REQUEST FOR

institutional change

Prepared for The Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.

January 2006

Metropolitan Community College
Blue River | Business & Technology | Longview | Maple Woods | Penn Valley
Metropolitan Community Colleges

Request for Institutional Change:

Request Approval to Offer Degrees Online

January 2006

Prepared for
The Higher Learning Commission
of the North Central Association
of Colleges and Schools

by
Metropolitan Community Colleges
3200 Broadway
Kansas City, MO 64111
(816) 759-1000
www.mcckc.edu
Contents

Brief History of Distance Education at the Metropolitan Community Colleges 1

Request for Institutional Change 4
  o Question 1 – What is the change being proposed? 4
  o Question 2 – What factors led the institution to undertake the proposed change? 5
  o Question 3 – What necessary approvals have been obtained to implement the proposed change? 6
  o Question 4 – What impact might the proposed change have on challenges identified by the Commission as part of or subsequent to the last comprehensive visit? 6
  o Question 5 – What are the institution’s plans to implement and sustain the proposed change? 7
  o Question 6 - What are the institution’s strategies to evaluate the proposed change? 15

Summary 22

Appendices
  • Appendix A – Faculty Training Certification 23
  • Appendix B – New Course Certification 24
  • Appendix C – Quality Matters 34
  • Appendix D – MCC Enrollment in Online Courses 36
  • Appendix E – MCC Online Course Offerings Leading to Selected Associate Degrees 38
A Brief History of Distance Education at the Metropolitan Community Colleges

Distance education programming at the Metropolitan Community Colleges can be traced back to a pair of initiatives begun in the early 1990s—Longview Community College’s PACE (Program for Adult College Education) and Penn Valley Community College’s interactive television (ITV) program. Over time other programs added to both the technologies used and the courses offered, including the Regional Technical Education Centers (RTEC), TeleCommunity Centers (TCCs) and the online course development funded by an institutional action plan.

The Longview PACE program, built around block scheduling, took the lead in developing ITV courses via local cable television in 1995. Within a year, Penn Valley expanded on the ITV model by acquiring an ITFS license and subsequent partnerships with local cable companies, Kansas City Public Television station (KCPT), and the University of Missouri—Kansas City. In 1999, RTEC centers built upon the ITV infrastructure by adding videoconferencing capabilities to MCC’s video technology infrastructure. A state funded program, RTEC allowed MCC to extend programs and services outside the Kansas City viewing area.

Computer based learning (CBL) and videoconferencing were coupled in a unique business and education initiative that resulted in the Southwestern Bell TeleCommunity Centers in 1997. These TCCs allowed MCC an opportunity to experiment with CBL programs and offer videoconferencing services to the community at little or no charge. This program was continued through a Community Technology Center (CTC) grant in 2000, and now offers introductory hardware and software training in the urban core.

In the fall of 1998 the Web-Based Instruction Action Plan project resulted in the first ten online courses being offered by MCC. This project was not only a faculty based initiative, but much of MCC’s current programs and policies originated here. Also in 1998, MCC provided leadership in the formation of the Kansas City Regional Access Consortium for Higher Education (KC REACHE). KC REACHE was conceived as a telecourse consortium built around the broadcast capabilities of KCPT, the local public television station. However, it quickly developed into a consortium of Kansas City-area colleges and universities whose purpose was to assist each other in developing and providing higher learning opportunities to area residents via online delivery. The consortium received grant funding from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) and has become recognized nationally for its model of providing shared on-ground and online support services to online students enrolled in any of the consortium colleges.

By 1998, there were a number of distance education initiatives at MCC, and the district’s leadership recognized the need to organize these programs within one unit. This resulted in the creation of the department of Distance Education Services (DES) in the summer of 1999.
Distance Education Services, which reports to the Vice Chancellor of Education and Technology, provides coordinated support services for faculty and students involved in distance education delivery. The director of the unit coordinates distance education offerings throughout the district in collaboration with campus instructional deans and division chairs who maintain appropriate academic oversight for online offerings.

The impact of this unit was seen within the year as student success rates in distance education courses rose from approximately 50 percent to 70 percent by the fall 2000 semester. The improvement in student performance resulted from a focus on proactive engagement with distance education students. The focus on proactive engagement led to both student orientation programs, informational mailings prior to the start of classes, and the development of a centralized technical support line for all distance programs during fall 1999.

The Distance Education Committee was formed in 1998-99 by the merger of two previous committees, the Instructional Television Advisory Committee, which had previously served in an advisory capacity for ITV at Longview and Penn Valley, and the Web-Based Instruction Action Plan committee, which was organized to administer this faculty-led action plan. This committee has served as an advisory committee for distance education efforts, and from time to time, has organized task forces to make recommendations regarding issues that emerged in the operation of a distance education program.

The first Distance Education Task Force was formed in 1998-99, composed of faculty and academic administrators from throughout the district, and charged to review institutional policies with respect to online and other technology-mediated delivery mechanisms. The task force identified a number of policies that needed addressing, including course size, teaching loads, training, and support services, and its recommendations were adopted by the Distance Education Committee and the academic administration of MCC.

A second Distance Education Task Force was convened in 2000 to address faculty concerns with loads, course sizes, and the impact of the recommendations of the original task force. The recommendations of the second task force refined many of the original policies, including changes in the goal class size, limitations in online teaching load, and training requirements. These were also endorsed by the Distance Education Committee and adopted by the MCC administration.

In the fall 2002 semester, a third task force with an updated name, the Distributed Learning Task Force, was convened to address specific policies regarding training, support, evaluation and assessment, and to review the course management systems used to support online, ITV, and blended instruction. This task force again refined a number of existing policies on course scheduling and training requirements. The major outcomes of this task force included a focus on the integration of assessment initiatives at MCC into distance delivery, expansion of student feedback on instruction, and identification of a single course management system.
Most recently, a fourth task force reviewed the quality assurance measures that MCC has in place for online instruction and made a number of recommendations to strengthen these measures, including the adoption of Quality Matters standards, a program introduced to MCC through the KC REACHE consortium. Once again, these measures have been endorsed by the Distance Education Committee and adopted by the academic administration of MCC.

So, with over a decade of substantial experience in distance education and distributed learning, MCC has incorporated online instruction into the mainstream of its instructional program. The district has standardized on Blackboard as its instructional management system, not only for online courses, but also for all sections of all courses offered by MCC. A course web site is automatically created for every section of every course offered by MCC every semester, and then populated with MCC-provided e-mail addresses of every student enrolled in every class. Over 60 percent of all MCC credit sections are supported by active course web sites, and nearly one-third of all MCC students are enrolled in courses that use online communications and resources as a major component of the course.

The logical next step in the development of distance education at MCC, now officially called distributed learning but still referred to as distance education due to habit, is to organize complete degrees to be offered via online delivery. MCC has a proven track record of success in online delivery, and online enrollments and demand continue to grow. MCC has developed support structures and technical infrastructure necessary to support expanded online delivery, and quality assurance measures, including assessment of student learning for online students, have been put in place. MCC is ready to offer its constituents online degrees at the same level of quality as all of its academic programs.
Request for Institutional Change

1. What is the change being proposed?

Metropolitan Community College is formally requesting approval from the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools to offer any of its approved degrees using online delivery.

MCC has previously been approved by the Commission to offer degrees using video technology, including interactive television (ITV), to any location in the state of Missouri. The current request is to be permitted to expand this approval to include online delivery methods to reflect the changes in instructional delivery made possible by changing technologies. The growth of web-based instruction since the past visit has brought this new instructional medium to the forefront of MCC’s distance education and distributed learning initiatives.

The principal intended outcome of this change request is to improve the services offered to the residents of MCC’s taxing district and service region. MCC is not proposing to offer online degrees primarily to extend the range of its degree programs, but rather to serve better its primary constituents. It is likely that as MCC is permitted to offer its degrees online, enrollments in online courses will increase at an even faster rate than they are already increasing, but MCC has not developed targets for online growth in enrollments or financial return. Simply, MCC is seeking to eliminate as many barriers as possible, including those of both distance and time, to access to its courses and programs to its principal constituents by offering online degrees.

