchronous context, the only way to be certain faculty are indeed interacting with learners other than querying learners or waiting for complaints is to monitor faculty interactions in the course room. Since a high instructor learner interaction has been identified as a key characteristic to successful online learning experiences (Husson & Waterman, 2002,; Mortera-Gutierrez, 2002) it is desirable to monitor the level of interaction with the intent to coach faculty with interaction rates determined to be too low to support effective online learning (Blignaut & Trollip, 2003,p. 353-353).

Another essential motivation for monitoring the online course room is that this process provides some of the evidence supporting levels of quality instruction required by academic accrediting bodies (The Higher Learning Commission, 2003). In traditional university settings it is typical for administrators to physically visit the course room and generate an evaluative report on the effectiveness and process of instruction. Tobin (2004) described a scenario for visiting an online course room and described aspects of this visit which differ from a traditional course room visit. He listed a set of questions for evaluation which focus on the online nature of the course

- How do I "visit" the classroom for a set period of time if the classroom is asynchronous?

- What should I look at to prepare myself for the discussions that the class will have?
- How can I evaluate the instructor's classroom presence in an online course?
- In order to say I have evaluated the instructor, where should I visit in the course shell, how often, and why?
- How can I ascertain the quality of the class discussion and whether the instructor is taking enough of a part?
- Should the online instructor use more multimedia than a classroom instructor?
- A lot of the questions from my classroom-visit rubric don't seem to apply. What questions are cognate?
- How can I evaluate an online course if I've never taught online, myself?

(Tobin, 2004, Online vs. Classroom Instruction)

Monitoring the level of faculty interactions was listed a key focus item. However, Tobin indicated it was essential to understand the learning objectives of the course and the teaching strategy of the instructor prior to judging the effectiveness of instruction. He indicated that a false interpretation of a quality learning experience was possible by focusing on the professional appearance of the course room and the inclusion of multimedia presentations. He emphasized that rapid instructor responses to postings were not always the most appropriate mechanism to allow learners to work collaboratively to build new knowledge. Course room monitoring must acknowledge that the instructor – learner interaction is not the only predictor of learner satisfaction and success, interaction between learners and interaction with the course material itself must also be considered as factors for learners' success.

The course room visit

Because teaching online involves some faculty characteristics and behaviors that differ from those needed by traditional faculty, it is important that any strategy of assessing online faculty attempt to assess these characteristics. Also, the nature of online teaching itself, required processes that acknowledge the characteristics of the online medium. In a traditional teaching setting, with notice to the instructor, a course evaluator may physically sit-in the course room of an instructor and monitor the instructors delivery style, the technique the instructor uses to answer learner questions, the material used and the structure and content of the syllabus. In the online course room other criteria are scrutinized such as the level of instructor learner interaction, the inclusion of supporting multi-media presentation, and the richness of Web links and references supporting unit topics (Tobin, 2004, p. 3-5). However, when on an online visit is conducted, Tobin emphasizes that the pedagogical goals of the online instructor must be considered. For example, if the constructivist approach supporting adult styles is followed, a more flexible approach to instructor interaction is desirable that supports rather than controls unit discussions.

The Mid Term and End of Course Evaluation

Capella University utilizes a survey that includes both numeric scales and free text entry. The scales reflect the level of particular instructor characteristics that are believe to be related to learner satisfaction and positive learning outcomes. These questions include:

- The instructor provided clear expectations of course requirements

- The instructor provided timely feedback regarding postings to the unit assignments
- The instructor provided constructive feedback regarding course papers or projects
- The instructor showed commitment to learner progress
- Overall, how would you rate the quality of instructor s online teaching activities?

The survey also includes questions directed at the effectiveness of the course design:

- The discussion questions were relevant and engaging
- The learning objectives for each unit were relevant and appropriate
- The unit learning activities (e.g. case studies group projects lab experiments simulations journaling role-playing etc.) supported the learning objectives
- Course content promoted relevant and useful skill development

The results of these questionnaires are averaged over the learners in each section taught by the instructor. To improve the instruction and also guide course development, a discussion is held bi-annually with each instructor regarding the results of the end of course evaluation. If the average rating of the instructor behavior falls below a predetermined average, the instructor is contacted as soon as feasible to discuss the results. Coaching of the instructor is performed to attempt to improve the instruction in future courses.

