

## Sharpen the Focus – Spring/Winter 2004

In an attempt to better serve institutions and Illinois policymakers, the Illinois Virtual Campus (IVC) has initiated a new enrollment reporting procedure to better understand trends of distance education. This new procedure involves phone interviews with select colleges and universities who can provide a “snapshot” of distance education enrollments at their institution. The first interviews were conducted in July and included three community colleges, a state university, and a private institution. Those chosen were Harper College, John A. Logan College, Lake Land College, Southern Illinois University Carbondale, and Quincy University. The interview consisted of five questions. The questions, individual responses and an overall summary are listed below.

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

**Harper College** – Harper is developing online and blended (hybrid) courses that work toward fulfilling completely online degree and certificate programs. Currently, 7 certificates are available in an online format.

**John A. Logan College** – We saw a 53% growth from last summer to this summer, so we find the growth of online to be an important trend. We have also found that interactive TV is not a strong area for us. Online courses and telecourses seem to work the best for our students.

**Lake Land College** – The most important trend we are seeing is the popularity of courses available online that are required for graduation. More and more students are enrolling and we are opening more sections to fill the demand.

**Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIUC)** - We are working toward offering more complete degree programs and certificates online. The enrollments are continually growing in individual courses as well as full programs. We are seeing more interest in graduate level programs from adult learners. The graduate degrees require fewer courses and the students tend to be professionals in search of further education.

**Quincy University** – We are seeing a large growth in the self paced in-service CD-ROM courses offered for K-12 teachers. Summer 2003 had 207 credit hour enrollments with Summer 2004 seeing 684 credit hours. We are also working with the University of Illinois at Springfield and The Franciscan University to offer more Interactive TV courses from distance education classrooms.

**Summary** - Enrollments are increasing in online courses with more students looking for complete degree and certificate programs available at a distance. The institutions are working to fulfill this demand by offering new courses and opening more sections of existing online courses.

### **Did the majority of your online classes fill last semester?**

**Harper** – The majority (30 of 50) of the online courses filled or had only 1-2 seats left open. The remaining 20 courses all had minimum enrollment and ran with at least 3 seats open.

**John A. Logan** – The courses all made minimum enrollment, some were full and some had waiting lists.

**Lake Land** – Most sections were filled and additional sections were added and filled as well.

**SIUC** – Yes, all the courses offered filled. There were 21 open enrollment web-based independent study courses and 16 online semester based courses available for Spring 2004 term.

**Quincy** – The course available has been offered for 3 years and is well accepted. It did fill last semester.

**Summary** – Courses offered do make minimum enrollments per semester. No courses were cancelled due to lack of student participation. “If you offer it, they will come.”

### **What are your institution’s plans for developing and offering additional online courses/programs? Will you be offering the same, more or fewer?**

**Harper** – Harper is interested in offering a distance degree program that may include a combination of online, telecourse and teleweb courses. New online courses are being offered each semester that add to the pool of over 90 different courses that were available and offered last year in an online format.

**John A. Logan** – We are planning to offer more online courses due mainly to the request of instructors to teach online. Our courses are developed for face to face teaching and offered online if the instructor wishes to teach online. More and more instructors have an interest in teaching online.

**Lake Land** – Lake Land will be offering more courses. The courses are not necessarily directed toward a certain degree program, just new online courses. In 2003, we developed 13 new courses and opened 5 new sections of existing courses.

**SIUC** - We are offering new online courses. We have four new courses for Fall 2004, which brings the total of courses available for Fall up to 86 courses.

**Quincy** - We are working to develop a Special Education minor with The Franciscan University. This course will be in either the online or compressed video format.

**Summary** – All institutions will be offering more courses. The majority of these courses will be newly developed courses created and taught by the online instructor. The trend seems to be more and more new courses developed each term.

### **What was unexpected about online enrollments last term?**

**Harper** – We continue to have high telecourse student enrollment. However, for the first time, online course sections have shown a slightly higher enrollment percentage than matching telecourse sections.

**John A. Logan** – The number of out of state and international students was unexpectedly high. Online enrollments continue to increase, but we were surprised by the number of out of state and international students. The Interpreter Preparation program has the largest number of these students due to the nature of the program.

**Lake Land** – Since the trend has been for increased enrollment, there was nothing really unexpected. We are showing a 20 – 30% growth per semester with a 44% growth from last year to this year.

**SIUC** - We didn't find our enrollments to be unexpected as they are continually increasing. We had 100 more students from last Spring to this Spring.

**Quincy** – Summer enrollments for our institution went up in our CD-ROM classes. This was not expected, however, as the CD-ROM courses are in-service courses for K-12 teachers and many take these courses over the summer.

**Summary** –Enrollments continue to increase and this was not unexpected. Significant increases were noted in online courses versus telecourses and increases in the number of out-of state and international students enrolling.

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

**Harper** – Our enrollment reports show that over 13% of students enrolled in Harper's online courses are from out-of-district. Adult non-traditional students (ages 25 and older) make up over 45% of total online course enrollment.

**John A. Logan** – We had the highest Summer semester enrollment numbers ever. Our Spring 2004 enrollment was the highest enrollment at 487. We anticipate that Fall will continue to break enrollment records. Online growth has a life of its own, it is growing the fastest.

**Lake Land** – As one of the first community colleges to offer online learning, we are pleased with the overall success of our online learners. Our grade point averages have increased as we have offered more online sections. Our retention rate has also increased. This shows that our instructors are doing a quality job and that we are offering superior support to our distance learners.

**SIUC** – Two of our programs have become so successfully that they have gone to selective admission processes. The Behavior Analysis Therapy program will soon consist of all 5 courses being offered online. The average number of students per course ranges from 18 to 30 and Director Mark Dixon has stated that his students have a 100% pass rate for the certification exam. The Information System Technology (IST) degree in the College of Applied Science and Arts is the number one viewed program on the IVC website and enrollment has continued to increase in this program. All IST core courses are online. The IVC has proven to be a good recruiting tool for this program.

**Summary** – Enrollments are increasing in online education due to more students and more courses. Trends seem to point to adult non-traditional learners being the most active distance education learners, and the growth of graduate level courses and programs echoes this trend.

The IVC will continue to utilize this new enrollment procedure with subsequent enrollment reports. New institutions will be chosen to get a broader picture of distance education trends. The goal of this report is to give insight and understanding to the numbers and trends that are presented in the standard enrollment report. The institutions involved in the IVC have a significant stake in distance education and this supplemental report can help everyone understand the present and future of online and other distance learning.