MCC’s proposal to offer its existing degrees online using the infrastructure it has already developed and implemented to provide an extensive array of online courses is not anticipated to change its mission, numbers or types of students served, or the breadth of its educational offerings. Rather, this proposed change is in keeping with MCC’s mission to provide access to its courses and programs and to serve the residents of its taxing district and service area. No new degrees are proposed. The only anticipated change is an increased rate of enrollment growth in MCC’s online courses.

MCC is not requesting change in its mission or relationship to the Commission. It requests only the ability to offer its existing degrees by an alternative educational delivery system with which it has years of successful experience, that is, by online delivery. It does not request the addition of specific new educational sites.
2. What factors led the institution to undertake the proposed change?

Rapid development of the worldwide web has resulted in online course delivery becoming the dominant distance education delivery mechanism at MCC and throughout higher education. MCC has responded to this development by shifting the focus of its distance education program from television to online delivery. Faculty-led initiatives resulted in the offering of the first fully online courses at MCC in fall 1998, and their success, coupled with the pervasive use of web-based technologies throughout society, has led to the growth and development of online courses at MCC.

MCC now offers nearly 175 online courses each semester, including a sufficient array and breadth of course offerings so that MCC students can already meet the requirements of a number of MCC’s degrees through online courses. (See Appendix E.) MCC has organized and implemented a strong technical infrastructure to support online student learning. It has developed the organizational structures necessary to ensure quality in online courses and has incorporated management of online courses into the mainstream of its academic administration and governance systems. MCC has participated and led in the establishment of a regional consortium of Kansas City-area higher education institutions that has popularized online instruction as an expectation for colleges and universities among constituents. Student demand for online courses is very high and continues to grow, sometimes even outpacing supply.

The request to offer degrees online is supported by MCC’s planning efforts, which have prioritized offering the right programs at the right time for MCC constituents and to attempt to eliminate barriers to access MCC’s courses and programs. No formal needs assessment has been conducted to measure the demand for MCC’s online courses and proposed programs. Rather, analysis of enrollment trends, including the speed with which students fill all available “seats” in MCC’s online courses almost immediately when they become available for enrollment, indicates that demand for MCC’s online courses remains high and is not yet saturated. All indications are that demand for online programs will follow already demonstrated demand for online courses.

In short, in order to meet the demands of its service area—which remains the principal market for MCC’s online courses—MCC needs to take the next logical step and explicitly organize, package and offer its degrees via online delivery. Students can already take all of the courses required for MCC’s Associate of Arts, Associate of Computer Science and Associate of Applied Science in Business Management online, and can take fifty percent or more of several other MCC degrees online. Approval from the Commission to allow MCC to offer its degrees online will legitimize the effort and make it possible for MCC to explicitly offer and market online degrees to its constituents who expect and demand them.

MCC’s Distance Education Committee initiated this Request for Institutional Change to the Commission and has led the preparation of this request, in collaboration with the department of Distance Education Services and the office of the Vice Chancellor for Education and Technology.
3. **What necessary approvals have been obtained to implement the proposed change?**

The MCC Board of Trustees and the Missouri Coordinating Board for Higher Education approve all degrees offered by MCC. However, no separate approval from either the local or state coordinating board is required to offer an existing degree online. Since MCC’s request is for Commission approval to offer existing degrees online, no additional approval is required from any body other than the Higher Learning Commission.

Any proposal to offer a new degree in the future will be proposed to appropriate approving bodies. However, no new degrees are being proposed with this Request for Institutional Change.

4. **What impact might the proposed change have on challenges identified by the commission as part of or subsequent to the last comprehensive visit?**

MCC received a very positive evaluation during its last self-study and team visit in 1996. No concerns were raised by the team report that required Commission follow up of any kind.

Only three concerns were raised that required institutional attention: 1) updating of MCC policies, regulations and procedures; 2) establishing a plan to monitor effective default management procedures for federal financial aid; and 3) addressing issues of diversity in curriculum, hiring and institutional environment. None of these three concerns identified by the most recent evaluation team is related in any substantial way to this Request for Institutional Change.

The team report did encourage MCC to follow up on its self-identified opportunities for improvement, including opportunities to improve its ability to respond effectively to change, to improve communications, to ensure that assessment of student learning is integrated into all aspects of college operations, to improve planning, and to continue to foster a caring and supportive environment that values diverse constituencies. There are a couple of points of connection between these recommended improvements and MCC’s current request for change.

Arguably, MCC’s development of its online program in response to student and constituent need is a good example of how MCC has become more effective in responding to change. MCC’s distance education efforts were largely video-based at the time of the last comprehensive visit, but in response to changing technologies and markets, MCC’s current
distributed learning efforts are largely online and web-based. The evolution of MCC’s distance education/distributed learning efforts are a case study of effective response to change.

Perhaps more relevant is MCC’s concerted effort to include online courses and students in institutional efforts to use the assessment of student learning as the foundation for institutional improvement. Online students are regularly included in assessment projects and activities, and web-based technologies have been piloted by distance education to improve the assessment of student learning. Improvement in online courses and support services have been driven by student and faculty evaluations. Assessment of student learning in online courses is addressed more fully under Question 6 of this report.

Finally, distance education has driven much of the technology infrastructure that has greatly increased communication between students and faculty throughout the district. The implementation of universal MCC-provided student e-mail, along with universal e-mail for all MCC employees, has created strong electronic communications between students, faculty and the institution. The adoption of Blackboard for all online courses led inevitably to the adoption of Blackboard for all courses. This, too, has greatly increased communications among all participants in the learning process throughout the organization, including greatly enhanced student-to-student communication.

In summary, this Request for Institutional Change is not complicated by any previous concerns of the Commission. Rather the request supports opportunities to improve MCC as suggested by the previous team.

5. What are the institution’s plans to implement and sustain the proposed change?

MCC has been steadily putting in place the organizational structures, financial resources, technical and support infrastructure, expertise and human resources, and policies and procedures necessary to implement and sustain the online delivery of degrees. The growth of online courses at MCC from ten in fall 1998 to 161 in fall 2005 has positioned MCC as having all but implemented online degree programs, without having formally done so. Students are capable of piecing together online degrees in several areas from the online courses already offered by MCC.

In developing its online courses and the infrastructure that sustains them, MCC has consciously adhered to the “Best Practices for Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs” promulgated by the Commission. MCC’s response to the question of its plans to implement and sustain the proposed change is organized in response to these best practices.
Institutional Context and Commitment

MCC’s distance education initiatives were initially supported by internal grants and other special projects funding. As these programs evolved, funding, staffing, and support became institutionalized, and online delivery has become an accepted method of instruction. Today, online instruction has been incorporated into MCC’s understanding of its mission, its organizational structure, its approval and quality assurance processes, its scheduling and marketing processes, and its budgeting and support infrastructure. Online instruction is part of the mainstream of MCC operations and culture, and online enrollments account for nearly 20 percent of MCC’s total enrollment.

Mission. MCC’s provision of online courses specifically supports MCC’s long-standing mission to provide its constituents with access to high-quality higher learning opportunities. Online instruction is intended to help students overcome barriers to access, specifically those associated with distance or time conflicts. The principal focus of MCC’s efforts is to provide programs and services to residents of its 12-school district taxing district and its nine-county service area, and its online program is aimed at the same priority constituents. However, that MCC also provides access to higher learning opportunities to students outside these areas through its online program is viewed as a positive outcome of its online efforts. MCC’s online initiative also supports its purpose statements, specifically the provision of transfer and career programs and a range of student support services. MCC’s online program is also operated consistently according to MCC’s vision statement and core values. In all respects, online instruction at MCC is completely consistent with institutional mission, vision, purpose and values.