Online caveat – instructors often are not course developers

In the online model of instruction, production of the course may not include the instructor of the course. This is the typical Fordism approach to course production (Simonson et al., 2003,p. 49-54). It is also the typical model for many online universities where subject mater experts interact with instructional designers to develop courses and

ensure consistency of design and effectiveness of the produced courses. LaBarre and Wilson (2002, p. 175) provide a diagram that illustrates the flow of development of an online course. It is evident from this diagram that considerable control and review of the course development process, particularly an analysis of requirements driving the design of the course, occurs which would not be typical of a traditionally developed course.

At Capella University, courses are produced through the efforts of subject matter experts (SME's) and instructional designers. Actual course instructors may have little impact on course development yet, when they teach the course, any deficiencies in course design will be attributed to the instructors presentation or instruction of the course. Faculty assessment must attempt to dissect learner comments that pertain to course design from those that reflect instruction of the course. Further, the nature of the learning platform itself may be a contributing factor in instructor evaluations since learners do not typically differentiate course instruction from difficulties they may experience in utilizing in technology delivering the course (IDE (Institute for Distance Education), 2004). As indicated previously, the end of course survey conducted by Capella University attempts to capture the learner perspective of the quality of the course design and content. A comparison of the response to questions related to instruction and course design must be performed to discover the impact poor course design may have on learner rated quality of instruction. Typically, a low rating on course design factors will also be manifested in lower ratings on faculty effectiveness. However high ratings on instructor effectiveness questions are typically not carried over to course design related questions. It appears that good instructional techniques can compensate to some extent for flaws in course design.

Working with an LMS (Learning Management) or LCMS (Learning Content Management System)

Administrators of online environments must acknowledge the additional effort required by faculty in course delivery in providing teaching assignments. The impact of utilizing modern Learning Management Systems can assist in reducing the effort in managing online courses, however selecting the appropriate system for any particular institution is a daunting task due to the complexity of these systems, the unique needs of each educational environment, and the many variables involved in the selection process (Horton & Horton, 2003). One option to ensure a LMS is suitable for a particular institutions needs is to internally develop the system . Collis and Nijhuis (Collis & Nijhuis, 2000) described how their internally developed LMS, TeleTOP, was able to ease the burden by providing various support tools. They continued to emphasize however, that in an online context, support for course delivery involved effort by all groups involved in supporting course development and delivery (p. 95).

Keeping Faculty Current is Essential

How can faculty stay current in the relatively new art of online instruction? The theories concerning the most effective techniques for online instruction are changing rapidly. Also, the learning platforms will continue to change necessitating a process to keep faculty informed of these changes (Husson & Waterman, 2002). To accommodate these changes, faculty development courses must be continually updated to accommodate changes to the learning platform, with the addition of tutorial training courses for faculty already teaching in the institution. Faculty accessible web sites that contain the current

intuitional policy articulating the "best practices" for online instruction must be maintained and faculty should be notified with policies and processes change (p. 255).

Impact of the Online Environment on Course Development

Ownership issues in the online context

Who owns the course and what impact does this have on faculty motivation to teach in the online context? In most traditional institutions, faculty may or may not have legal ownership to the developed course develops courses. Typically in the traditional environment, the faculty member who has developed a course also instructs the course and usually may freely and dynamically modify course content within the constraints of the catalog description of the course. As traditional courses have migrated to the online environment they must be published at least to the extent that portions of the course material are converted to a web deliverable format, web pages. At this juncture of publication, the course may continued to owned by the faculty who created it and will deliver it or it may become the property of the institution who employs the course developing faculty and be used by various faculty and over several iterations a instruction. Typically, the institution employing the course developer owns the developed courses unless the ownership is formally transferred to the faculty developing the course (Onay, 2002, p. 246). This change in ownership and the resulting control of the course content may not be readily accepted by faculty who are comfortable with control and ownership of the courses they teach, particularly if it restricts their capabilities to modify delivery of the course as they may see appropriate. Faculty may also be reluctant to transfer courses they teach traditionally to the online context fearing the loss of financial

benefits from existing course material which will need to be made available on the Internet.

