

DISTANCE LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Council for Higher Education Association (2000). *Distance learning in higher education: CHEA update number 3*. <http://www.chea.org/Commentary/distance-learning-3.cfm>.

I. THE EXPANDING UNIVERSE OF DISTANCE LEARNING

National survey on distance education

In 1999, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) released a national survey on distance learning space at two- and four-year institutions. Here are some of their findings.

- In 1997-98, 44% of these institutions offered distance courses (an increase of 1/3 since 1994-95).
- Growth in distance learning is greatest among institutions that were already engaging in distance learning prior to 1995.
- Public colleges and universities are much more likely to offer distance learning than private institutions. For example, 70% of public four year institutions offered distance learning, while only 19% of private four year institutions offered distance learning.
- Larger schools are more likely to offer distance learning. Eight percent of institutions with more than 10,000 students offer distance classes, while only 19% of institutions with fewer than 3000 students do so.
- More than half the enrollments in credit-granting distance learning classes occurred at public two-year colleges.
- The percentage of two- or four-year institutions offering certificate or degree programs by distance learning actually declined slightly between 1994-95 and 1997-98.
- About 8% of all two- and four-year institutions offer certificate or degree programs entirely via distance learning.
- The greatest amount of growth is in asynchronous, computer-based technology (primarily the Internet). Video-based technologies for distance learning are not growing.
- Campuses tend to use the same fee structure for distance learning and on-campus classes; however, they sometimes charge enhanced student fees for distance classes.

1999 National survey of information technology in higher education

557 two and four year colleges and universities provided data for the survey.

- 77% post their catalogs online
- 70% provide undergraduate admissions applications over the Internet
- 61% have a strategic IT plan in place
- 47% offer at least one course entirely over the Internet
- 54% of college courses now use email
- 39% of courses use Internet resources as part of the syllabus
- 20% courses have a web site

Faculty-developed intellectual property

Percentage of schools with a policy addressing faculty-developed intellectual property posted on campus web sites:

- 46% of public research universities
- 36% of public four-year colleges and universities
- 23% of private universities

Major Issue: Limited IT staff

- A survey conducted by the IT research organization Gartner Group reports that campuses have an average of one IT support person for every 150 to 800 users.
- The same organization *recommends* one IT person for every 50 to 75 users

Research universities team up to market distance education

Fourteen of the largest research I schools in the United States and Canada will jointly market distance education courses via a central web directory. The list includes MIT, New York University, Stanford, UC Berkeley, UCLA, UNC Chapel Hill, UT Austin, the University of Washington, Pennsylvania State, the University of British Columbia, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, the University of Pennsylvania, and the University of Wisconsin at Madison.

Unext.com

Several elite universities have teamed up to form <http://www.unext.com>, which offers executive training courses (and eventually will offer a full MBA) over the Internet. Columbia, Stamford, the University of Chicago, Carnegie-Mellon, and the London School of Economics and Political Science will develop courses that will be sold to corporations and delivered via the Internet.

Internet access in elementary and secondary schools

- The ratio of students per computer is dropping, now averaging six students to every computer rather than the eleven students to every computer found five years ago.
- The "digital divide" is present at the elementary and secondary level--- 94% of schools in affluent areas have Internet access, while only 84% of schools in poor barriers is have access.

II. POLICY ISSUES AFFECTING DISTANCE LEARNING

AAUP policies on distance education and intellectual property

The American Association of University professors created a special committee on distance education and intellectual property issues in 1998. A year later, the committee's report was delivered. The report states that faculty members' role in distance learning classes should be the same as in traditional classes. However, the committee does recommend that professors be given enough time to become familiar with the technological tools that they will be using. They also recommend that professors should retain copyright to their intellectual property unless one of the following special circumstances applies:

1. The work is made for hire
2. There is a contractual transfer of copyright
3. The course is considered a "joint work", and co-owned by the faculty member and the institution who provides significant technical support in adapting the courseware for use in a distance learning environment.

iCopyright.com

<http://www.icopyright.com> is a new web site that offers automated copyright permission with the goal of easing the process of obtaining permission to reprint copyrighted materials. Copyright holders register their materials and choose the rules for use. Then, licensees initiate a licensing request by clicking a logo next to the material they would like to use.

III. VIRTUAL UNIVERSITIES

U.S. Open University

A U.S. Open University, based upon Britain's Open University, is now operational at <http://www.open.edu> and offering a master's in business administration.

IV. UPDATE OF GOVERNMENTAL ACTIVITIES

Copyright office reports to Congress regarding distance education

The United States Copyright Office delivered a report to Congress focusing on how recent changes in legislation will affect materials used for distance education. The Digital Millennium Copyright Act, enacted in 1998, places stringent requirements on use of digital media. However, there are some "fair use" allowances for distance education. The report can be viewed at <http://www.loc.gov/copyright/disted/>.

Department of Education announces demonstration program participants

Fifteen institutions, systems, and consortia have been selected to participate in the United States Secretary of Education's distance education demonstration program. Details can be viewed at <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OPE/PPI/DistEd>.

Grant recipients announced for "learning anytime anywhere" program

In 1999, the vice president of the United States announced the first grant recipients for the "Learning Anytime Anywhere" program, which encourages partnerships to develop model self-paced distance learning programs/software or innovative online student support services. The web site is located at <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OPE/FIPSE/LAAP>.