Long-Term Commitment. MCC is committed to the long-term operation of its distributed learning efforts, which with existing technology currently focuses on online instruction and courses. Students enrolling in MCC’s online courses can do so with complete confidence in the continuation of this program. Even in the event of a change in technology or delivery model, MCC has demonstrated in comparable circumstances that it would sustain existing students through to degree completion as possible. MCC’s long-term commitment is primarily evidenced by the strength of its commitment of organizational and financial resources.

Organization. The principal responsibility for online courses rests with the same academic units responsible for all instruction at MCC, namely, the academic divisions, division chairs, and deans of instruction at each of MCC’s campus, with coordinating and support responsibilities organized under the district’s chief academic officer, the Vice Chancellor for Education and Technology. Online courses are initiated, approved, scheduled, supported and managed in the same way that traditional courses are. Responsibility for academic content and integrity rests with the faculty; quality assurance is maintained by faculty and academic administration.
The one academic support unit that was organized specifically to support the development and growth of online instruction is the department of Distance Education Services. The Director of Distance Education Services, a former MCC faculty member and early adopter of online instructional delivery, reports to the Vice Chancellor for Education and Technology. His position oversees the technical infrastructure required of the various distance education media, coordinates resources with other technology directors, coordinates the scheduling of distance courses with the deans of instruction at each college, oversees the training of new online faculty and development of new courses, and manages the evaluation and assessment initiatives that measure the performance of the services provided.

The Distance Education Services department itself is organized into three branches: student support, web services, and video services. Student support consists of two staff members who coordinate instructional resources, enrollment services, and academic support with academic and student support units at each campus. Web services oversees the Blackboard system, server infrastructure, and interfaces with the Techline Help Desk. Video services oversees live television production and the development of digital video in support of web-based instruction.

**Budget.** There is no consolidated budget for online courses as their development and implementation are supported and budgeted through each campus’ instructional budget. Over the years, district funds have been allocated to campus instructional budgets to support the training of online instructors and to provide incentives for the development of online courses; however, the fundamental principle holds that online courses are incorporated into the instructional budgets of each campus.

Distance Education Services does have a substantial budget to support the additional costs of supporting expanding online course offerings, training and technical support. A user fee or surcharge of $10 per credit hour for online courses was implemented to cover these additional costs, and much of the budget for Distance Education Services is generated from these fees. The fee revenue, coupled with core funding for personnel and ITV infrastructure, have allowed the creation of a redundant technical infrastructure able to meet the current and projected needs of MCC.

In addition, online offerings are supported by the departments of Network and User Services, Web Applications which operates the districtwide Techline Help Desk, and to a lesser degree, by Computer Services which supports integration of PeopleSoft functionality with Blackboard. All contribute substantial resources in support of online instruction through their own operating budgets.

**Technology Infrastructure and Support.** Online programs at MCC are supported by other technology units. Network and User Services manages the local and wide area network infrastructure. This includes providing prioritized communication routing for the Blackboard servers, overseeing the server farm (a load-balanced five-server array utilizing a 2Tb mass storage unit), and network security. Web Applications assists Distance Education Services with
links from the institutional web pages, providing and supporting public space specific for marketing and support of online courses, and oversight of the Techline Help Desk. Computing Services provides the interface between the PeopleSoft Student Administration system and Blackboard, ensures the daily data transfers that allows automated updates for both online and traditional courses, and centrally manages system data needed for all systems.

**Role of Faculty.** MCC’s online courses originated through a faculty initiative in 1998, and faculty have continued to played an important role since. In addition, MCC faculty have been active participants on the Distance Education Committee and its task forces that have examined a range of issues associated with online instruction. Faculty continue to provide insight and guidance to MCC’s delivery of online instruction.

**Curriculum and Instruction**

Online courses are proposed by faculty and managed by academic administrators, and the technical services and training are coordinated by the Distance Education Services department. The initiative to develop a course for distance delivery still starts with an individual faculty member. There has been no need for MCC to entice or pressure faculty to teach at a distance. The services have been made available, and the early adopters, pioneers, and now settlers have taken on the challenge.

**Quality Assurance.** To insure the ongoing quality of all distance education offerings, MCC has adopted the Quality Matters (QM) program, developed by the Maryland Online Consortium with the support of a Department of Education FIPSE grant. Quality Matters is based upon a peer review of all online course offerings every two years. The goal of QM is to continually improve the online course offerings.

**Course Approval Process.** Anytime a new course or online instructor is proposed, a series of checks must be completed before inclusion in the schedule and subsequent delivery. Once the instructor makes the decision to deliver a course online, he or she needs to communicate his or her intent to the division chair and Distance Education Services by means of an online application. The division chair makes the case for new courses to the dean of instruction and the local campus Distance Education Committee. Courses with a potential to impact other locations across the district (Internet or ITV) must then be approved by the Instructional Deans Council (composed of the five deans of instruction and the Vice Chancellor of Education and Technology) with the advice of the Director of Distance Education Services. This process is facilitated through an online application, and a copy is also forwarded to the campus deans of instruction.

The new course application not only requires the necessary logistical information, but faculty are also asked to provide specific plans for adapting their previous classroom activities to the online environment. Specific questions address learning and assessment strategies, plans for interaction, and how these are tied to the learning objectives of the course.
The final step in the new course approval process is the certification of both the instructor and the course prior to the start of early enrollment. This approval process has recently been expanded. Currently, faculty certification consists of Blackboard training, Quality Matters peer reviewer training, and MCC’s Best Practices training. Courses must also be certified by Distance Education Services as meeting a minimum set of fifteen required elements. If a course or instructor does not meet both certifications prior to pre-enrollment, then the course is closed to student enrollment and removed from the active schedule.

The combination of the application process with institutionwide review helps not only to ensure that faculty understand the commitment to an online course, but also to provide for input and interaction from the institutional stakeholders. This process also allows MCC to manage the number of course offerings based upon institutional need.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distance Education Services</th>
<th>Instructional Deans Council</th>
<th>Campus Faculty, Division Chairs and Deans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Reports to the VC Education &amp; Tech.</td>
<td>• Approves all new courses and instructors</td>
<td>• Initiates proposals for new courses and faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Manages technical infrastructure</td>
<td>• Oversees districtwide distance schedule</td>
<td>• Provides local resources for training and mentoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Coordinates support services</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Develops local schedule to meet campus goals and needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Manages training resources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Certifies schedules</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Mentors, Training and Best Practices.** Faculty are provided access to both self-paced online training and classroom led instruction in both the mechanics of the Blackboard course management system and pedagogical methods for effective online instruction. All new online faculty must complete the introductory section of the online training so as to gain insight into the student experience. The training course includes activities that will assist the new instructor in the development of a range of content, policy and performance assessment tools that may be used in the course under development.

Local training is supported and facilitated through the use of faculty mentors and trainers. Each college location has at least two such individuals who lead local training sessions and mentor faculty developing new online courses during both development and the first offering of the course.

Training is built around three distinct elements: Blackboard, Quality Matters and pedagogy. Blackboard training can be completed online or through local courses that cover the range of technical skills and features. Quality Matters training is the second step towards certification of online faculty and takes the form of Peer Reviewer Training. New online faculty need to be
prepared for the expectations of the peer reviewers that will review their course after it has been offered at least three times (and regularly thereafter). The final leg of training is a pedagogical training session that examines the fifteen core elements of the course certification process and reviews a number of instructional examples that the faculty mentors and prior peer reviews have designated as best practices.

The combination of coordinated districtwide training and design support and local colleagues as experts has proven to be effective in managing the increasing training demands that resulted when Blackboard sites were made available for all courses offered by MCC.

**Scheduling.** The scheduling process begins with the individual academic units throughout MCC, allowing each discipline and division to address its local needs. Once the initial drafts are created, the Distance Education Services staff extracts the full distance education schedule from the PeopleSoft Student Administration system. It is then reviewed to ensure that faculty and courses meet MCC’s training and approval requirements. The draft schedule is submitted to division chairs and instructional deans. Final review and approval are made by the Instructional Deans Council with input on enrollment trends from the Director of Distance Education Services.