Another key issue related to online courses is the source of resources supporting the learning objectives and activities of the course. In traditional courses, the key resources for a course are the course text books and journal articles which may be provided as a purchasable course pack. In this context, ownership of the content is clear, the learner must purchase the textbook or course pack and the instructor or course developer has no additional concern about copyright or licensure issues. In the online context, the instructor or course developer faces a complex litany of regulations concerning the use of learning content (Simonson et al., 2003, p. 199-141).

Administrators must continually admonish online course developers that there are very few instances in which online material or course material from other contexts (i.e. DVD's, audio recordings, pictures from journals or text books) may be copied and utilized in a course. An examination of the extensive list of continually changing copyright laws provided by the federal government (U. S. 108th Congress, 2004) attests to the difficulty in understanding under what, if any conditions, material may be copied and legitimately used for online educational purposes. However, the TEACH Act (American Library Association, 2004) does provide a description of the contexts in which material may be copied and utilized in a distance educational context by non-profit educational institutions.

To prevent potential copyright issues and the associated litigation and legal costs associated with infringements, administrators typically request course developers use hypertext links to content that supports the learning objective of the course. This is

described in a positive fashion by Chou and Tsai who discuss this as a way to "develop web curricula that are open, non-fixed and boundless" (2002, p. 627). Although benefits may be achieved through using this vast resource of information, potential problems relative to the nature of the Internet may occur negating some of these benefits. For example, links to web resources are not permanent since the owner of the resource may remove or move the resource at any time. A particular resource, which was "free" at a particular time, may require payment for use at some future time. Resources may not be viewable or useable on each learner's computer due to problems related to browser and computer capabilities. To protect faculty and learners from courses that may suffer from these problems during course delivery, administrators should create guidelines for course developers concerning the use of web resources emphasizing the importance of strictly following copyright laws.

Efficiencies in online course development

Can online courses be developed more efficiently and cost effectively than traditional courses? Simonson et al (2003, p. 49-52) describes the trend, characterized as Fordism, to utilize manufactured courses available from centrally administered sources to improve the efficiency and standardization of course delivery. They discuss the advantages of being able monitor, maintain control course delivery more efficiently which are key aspects of course delivery, particularly in for-profit educational markets (p. 50). However they also acknowledge that these courses may suffer from inflexibility since the original target of the courses may not be the applied target of the courses. Also, the mass production metaphor does not consistently guarantee that the products of this process will be high quality. Administrator must use caution when purchasing and

utilizing pre-produced courses to ensure they satisfy the requirements of the institution's instructional purpose and curricular direction. They must also ensure this courseware is relevant to the leaning styles and capabilities of their target students.

Related to the notion of courses produced for use by various instructors or even sold for use by client institutions is the notion of utilizing reusable course content. In this model courses are developed through the use of course content which may reside on a vendors learning content repository for purchase and use by learning providers (Kraan, 2004). This may be an attractive way of avoiding copyright issues, however issues relating to licensure of the content or outright purchase of the content are still relevant. Additionally, it is crucial that the learning content is indeed relevant and suitable to its intended use with in a course. Content must be selected not only for its match to the intended learning objectives but also to the learning style and level of the target audience (Sederberg, 2001). The new standards for learning object repositories by the ADL are an attempt to facilitate this process through more standardization of the meta data tags identifying this content and effective procedure for accessing it (Kraan, 2004).

Key course delivery issues

Ensure technical support of faculty and learners

Online education is delivered over the Internet with the natural assumption of reliable delivery of the educational experience to all learners. However the Internet and the software systems responsible for delivering on online course are neither totally reliable nor are they easy to navigate and utilize. This nature of this course delivery technology must be acknowledged and confronted through designing programs and preparing instructors and faculty for the online environment.

Because of the variety of operating systems, differing brands of computers, diverse network configurations utilized to access the Internet and the variety of browsers and browser settings used to interface with learning delivery platforms, issues will develop which prevent some learners from accessing their online courses or communicating with their instructors. In an attempt to minimize these issues, online institutions identify and establish standard configurations for the above resources that have been verified to interface correctly and reliably with the institutions learning delivery platform. These configurations and PC requirements must be clearly communicated to the faculty and learners through institutions catalog or other online support resources so initial course access problems can be minimized.

