

## Sharpen the Focus – Fall 2005

The Illinois Virtual Campus (IVC) provides an additional enrollment reporting procedure to help institutions better understand the trends of distance education. This procedure involves phone interviews with administrators from select colleges and universities who can provide a “snapshot” of distance education enrollments at their institution. This term, interviews were conducted with Molly Baker, Black Hawk College; Page Wolf, College of Lake County; Mary Hales, Lewis and Clark Community College; Faye Lesht, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; and William Summers, Olivet Nazarene University. The interview consisted of five questions. The questions and individual responses are listed below.

### **What is the most important trend in distance education at your institution?**

**Black Hawk College (BHC)** – Black Hawk College has been experiencing continued growth in online enrollments, fueling renewed efforts to accomplish an entirely online AA/AS degree. The program is one course short at this time. In addition, integration of the course management system with our new college-wide portal has driven the focus of faculty support activities in the past six months.

**College of Lake County (CLC)** – Student requests for online and hybrid courses continue to increase, and these classes fill right away. We are continuously interested in pursuing hybrid course development as another possible distance learning option. Furthermore, we are seeing more part-time faculty members expressing an interest in developing/teaching online courses. Our Vice President of Educational Affairs has convened a group to explore the quality of our distance education courses here at College of Lake County, particularly online courses.

**Lewis and Clark Community College (L&C)** – We are continuing to have more and more students who want online courses. This is especially true of the General Education courses. The demand for courses is surpassing the supply.

**University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC)** – We are looking for ways to capture lectures and discussion live to be converted by our instructional design team to an online format. This capture and conversion will help facilitate program development.

**Olivet Nazarene University (Olivet)** – At Olivet there is an increasing interest in online courses. The younger generation is more open to distance education. They like the convenience and freedom these courses provide and they seem to respond well to this format. The older generation is experiencing a bit of a learning curve with this type of course but finds the more focused interaction to be a plus.

### **What programs and subject areas generate the most distance education enrollments?**

**BHC** – We experienced a twelve percent growth in online courses from Fall '04 to Fall '05. Demand for new courses appears to be in the Early Childhood Education degree program. We also continue to see expansion in sharing seats in our online courses with other colleges. Telecourse enrollments continue to decline. Interactive TV courses remain stable, as we offer courses in selected programs between our two larger campuses and area high schools for dual enrollment.

**CLC** – Our top 5 distance education enrollments are in Business, English, Criminal Justice, Computer Information Systems, and Administrative Office Systems

**L&C** – General Education courses in every category fill very quickly. The Web-blended lab sciences courses are very popular, as well as courses supporting the Nursing/Allied Health programs. In the career program areas, Business, Criminal Justice and Office Technology courses generate the most enrollments.

**UIUC** – The three most popular graduate programs are the Library and Information Science, Engineering, and Education programs. We also have strong enrollment numbers in guided individual study (self-paced) courses that help students fulfill General Education requirements.

**Olivet** – Our distance education programs are only at the graduate level. The two most popular programs are the Education – Curriculum and Instruction program and the Masters in Reading that leads to certification as a Reading Specialist. The Reading program is a hybrid program with online components.

### **How do students enrolled in your distance education courses differ from traditional students in the support services they seek?**

**BHC** – We are finding more and more need for online services for all our students, whether online or on campus. We have completed an audit of our current online services with the help of a Higher Learning Commission-sponsored workshop. Our current strengths are in the area of student access to their data and online registration through our new portal. We have also developed an Online Learning Center specifically geared to online students.

**CLC** – We have not noted a great difference in support services sought by online students. Many support services maintain an online presence so that distance students can have access. We do employ a full-time counselor devoted to serving our online students. She provides specific assistance in helping answer questions, getting them started, and directing them to our other available support services when needed.

**L&C** – The majority (75%) of our online students are also taking courses on campus. There is access to the library, student records, and payment options online. Beginning March 13, Lewis and Clark will begin offering online registration and admissions.

**UIUC** – Our distance education students are seeking support in two main areas – technology and learning communities. In the technology area, the support focuses on three key elements – course content/delivery, interaction, and administrative support. The learning communities provide students the opportunity to network through a remote medium.

**Olivet** – The students in our distance education programs tend to be adults who are employed and married with families. The support services they seek are different in that they are interested in curriculum advice for their degree plans or vocational advice on finding employment or bettering their status in the workplace.

**If your institution currently offers distance education courses in delivery modes other than the Internet (such as correspondence courses or Broadcast TV), what are your plans for continuing to offer them? What segment of the student population enrolls in these courses?**

**BHC** – We do offer telecourses (correspondence courses with video components), but enrollment continues to decline as many students appear to prefer the interactivity of the online course experience. We also offer interactive TV courses that are delivered between our two larger campuses and area high schools. These types of courses are offered in curricular areas where faculty are difficult to find near our rural campus, and where high school students sign up as entire classes for dual enrollment.

**CLC** – We do plan to continue to offer classes in other distance learning delivery modes, although clearly our online courses make up the majority of our distance learning offerings. Such courses may often now include a DVD or online component. Currently, it is the decision of each individual division to decide which type of distance delivery mode to offer. Sixty seven percent of our distance learning program is offered online, twenty percent is offered in hybrid format, nine percent is offered via telecourse, and four percent via live two-way interactive video. Three percent of our total credits are delivered to students enrolled in distance education courses in delivery modes other than the Internet.

**L&C** – Video cassette courses are still available. However, we are down to two courses in this delivery mode – Introduction to the Visual Arts and Personal and Community Health. These courses will continue to be offered according to student demand. Per semester we average 100 students in the video cassette courses compared to 1,300 online students.

**UIUC** – Guided Individual Study (self-paced) courses are offered online as well as print-based by postal delivery. While there is movement towards changing the print-based courses to an online format, some courses are expected to remain print-based in order to facilitate access. Our graduate degree programs also utilize a video conferencing system that is site-based but available at more than one site. The instructor will rotate the location of the live lecture from site to site.

**Olivet** – Olivet offers only online courses.

**What additional information about enrollment at your institution is significant?**

**BHC** – Online enrollment continues to grow as the demand continues to grow. There is no institutional initiative to develop courses other than to complete the AA/AS degree. Most additional courses are developed due to department-based demand. Additional attention is being focused on retention and ongoing professional development of faculty through learning communities centered around online, interactive TV and dual enrollment instruction.

**CLC** – Currently, we have 94 online and 43 hybrid classes. We do have a number of classes with multiple sections taught by different instructors, which are not included in this number. For spring 2006, we have a total of 130 online and hybrid course sections being offered. Sixty one percent of distance students are female, seventy five percent are Caucasian, and sixty percent are over 24 years old.

**L&C** – Seventy five percent of our distance education students are also face-to-face students. We are finding a trend in night students becoming online students. Students are taking 9 to 12 hours face-to-face and enrolling in 3 hours online to make them full time students.

We have also developed a series of for-credit courses for our faculty including courses in Instructional Design, WebCT Course Development, Introduction to Online Teaching and Learning, Issues and Strategies in Online Learning, and Course Level Assessment. Faculty who complete these courses may apply the credits they earn toward their promotion requirements. These courses are taught online or Web-blended.

**UIUC** – UIUC sustains very high retention and completion rates in the online degree programs. On average the rates are between 80 and 90 percent and in some cases the rate is over 90 percent.

**Olivet** – The need and potential for online growth are both present. Olivet has been noticing an approximately 5 percent increase yearly. We are continuing to offer more and more degree programs online and look to include a Masters of Arts in Education – Problem Based Learning Concepts completely online in the Fall 2006 or Spring 2007.