MCC has implemented a series of policies and procedures to ensure that online courses meet the instructional goals and needs of both the students and institution, including a series of checks and reviews overseen by the appropriate academic administrators. Access to resources and training are an integral part of the process, and are supported both centrally and locally.

**Faculty Support**

The Distance Education Services department supports faculty in the development and delivery of online instruction and coordinated related services across MCC. Substantial training and technical and other support resources are available to support faculty use of technology.

Faculty have also played a central role in the decision making process regarding the design and implementation of MCC’s online program. MCC’s faculty were the driving force behind the original online initiative funded through an internal grant in 1998, and faculty have always been well represented (often more than half) on the Distance Education Committee, which provides advice and oversight to the online program.
Technical Support. The technical needs of faculty are varied and often require personal touch. The Distance Education Services department provides both direct and indirect support options. The system administrator and instructional designer provide a range of support, development, and design assistance to faculty. In addition to managing the web-based training site, these individuals manage the web-development and non-Blackboard instructional web servers. The instructional designer also assists or leads design projects in support of new or revised courses.

Video services support faculty with design and production of digital media and manage streaming resources. Other department staff provide services such as document scanning and graphic design. Staff also coordinate the scheduling process and work directly with PeopleSoft Student Administration system personnel to manage account names, identify gaps in the data, and troubleshoot enrollment problems.

Distance Education Services is not the only unit supporting the online program. Both Network and User Services (NUS) and Web Development assist with a range of support functions. NUS provides infrastructure services at the core plus local support experts that augment Distance Education Services. Web Applications oversees the Techline Help Desk which provides seven-day telephone and e-mail technical support for both students and faculty.

Training and Instructional Design. Faculty are provided with three options for training in the use of Blackboard for both online instruction and in support of regular instruction. All faculty have access to both introductory and advanced training courses. In fact, new online faculty are strongly encouraged to complete the online version to gain insight into the student experience. Faculty serving as mentor/trainers at the campus offer both group courses and individual training opportunities based upon the content of the online course.

In 2003 Longview used the Action Plan process to pilot an intensive, one-week, instructor-led training program. This course is built around the online training course, with a focus on student characteristics and interaction-based instruction. Distance Education Services has supported this initiative, and it has now been emulated on the Blue River campus. This program has been particularly effective in providing adjunct faculty access to training and development, and it now serves as the foundation of the pedagogical training leg of the online faculty certification process.

The Blackboard training course is broken into major units such as navigation, communication, content, and assessment. Additional resources are added to the course as identified. Most recently updated training on ADA compliance and new theories on pedagogy were added. Blackboard training includes a number of web-based activities that demonstrate good online instructional methodology while teaching the mechanics of the Blackboard system. Our current focus has been to expand the pedagogical training and increase the number of best
practices available. Finally, Quality Matters provides for ongoing faculty training and development. Faculty that have completed a peer review are offered the opportunity to work with one of MCC’s instructional designers to address any issues identified in the process.

Student Support

From the moment MCC consolidated the various distance initiatives into one unit, there has been a focused effort to provide distance students with the same services and resources as students have on campus. This has been facilitated by active communication with student development units and the participation of student development administrators and professional staff on the various task forces and the Distance Education Committee. One of the consistent goals has been to provide both online and on-ground services for online students, an approach we have dubbed ‘brick and click’.

Learning Resources and Student Services. Longview piloted the “Ask an Advisor” online program by the spring of 2000, and within a year Maple Woods had the first online counselor in the district. To keep advising and counseling personnel apprised of the student profiles, new programs, and changes in services, annual information meetings are held at each location. The academic advisors also invite a representative of this unit to speak at their annual function.

MCC was a founding member of the Kansas City Regional Access Consortium for Higher Education (KC REACHE), which consists of most the higher education institutions in the Kansas City Metropolitan area. Participation in this organization has led to a number of shared resources, including testing centers, library services, and some student activities. KC REACHE has just completed a FIPSE grant project focusing on student activities for distance students.

MCC went beyond the shared library services of KC REACHE by centrally contracting with a number of online databases for use by all MCC students. Membership in MOREnet (Missouri’s statewide network for higher education K-12 schools and libraries) resulted in the MOBIUS library system which now provides MCC students access to library holdings throughout the state of Missouri by means of both online databases and quick turnaround interlibrary loan services.

Other academic support services added by MCC include campus testing centers, online enrollment and student records functions, and system-wide student e-mail. The crowning achievement is the Techline Help Desk. It provides phone and e-mail support seven days a week, and serves as a central resource for all the digital technologies available to students.

Student Training and Orientation. The biggest challenge still facing distance education programming at MCC is orienting new online and ITV students. By the spring of 2000, Distance Education Services staff held a series of simultaneous orientations at all campus locations. These sessions were supplemented by informational mailings to students prior to the
first week of classes. Initially, these sessions were well attended (fifty or more students at each location). By the fall of 2001 attendance at these sessions dropped essentially to zero, and it became clear that mail was an unreliable mode of communication.

A limited number of faculty continue to hold introductory meetings on campus; however, student feedback indicates a perception that this is unnecessary. Online training includes a session on how to manage student orientation during the first week. The new focus is on a string of introductory activities, preferably ungraded, requiring students to utilize the tools to be utilized throughout the course.

Surveys of students indicated a growing technical self-confidence, and Distance Education Services responded by moving the orientation and informational materials online. A number of technical references and self-help tools have been added so that students can take a more active role in managing their online learning. Proactive intervention is also provided through the student e-mail tool, and regular meetings are held with student support units so that they may also educate students about what resources are available.

MCC has invested in the infrastructure, personnel, support services and procedures necessary to ensure a successful, quality learning experience for its online students. MCC demonstrates support for this initiative through its steadfast commitment to provide resources and support for the faculty, staff and students involved in online courses. The online program is designed and supported so as to provide students with learning outcomes and personal success comparable to what might be expected in a traditional class, and it has been implemented for long-term operational success.

6. What are the institution’s strategies to evaluate the proposed change?

MCC is committed to a culture that seeks improvement based upon evaluation of its programs and services and assessment of the outcomes of these programs. In that light, MCC has implemented a series of initiatives designed to support the quality of the online course experience and to assess student learning in them.

Early Projects

When Distance Education Services was first formed in the summer of 1998, the immediate task was to address the low success rate of students in all distance education courses, including both television and the first online pilots. Districtwide, 75 percent of students completed courses successfully; however, distance education courses were struggling to achieve 50 percent success. Some of the staff were able to attend the Distance Learning Conference, annually
hosted by the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and were able to implement some ideas gathered there by the fall 1998 semester.

Prior to this time only Longview’s PACE program had a success rate at least equal to the institutional average. The difference between PACE and the other programs was a proactive attempt to get information into students’ hands prior to the start of the semester. The Distance Education Services staff coupled the proactive approach of PACE with what was learned at the Distance Learning Conference to actively communicate with distance students prior to the first day of classes. Pro-active initiatives included information packets mailed to students at least one week before the start of the semester, an online New Student Assessment Tool for measuring readiness for online courses, and the addition of a distance education section to the district’s print schedule to provide more information to students about distance education courses and procedures.

**Right Choice Assistant.** By the Fall of 2001 it became apparent that the original Student Pre-Assessment Survey was not effective. The original survey consisted of 11 success indicators, and students were asked to rate themselves from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest) on each success indicator. The survey was originally administered in spring 1999, and the average score over that period was 54 (out of 60). Based upon the success rate, it was clear that a new instrument was needed.