An example of communicating this information is found on Capella's Learners Courseroom Orientation Page (LCOP) (Capella University, 2004) which includes tools for detecting the browser and computer configuration of the user providing instructions for changing the configurations to properly interface with Capella's learning management systems (LMS). A tutorial introducing the LMS and how to navigate within the course room is also provided. Further, a list of the latest problems and most frequently asked questions concerning the LMS is offered to facilitate the most effective use of the system and reduce the frequency of help line calls. A similar resource offering information on connecting the institution's course deliver system, "WebTyco", and guidelines for using the system with the specific education context is provide by the University of Maryland, University College (UMUC) (2004). Administrators are challenged to determine the most effective mechanism for presenting this information. The Capella model attempts to isolate the LMS connection issues form course learning experiences while UMUC

(University of Maryland University College, 2004) follows a more inclusive strategy of including general educational philosophy in this site as is evidenced by entries on creating a learning profile or autobiography.

Because of the possibility of failures in course delivery technology and also because of the level of complexity of this technology, administrators must ensure technical support is readily and rapidly available to both learners and faculty utilizing the learning platform (Singh & Pan, 2004, p. 305). This support should consist of online resources and direct, telephone accessible support for all hours of operation. If an educational institution serves a national or international constituency, learners can be expected to access educational resources at almost any time of the day. An important suggestion is ventured by the University of Maryland for Distance Education (IDE (Institute for Distance Education), 2004) to allow the faculty, learners and the support staff evaluate the nature of the support services on a regular basis to provide feedback that can be utilized to improve their services.

To achieve these goals, Capella University utilizes an internal organization, University Services, to respond to faculty and learner questions and issues related to use of its learning platforms. Additionally, Web help sites are available to both faculty and learners which provide handbooks in the use of the learning platform and information concerning the latest problems in utilizing this platform. The intent of these sites is to provide the quickest and most accurate mechanisms for learners to resolve technical and usage concerns with the learning platform so that they may focus on the goals of instruction and learning. The figure below illustrates the interaction of the help Web Sites and the call-in support desk, University Services.

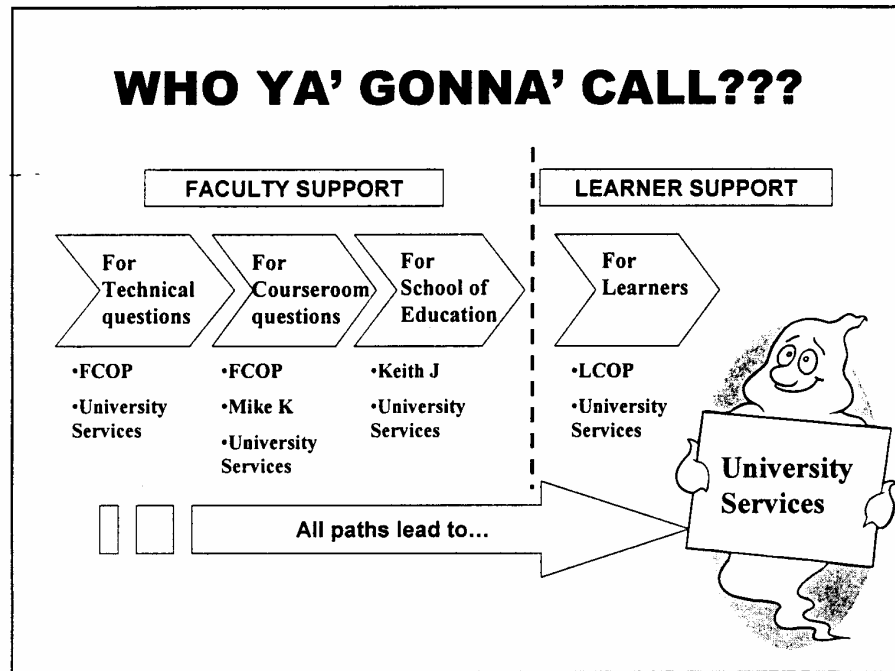


Figure 1: Capella Learning Platform Support Structure

Impact of technology on new learners and faculty

Palloff and Pratt (2001, p. 63) emphasize that technology should be transparent facilitating the learning experience and enhancing it. However, many learners matriculating in an online program will not have had experience with the particular technology (i.e. Learning Management System (LMS)) used to deliver courses, it is essential that some form of initial training in this system be provided. Without this initial training in the interfaces involved in "taking" an online course valuable time that could be devoted to leaning course content will be spent in learning the online course room interface (Mortera-Gutierrez, 2002, p. 205).