**Student Surveys.** A pair of surveys to gauge both faculty and student perceptions was delivered during the fall 2001 semester, and this survey confirmed some perceptions and identified some issues not anticipated. It was not a surprise that students indicated a perception that online courses required less time and work; however, the third most common response was concern about a lack of student-student interaction. The faculty survey indicated that some online faculty were not incorporating any interaction (student-student or student-faculty) into their course design. A review of current research indicated that student-student interaction was important to student success online.

Other results of the survey included the following:

- Students’ technical skills are better than originally thought.
- More than 75 percent of student respondents had three to five years experience with the Internet and had used e-mail prior to enrollment.
- More than 80 percent of students viewed the student-student relationship as cooperative rather than competitive.
- Both faculty and students indicated that e-mail was the principle mode of communication.
In response to these findings, a number of improvements were implemented:

- The pre-assessment instrument (now called the Right Choice Assistant) was completely redesigned. The new instrument utilized scenarios and problems, not self-ratings, and the logical engine was based upon knowledge management methods making it a flexible instrument that provides tailored feedback based upon each response.
- Faculty training was changed to address both the student-student interaction issue and the prevalent use of e-mail. Methods for addressing the need for student-student interaction and related best practices were added by spring 2002. Faculty training materials were modified to focus on the use of discussion boards for asynchronous interaction.

Student responses continue to be monitored to ensure that the new survey is accurate and reflects what students will continue to encounter.

**Assessment of Student Learning in Online Course**

The Distributed Learning Task Force was charged to ensure that assessment of student learning would be a regular feature of the online course environment, and that the results of assessment would be used to inform initiatives to improve teaching and learning in these courses. This charge included two specific challenges for the task force: 1) to assess student learning in online courses to ensure that the learning outcomes of online courses were at least comparable to learning outcomes in more traditional courses, and 2) to include online students in the institutionwide program to assess student academic achievement that is the foundation of improvement efforts districtwide.

Efforts to include online, ITV and blended courses in assessment activities have been greatly improved as a result. Also a critical obstacle to full inclusion of online courses in all assessment projects was identified: the use of copyrighted instruments by various projects, some of which cannot be converted for online use. The alternative of asking online students to travel to campus testing units has been problematic.

To facilitate the inclusion of Distance Education courses in MCC's Assessment initiatives, the Distributed Education Task Force recommended that the Director of Distance Education Services be included on the District Steering Committee for Institutional Assessment (DSCIA). His addition in 2002 led to a re-evaluation of the committee’s assessment goals and to formal recognition that online courses must be included in all districtwide assessment initiatives both as a way of ensuring quality in online courses and in order to gain a full picture of MCC. Subsequently the director met with various campus assessment teams to encourage the inclusion of distance courses where possible. The addition of distance courses to the larger assessment activities has thus been successfully implemented, except in cases where the copyright limitations did not allow for conversion to digital delivery. Continued participation
by Distance Education Services representatives will ensure that alternative delivery courses continue to be included in future assessment activities.

**Comparisons of Student Performance in Online and On-Ground Courses**

By integrating online courses into the different assessment projects, a number of comparisons between student performance in online and on-ground courses was possible.

**Humanities Assessment.** The disciplines that make up Humanities developed an assessment project designed to address general education outcomes adopted for the Humanities, specifically a student’s ability to make an aesthetic judgment. Online students in ENGL 120 (Introduction to Fiction), ENGL 142 (Women’s Literature), ENGL 151 (World Literature II) and ENGL 155 (African American Literature) comprised the student population that participated in this assessment activity. The instruments were delivered from spring 2004 through fall 2005 semesters. The results of the study showed that students in online courses performed at essentially the same level (no significant difference) as classroom participants in ability to make reasonable aesthetic judgments.

**Inference Assessment.** The Social Sciences faculty in 2002 adopted an assessment protocol to assess two key general education outcomes: 1) critical thinking and 2) awareness of social, political and behavioral environments, with specific concern for the skill of inference, a concern that had previously been identified in an earlier assessment initiative. Beginning with the fall 2004, students in online history and psychology courses began participating in this assessment project, which uses an embedded assessment methodology that focuses on a student’s ability to query evidence and draw conclusions from historical documents.

Results from the American History (HIST 120/121) and Western Civilization courses (HIST/HUMN 133/134) generally demonstrated equivalent and higher performance by students in online courses when compared to traditional classroom populations. For instance, with regard to “querying the evidence” 89 percent of the online students could perform this task, as compared to 76 percent of classroom students. With regard to “drawing conclusions,” 78 percent of online students could draw and support a historically adequate conclusion based on evidence, as compared with 55 percent for traditional classroom students. In addition, for both classroom and online instances, nearly 90 percent of tested students were capable of drawing valid assessment supported by evidence from a single document. A greater challenge for faculty, regardless of the instructional venue, was that just slightly more than one-half of tested students could draw a general conclusion supported by evidence from three historical documents.

Information gleaned from the analysis of online assessment projects shows this assessment methodology is conducive for administration to students in multiple instructional venues.

More detailed information regarding this project can be found in MCC’s Assessment Update Report.
Online Student Performance on General Education Outcomes

The Physics faculty adopted the Views About Science Survey (VASS) as an instrument to measure student performance on the general education outcomes adopted for the physical sciences. The VASS was chosen because it focuses on how students view science and the extent to which a student’s views about an aspect of science is stable and well-formed. Science faculty support the notion that how a student views science is related to how well a student will perform in a science course. Perhaps more importantly, students’ views of science influence how they interpret data, form conclusions and develop understanding about “next action” within a scientific context.

Students in online sections of Physics 101 (Introduction to Physics) and 104 (General Astronomy) participated in this study during the spring and summer 2005 semesters. The results of VASS provide students and faculty with information about two major areas of science: the scientific dimension and the cognitive dimension. These two dimensions are further divided into three categories: structure, methodology and validity for the scientific dimension; and learnability, reflective thinking and personal relevance for the cognitive dimension. The VASS test asks students a series of questions about science, learning science, and how science is done. Scores for students are presented at a numerical (ordinal, not absolute) level for each student. Scores are used to assign a science profile to the students based on their responses in the form of “folk”, “low transitional”, “high transitional”, and “expert”.

The results of the VASS clearly show a different in the performance of students based upon the number of credit hours completed—a mean of 77.7 for students with more than 30 credit hours, and a mean of 71.6 for those with less than 30 credit hours. Thus, VASS could distinguish students by Year 1 and Year 2 of their higher education experience. Year 1 students scored into the low transition profile (students are beginning to align their thinking with experts, but still tend to rely upon common misconceptions about science), and Year 2 students scored into the high transitional profile (these individuals are not relying upon the “expert”). See MCC’s Assessment Update Report for more detailed information.

A number of additional assessment projects that are currently being analyzed include distance education student populations. These activities include the CLA, Writing P.A.G.E. Assessment, Social Sciences Diversity Survey, Library Instruction Assessment, and Global Education Assessment. Each of these assessment projects addresses general education outcomes; consequently, the results will allow MCC to compare online student performance with those of students in the classroom, as well as the performance of online students on a range of general education outcomes.

An argument can be made that the rapid growth of online courses and the related technology have also allowed the organization to pilot new methods of assessment and evaluation that may be applicable to classroom sections. In fact, some indications are online faculty have been
consistently more receptive to the need for assessment, and that their participation rate is proportionally higher than for traditional classroom faculty.

Program Evaluation

In an effort to gain insight into the services provided to both students and faculty, the Distance Education Services department collects feedback through surveys aimed at each constituency. Annually, faculty are surveyed regarding the range of services provided both to them and students. Students provide input through two instruments. Every semester students have the opportunity to complete MCC’s Student Experience Questionnaire for each distance course (online, ITV and web-assisted). Every other year, students are provided the opportunity to provide feedback about online services by a survey given in conjunction with the Student Experience Questionnaire.

Faculty Evaluation of Programs and Services. The Distance Education Committee has regularly developed surveys to collect faculty feedback regarding planned decisions and needed services. As part of the decision to choose a single course management system, faculty were queried regarding training and support needs. In 2004, a new survey to gain a broader understanding of faculty perspectives on policy and support services was developed and tested. This survey was first administered in the spring 2005 semester.

CMS Survey, Spring 2003. One of the goals of the Distributed Learning Task Force was identifying a single course management system for MCC. Faculty were surveyed regarding needs, plans, and training as a part of the process. Some important insights resulted from this survey, including:

- Faculty were interested in a system that automatically generated course sites, rather than one that required them to submit a request to build course sites.
- Faculty wanted flexible training available both online and in the classroom.
- Faculty indicated that communication tools (e-mail and discussion boards) showed greatest promise for supplementing instruction.
- Faculty also indicated the usefulness of the system to deliver handouts and supplementary documents.

The results of this survey influenced the training plans developed once Blackboard was selected. To facilitate local training opportunities, the mentor/trainer concept was identified and supported. The decision to move to an automated course creation process was confirmed and first implemented in the fall 2004 semester.

Faculty Survey, Spring 2004. The feedback from this faculty survey tended to focus on technical infrastructure and some on policy and procedures. The respondents did express concern about the level of available support, as well as a concern about the appropriateness of
the technology. The other concerns raised were with the size of courses and the amount of input regarding class-size determinations.

Student Experience Questionnaire. An electronic version of the Student Experience Questionnaire was first piloted in 2002 to facilitate faculty evaluations completed according to MCC Policies, Regulations and Procedures (PRPs). However, MCC’s PRPs’ restrictions on the number and frequency of student evaluations of instructors severely limited the number of responses from online students, and by 2004 it was clear that an alternative process was required. Ultimately, it was agreed that student feedback needed to be collected for all online courses, and Distance Education Services piloted a revised process during the summer 2004 term. The results of the pilot indicated that it was possible to provide access to Student Experience Forms to all online students beginning with the fall 2004 term.

The survey also yielded the following results:

- A number of students indicated that many of the questions did not apply to the online course experience. Many noted that they chose the neutral response which may indicate lower than institutional means on questions addressing issues such as classes starting and ending on time, management of disruptive students, and regularity of attendance.
- Given the text-based nature of online courses, the above average results on questions addressing the clarity of communication and usefulness of text may indicate the emphasis on communication in training.
- It should be noted that the high average expected grade indicates that this sample is not generalizable to the MCC population.

Distance Education Survey. The Distributed Learning Task Force recognized that the Student Experience Questionnaire did not translate well to online courses. Working in parallel with the Faculty Senate’s Academic Affairs committee, the task force proposed a number of modifications. Unfortunately, these recommendations were never adopted by the Faculty Senate, even with the support of its Academic Affairs Committee. Providing students, both online and in traditional classrooms, with regular opportunities to provide feedback regarding their course experiences remains an outstanding issue. Current MCC PRPs appear to limit the frequency of such feedback, and thus limit the use of student feedback to improve instructional practices.

When it was decided that all online students would have the opportunity to provide feedback via the existing Student Experience Questionnaire, the Distance Education Committee proposed adding an additional survey addressing the specific issues of online and ITV learning. The Distance Education Survey was piloted in the summer 2004 term and delivered in conjunction with the Student Experience Questionnaire in both the fall 2004 and spring 2005 semesters.
Results of these administrations of this instrument include the following:

- Students clearly indicated a strong demand for more online courses and sections.
- Some concerns were raised about the helpfulness of telephone support.
- A majority of students indicated that they gain information about online courses primarily from the printed schedule and the MCC web site.
- Students overwhelmingly indicated both an interest in taking more distance courses themselves and in recommending them to others.

MCC is committed to a culture of evaluation and assessment to inform and motivate institutional improvement. Evaluation and assessment of its online program is consistent with this emphasis.

Online students are consistently included in assessment initiatives, including general education assessments. Student learning in online courses is consistently assessed, and some indications are that online students perform at least as well as students in more traditional classes. Distance Education Services has actively sought feedback from faculty and students regarding their experiences. In fact, student and faculty input regarding online courses regularly exceeds that gleaned for faculty and students engaged in other instructional formats. Constructive feedback has regularly been used to fuel future improvements in the online program.

**Summary**

With over a decade of substantial experience in distance education and distributed learning, MCC has incorporated online instruction into the mainstream of its instructional program. The logical next step is for MCC to organize complete degrees to offer via online delivery in response to constituent demand.

MCC has a proven track record of success in online delivery, and online enrollments continue to grow. MCC has developed support structures and technical infrastructure necessary to support expanded online delivery, and quality assurance measures, including assessment of student learning for online students, have been put in place. MCC is ready to offer its constituents online degrees at the same level of quality as all of its academic programs.
MCC’s required Online Faculty Certification for Online Instruction is achieved through the completion of three specific training events.

I – **Blackboard Training.** Blackboard training can be completed online, through classes scheduled at campus locations, or at another institution. Completion of training through MCC may be certified through a campus mentor/trainer or via a skill test. Training completed outside MCC will require verifiable documentation of training or the satisfactory completion of the skill test.

II – **Quality Matters Peer Reviewer Training.** QM Peer Reviewer Training examines the goals of the QM Peer Review process, examines the role of the course developer/instructor in the process, and walks participants through a sample course peer review. This training will require a full day.

III – **MCC Online Best Practices Training.** The MCC Online Pedagogy Training course addresses new course expectations (potentially the New Course checklist), reviews information about MCC’s online students and their expectations, and concludes with a session on Best Practices. It is anticipated that this training will require a full day.

Existing online faculty are grandfathered for this requirement, with the understanding that all will have to complete the Quality Matters Training (required to continue teaching online at the conclusion of the Fall 2008 semester).

Faculty receive three (3) release hours as compensation for Online Training and Development of their first course. Faculty will be credited for the compensation once they have achieved both Training and Course (next appendix) certification.

To support continued improvement, faculty will be regularly reminded every two years to complete additional training or update their existing skills.
New Online courses are required to meet fifteen minimum standards as a condition of scheduling. The fifteen standards address communication, course navigation, instructional design, and other elements identified as important to student success in online courses. The review of new courses will be managed by the campus Dean of Instruction with the support of the Instructional Division. The full set of criteria follow:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Annotations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1.1 Navigational instructions make the organization of the course easy to understand. | Instructions should provide a general course overview, guide the new student to explore the course website, and tell what to do first, rather than list detailed navigational instructions for the whole course. (Instructors may choose to incorporate some of this information in the course syllabus.)

A useful idea is a “Read Me First” or “Start Here” button or icon on the course home page, linking students to start-up information.

Examples:
- A course “tour”.
- Clear statements about how to get started in the course.
- A “scavenger hunt” assignment that leads students through an exploration of the different areas of the course areas. |

| 1.2 There is a statement introducing the student to the course and to how student learning is structured. | Look for a statement by the instructor that gives the new student an idea of how the learning process is structured. These are often found in the course syllabus.

The instructor may describe some or all of the following:
- The course schedule (self-paced, following a set calendar)
- Course sequencing, such as a linear or random order.
- Types of activities the student will be required to complete (written assignments, online self-tests, participation in the discussion board, group work, etc.) |
1.3 Course Syllabus

The syllabus should be readily accessible within a click of the entry point into the course.

The instructor should include all of the following:

- Course calendar with assignment and test due dates
- Preferred mode of communication with the instructor (email, discussion board, etc.)
- Preferred mode of communication with other students
- Testing procedures (online, proctored, etc.)
- Procedure for submission of electronic assignments

2. Learning Design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Annotations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 2.1 Learning objectives are identified and describe measurable outcomes. | Students should be able to easily grasp the meaning of the learning objectives. Use of jargon, confusing terms, unnecessarily complex language, and puzzling syntax should be avoided. Examples:  
  - The objectives found on the CIF are posted in the course site.  
  - The General Education Outcomes the course meets are articulated.  