Since LMS's will continue to develop and offer more capabilities to both learners and faculty, their interfaces will continue to become more complex requiring some form of initial training in use. New learners should be provided separate training in the use of

the course delivery interface prior to using it within a credit-producing course. This training could also be offered as part of an initial orientation course, similar to Capella's First Course experience. However, those learners who must migrate from the use of one LMS to another, as a result of transitioning systems, will require at least a tutorial in the use of the new system prior to using the system in course work.

Miscellaneous academic concerns

Impact of Diverse Learner Population

A difference of opinion exists concerning the importance of customizing instructional delivery to the learning style of specific learners. Some authors contend that although teaching in fashions that support individual learning styles may be effective in supporting learning achievement, this process can be most easily obtained by utilizing a variety of teaching methods within a specific course (Rena M Palloff & Pratt, 2003, p. 31-34). However other authors emphasize the importance of attempting to teach individual learners in a fashion that supports their specific learning preference (Meyer, 2002, p. 48). In an online context, it can be more difficult to determine the specific learning characteristics of specific learners due to the lack of visual and auditory queues which can provide this type of information in a traditional learning context.

Using technology to administer online education effectively

Over the years systems have been developed and have evolved from centralized computer systems through client-server architectures to the current web based systems (i.e. IQ.Student and IQ.Faculty) that support typical student administration procedures and which support student initiated activities such as course registration, enrolment, grade reporting and academic progress (Moldoff, 2002). An extension of these features

that allow integration of faculty and learner management capabilities with course delivery and instructor to course assignments is PowerCampus (SCT Corporation, 2001). The inclusion of this multitude of features supports most online college administrative functions through one complex software application. These types of systems may reduce to total number administrative staff required to perform these task "manually", but they require extensive training for efficient and accurate use. Since they centralize a majority of university's administrative functions they represent a single point of failure.

Complexities also exist in attempting to interface these systems with an institutions current learner and faculty management systems, course delivery systems and other academic and administrative databases. Administrators must understand these complexities and potential integration and maintenance issues to plan effective processes for use and maintenance of these systems.

Summary

In examining the faculty related issues administrators must confront in the online environment it appears that two key concerns must be addressed. Faculty will need to adjust to utilizing new technology both in the delivery of courses and in the development of an online curriculum. The new mechanism of course delivery may result in a paradigm shift for faculty as they transition from a traditional to an online environment. Administrators will face challenges in ensuring faculty development program adequately prepare faculty for this shift in focus to become "guides on the side" rather than "sages on the stage". Administrators must also develop effective faculty monitoring programs to ensure the quality of instruction and provide effective faculty coaching.

Additionally, administrators must understand the complexity of issues surrounding establishing, delivering and maintaining a large scale, quality online program. Technology has advanced markedly over the last ten years of web based instruction, providing powerful Learning Management Systems like WebCT® and Blackboard®, campus management and administrative support systems like PowerCampus® and system interfacing with both of these systems supporting the development of an online curriculum (i.e. Learning Content Management Systems), but this advancement has resulted in many additional choices for administrators in confronting these systems. Educational administrators must learn enough about technology to wisely select the appropriate systems for their educational context. They must ensure adequate support exists for learners and faculty in training in the use of the systems and in their maintenance. They must ensure course development processes can effectively utilize these systems to construct curricula in an efficient and accurate fashion utilizing faculty and instructional designer effectively. All of these concerns are somewhat unique to the online educational context and involve additional resources, costs and processes that may not be well understood by traditional academic administrators. The future challenge for post secondary online education will be to continue to develop the discipline area of online distance administration to discover best practices and guidelines so administrators can more easily select the most appropriate mechanisms for delivering online learning in their specific environment.

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