Measurable learning objectives help teachers precisely describe what students are to gain from instruction, and then to accurately assess student accomplishment. Objectives should describe a student performance in specific, observable, terms. If this is not possible, (e.g., internal cognition, affective changes), be certain to check for clear indications that the learning objective is meaningfully assessed.
2.2 The link between learning activities and outcomes is clear. Ideally the link between learning objectives and activities should be clear. It is recommended that an assignment or learning activity be identified as addressing at least each of the published learning objectives.

Examples:
- The course objective met by the assignment is indicated in the instructions of the assignment.
- A link to the corresponding General Education Outcome directly addressed by the assignment is present.

2.3 Course contains resources, or access to resources, in support of course objectives.

Learners should easily be able to determine the purpose of all materials, technologies and methods used in the course. For example: a course may be richly garnished with external links to Internet resources, but students may not know whether those resources are for background information, additional personal enrichment, or whether they are necessary for an assignment.

Examples:
- Content pages are present and clearly linked to course objectives.
- If links to an external web sites are used, the purpose of the links is clearly explained to students or is completely self-evident.
- The function of animated games or exercises are clearly explained or is completely self-evident.

### 3. Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Annotations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1 The types of assessments selected are consistent with course activities and measure the achievement of stated objectives and learning outcomes.</td>
<td>The assessment format used should provide a reasonable way to measure related learning objectives. Assessments, learning objectives, and learning activities should align.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examples of inconsistency:
1. The objective is to be able to “write a persuasive essay” but the assessment is a multiple choice test.
2. The objective is to “demonstrate discipline-specific information literacy” and the assessment is a rubric-scored term paper, but students are not given any practice with information literacy skills on smaller assignments.

Examples of objective/assessment alignment:
- A problem analysis assessment to evaluate critical thinking
• Multiple choice quiz to test vocabulary knowledge.
• A composition to assess writing skills.

3.2 Assessment and measurement strategies are designed to provide feedback to the learner.

Students learn more effectively if they receive frequent, meaningful, and rapid feedback. This feedback may come from the instructor directly, from assignments and assessments that have feedback built into them, or even from other students.

Examples:
• Instructor participation in a discussion assignment.
• Writing assignments that require submission of a draft for instructor comment and suggestions for improvement.
• Self-mastery tests and quizzes that include informative feedback with each answer choice.
• Interactive games and simulation that have feedback built in.

4. Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Annotations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 4.1 The course design provides learning activities to foster instructor-student, content-student, and if appropriate, student-student interaction | The learning activities in the course should foster the following types of interaction:

• Instructor-learner: Self-introduction; discussion postings and responses; feedback on project assignments; evidence of one-to-one e-mail communication, etc.
• Learner-content: essays, term papers, group projects, etc. based on readings, videos, and other course content; self-assessment exercises; group work products, etc.

Learner-learner (if appropriate): Self-introduction exercise; group discussion postings; group projects; peer critiques, etc. |
4.2 Clear standards are set for instructor response and availability (turnaround time for email, grades posted etc.)

Students need clear information about how quickly the instructor will respond and how frequently he or she is available. Informing students about instructor response and availability times prevents unreasonable expectations from developing (such as anticipating a response from an email in the middle of the night).

Look for clear standards for instructor response time for key events and interactions, including e-mail turnaround time, time required for grade postings, discussion postings, etc. Also look for clear standards for instructor availability, including e-mail response time, degree of participation in discussions, and availability via other media (phone, in-person) if applicable.

This standard does not prescribe what that response time and availability ought to be.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Annotations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 5.1 The course instructions articulate or link to a clear description of the technical support offered. | Technical support for online students differs from institution to institution. Technical support covers questions about such topics as how to login, how to use the software, and how to upload files. It does not include help with course content, assignments, course content, assignments, academic or student support services (see Standards VII.2 and VII.3 below).

Look for evidence that students have access to technical support services from within the course. The purpose is not to review the adequacy of those services on an institutional level.

Examples:
- A clear description of the services, including a link to a technical support website.
- An email link to an online learning helpdesk.
- A phone number for an online learning helpdesk. |
5.2 Course instructions articulate or link to an explanation as to how the College's academic support system can assist the learner in effectively using the resources provided.

Academic support for online students, and the scope of what “academic support” entails, differs from institution to institution. For the purposes of review, academic support involves access to library resources, readiness assessment, testing services, tutoring, a writing center, a math center, supplemental instruction programs, and teaching assistants.

Look for evidence that students have access to academic support services from within the course. The purpose is not to review the adequacy of those services on an institutional level.

Example:
- A clear description of the academic support services and how to access them.
- A link to the academic support website, along with a definition of academic support.
- Instructions on the use of online learning support resources such as electronic library databases.

### 6. Technology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Annotations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 6.1 Resources and materials are easily accessible to and usable by the learners. | If some of the course resources, including textbooks, videos, CD-ROMs, etc., are unavailable within the framework of the course website, investigate how students would gain access to them, and examine their ease of use. Examples:  
- If textbooks and/or CDs are used, titles, authors, publishers, ISBN numbers, copyright dates, and information as to where copies can be obtained, are listed.  
- A navigation button is devoted to “Resources” and appropriately tied in with the overall course design.  
- Required software plug-ins are listed, along with instructions for obtaining and installing the plug-ins. |
## 7. Access

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Annotations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.1 There is evidence of some effort to recognize the importance of ADA requirements</td>
<td>ADA compliance is the most fluid of the review standards. At this time, Blackboard, WebCT, and WebTycho offer features that implement ADA; the use of either of these course management systems satisfies standard VIII.1. Look for a statement in the course that tells learners how to gain access to ADA services.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 7.2 Web pages should provide equivalent alternatives to auditory and visual content. | Alternative means of access to course information should be provided for the vision or hearing impaired student. Look for equivalent textual representations of images, audio, animations, and video in the course website. Presenting information in text format is generally acceptable, because screen reader software (used by the vision impaired) can read text. Example:  
   - Audio lecture has a text transcript available.  
   - Video clip, image, or animation is accompanied by text transcript.  
Faculty must be prepared to address possible accommodation requests. |
Standards Checklist for New Courses

The following review checklist provides reviewers with possible examples of evidence that would indicate that a new course meets the requirements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Course Introduction</th>
<th>Evidence of Compliance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1.1 Navigational instructions make the organization of the course easy to understand. | __ Introductory letter explaining course and how to use.  
__ Link/Button to a “Start Here” page that outlines how to use the course |
| 1.2 There is a statement introducing the student to the course and to how student learning is structured. | __Statement located on Entry page, in Syllabus, or introductory letter.  
__Statement addresses how students are expected to use the course and its resources. |
| 1.3 Course Syllabus that can be easily found and addresses the role the online environment will play in the course. | __Syllabus button or link to course syllabus.  
__Syllabus posted on entry page of course site. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. Learning Design</th>
<th>Evidence of Compliance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 2.1 Learning objectives are identified and describe measurable outcomes. | __ The course objectives are listed within two “clicks” of the entry point into the course.  
__Outcomes use actions verbs such as demonstrate,… |
| 2.2 The link between learning activities and outcomes is clear. | __Introductions to learning activities indicate which learning objectives are being addressed by the assignment.  
__The assignment references the General Education Outcome the activity supports. |
| 2.3 Course contains resources, or access to resources, in support of course objectives | __Content pages indicate which learning objectives are supported.  
__Links to external sites/activities include information regarding the relationship to learning objectives. |
### 3. Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Evidence of Compliance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 3.1 The types of assessments selected are consistent with course activities and measure the achievement of stated objectives and learning outcomes. | __ Introduction to the assignment indicates which learning objectives are being assessed.  
__ Posted Rubrics for each assignment indicate which objectives or outcomes are addressed. |
| 3.2 Assessment and measurement strategies are designed to provide feedback to the learner. | __ Automated assessments (such as quizzes) include feedback for correct/incorrect answers to each question.  
__ Faculty have posted feedback resources to be released after assignment deadline. |

### 4. Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Evidence of Compliance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1 The course design provides learning activities to foster instructor-student, content-student, and if appropriate, student-student interaction</td>
<td>__ Course includes learning activities that require students and faculty to interact on learning topics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 4.2 Clear standards are set for instructor response and availability (turn-around time for email, grades posted etc.) | __ Course syllabus (or other document) includes a statement about grading timeline or anticipated response.  
__ A communication policy is posted in the course (or located in a course document such as the syllabus) |
### 5. Student Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Evidence of Compliance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 5.1 The course instructions articulate or link to a clear description of the technical support offered. | __ Course contains telephone number of and links to the MCC Techline.  
__ Course contains links or references to Distance Education Services Web Site and Resources. |
| 5.2 Course instructions articulate or link to an explanation as to how the College’s academic support system can assist the learner in effectively using the resources provided. | __ Course includes links to MCC Student Services web resources.  
__ A page or letter introduces students to online or on-ground learning resources at MCC. |

### 6. Technology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Evidence of Compliance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 6.1 Resources and materials are easily accessible to and usable by the learners. | __ Course links to needed software (media players, publisher resources, etc.) are included in the course.  
__ Faculty use DES recommended software for media.  
__ Course documents are posted in html, pdf, or rtf, NOT proprietary formats not readily available to students (MS Word, etc). |

### 7. Access

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Evidence of Compliance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.1 There is evidence of some effort to recognize the importance of ADA requirements</td>
<td>__ A posted ADA statement is included in the Syllabus.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 7.2 Web pages should provide equivalent alternatives to auditory and visual content. | __ Text only pages are provided as an alternative.  
__ Media files are accompanied by text descriptions.  
__ Alt Text Tags are included with all images. |
APPENDIX C

Quality Matters

When the first Distance Education Task Force addressed the question of how to address the quality of online courses, it was agreed that MCC could not hold online courses to a higher standard than classroom sections. Each successive task force re-evaluated how online courses were to be evaluated. The Distributed Learning Task Force communicated to the Faculty Senate’s Academic Affairs Committee about the poor fit of current evaluation instruments and procedures to online courses. The communication coincided with an initiative to review the existing faculty evaluation process, and the recommendations of the DLTF were well received by the Academic Affairs Committee.

Existing evaluation procedures were ultimately applied to all online courses by the Fall 2004 semester. The feedback indicated general satisfaction with the offerings; however, this process did not provide the additional information needed to prove effectiveness of the technology. Similarly, as distance education courses were included into the various assessment activities, the positive results did not address the effectiveness question.

How to ensure the quality of MCC’s online offerings continued to be a regular topic of discussion of the Distance Education Committee and began to be a topic of discussion within KC REACHE in late 2003. As the discussion continued in a number of venues, the Quality Matters program developed by Maryland Online was brought to the attention of KC REACHE members, which began focusing in earnest on this issue in the summer of 2005. By the Fall 2005 semester KC REACHE made plans to develop a pilot program with Quality Matters, which began with a Peer Review Training event in October 2005. The results of the training led KC REACHE to focus on five classes for pilot reviews in the Spring 2006 semester.

MCC’s participation in KC REACHE and the Peer Review Training made it clear that Quality Matters was a well designed and researched program for continually improving the quality of online course offerings. While KC REACHE is piloting a limited number of Quality Matters Peer Reviews during the Spring 2006 semester, MCC has adopted the core of Quality Matters with the intent of broadly implementing the process by the Fall 2006.
MCC plans to implement the Quality Matters process as follows:

**Spring and Summer 2006.** Distance Education will focus on peer reviewer training with a goal of training twenty faculty to review/participate in reviews.

**Summer 2006** DES, with input from the Deans of Instruction, will identify as many as ten courses for Peer Review during the Fall 2006 semester.

**Fall 2006** The first set of peer reviews will be completed by December 1 and at least 10 courses will be identified for a Spring 2007 review. Long term goals include a review of at least one course delivered by each online and web-assisted faculty by the conclusion of the Fall 2008 term.

The Quality Matters Peer Review process is a significant factor in ensuring that MCC students have a solid online learning experience.
APPENDIX D

MCC Enrollment in Online Courses

The above graph indicates raw enrollment data.

The above graph indicates the number of online course sections MCC has offered in past semesters.
## Enrollment in MCC Online Courses
### Fall 1998 to Fall 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of sections</th>
<th>Seats enrolled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fall 1998</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spring 1999</strong></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summer 1999</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total AY 1998-99</strong></td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fall 1999</strong></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>679</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spring 2000</strong></td>
<td>38</td>
<td>917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summer 2000</strong></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total AY 1999-2000</strong></td>
<td>98</td>
<td>2266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fall 2000</strong></td>
<td>37</td>
<td>643</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spring 2001</strong></td>
<td>27</td>
<td>447</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summer 2001</strong></td>
<td>34</td>
<td>825</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total AY 2000-01</strong></td>
<td>98</td>
<td>1915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fall 2001</strong></td>
<td>66</td>
<td>1566</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spring 2002</strong></td>
<td>86</td>
<td>1983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summer 2002</strong></td>
<td>53</td>
<td>1278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total AY 2001-02</strong></td>
<td>205</td>
<td>4827</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fall 2002</strong></td>
<td>96</td>
<td>2248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spring 2003</strong></td>
<td>124</td>
<td>2769</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summer 2003</strong></td>
<td>65</td>
<td>1485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total AY 2002-03</strong></td>
<td>285</td>
<td>6502</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fall 2003</strong></td>
<td>125</td>
<td>2692</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spring 2004</strong></td>
<td>134</td>
<td>3080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summer 2004</strong></td>
<td>81</td>
<td>1773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total AY 2003-04</strong></td>
<td>340</td>
<td>7545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fall 2004</strong></td>
<td>138</td>
<td>3113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spring 2005</strong></td>
<td>147</td>
<td>3641</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summer 2005</strong></td>
<td>90</td>
<td>2155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total AY 2004-05</strong></td>
<td>375</td>
<td>8909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fall 2005</strong></td>
<td>161</td>
<td>3898</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### APPENDIX E

**MCC Online Course Offerings Leading to Selected Associate Degrees**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree Requirement</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Fa03</th>
<th>Sp04</th>
<th>Fa05</th>
<th>Sp05</th>
<th>Fa06</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>American Institutions</strong></td>
<td>6 credit – complete two of the following courses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIST 120</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIST 121</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POLS 135</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POLS 136</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POLS 137</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communications</strong></td>
<td>9 credits – complete the following:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGL 101</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGL 102</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPDR 100 or SPDR 102</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mathematics</strong></td>
<td>3 credits</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MATH 119</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MATH 120</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Natural Science</strong></td>
<td>9 credits – two lab courses, one each in biological and physical</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biological</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIOL 101</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEOG 110</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYS 101</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYS 106</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYS 107 (PHSC 104)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree Requirement</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Fa03</td>
<td>Sp04</td>
<td>Fa04</td>
<td>Sp05</td>
<td>Fa05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>9 credits – a course in 3 different areas (one must be in literature or philosophy)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Art History</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ART 108</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGL 120</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGL 124</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGL 127</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGL 142</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGL 144</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGL 155</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGL 165</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGL 167</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGL 220</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGL 221</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGL 222</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIST 133</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIST 134</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUMN 133</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUMN 134</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUMN 140</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUMN 141</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUMN 145</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUMN 165</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUSI 108</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHIL 100</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHIL 200</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree Requirement</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Fa03</td>
<td>Sp04</td>
<td>Fa04</td>
<td>Sp05</td>
<td>Fa05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>6 credits – one course from two different areas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Economics**

- ECON 110
- ECON 210
- ECON 211

**History** – any course

See Humanities & American Institutions

**Social Sciences**

- SOSC 153A

**Political Science** – any course

See American Institutions

**Psychology**

- PSYC 140
- PSYC 243

**Sociology**

- SOCI 160

**Anthropology**

- ANTH 110