

## 5 Distance Education

Annual Update: 2009-09-08

### A. Describe the past year's accomplishments and the current status of this Action Project.

Generally, we have made progress according to the six Action Project Goals: 1. Determine the stakeholders to be served The Online Education Committee (OEC) (chaired by the eUniversity director and made up of faculty and support services members) met a total of seven times during the academic year, 2008-2009. Among its activities was the development and presentation of an online education action plan delivered to the Evangel Board of Administration (BOA) in February of 2009. The OEC worked in conjunction with an ad hoc steering committee made up of academic and support services department heads. In the presentation, the committees proposed an expansion of the current campus based Evangel vision to one that encompassed distance students in the areas of high school, degree completion, graduate studies, and professional studies including denominational constituents such as ministers and missionaries. The presentation also identified immediate online and distance opportunities, segregated Evangel's online development into past, current and future stages, and stated critical needs with recommendations of how to accomplish future stages and opportunities. 2. Clear inclusion of the Evangel ethos Over the past year, in conjunction with the General Education Redesign Action Project, there have been coordinated meetings of EU faculty and staff to discuss and define the Evangel ethos. As part of these discussions, the OEC addressed the issue in relation to online distance education. The committee found that online distance education was compatible with the current Evangel vision and mission statements. Suggestions were made that the Evangel experience (ethos) could also be continued through online recordings of chapel services, topical discussion boards, online spiritual mentoring and counseling, and other services that could be offered to distance students. 3. Common components for all online classes based upon HLC's Best Practices 4. Certification of faculty in pedagogy, as well as practical and technical techniques Number's three and four have been addressed by the continuation of the online and hybrid course instructor certification program. Since the fall of 2008 and through the summer of 2009, 19 full and part time instructors have been certified as being capable of teaching an online or hybrid course for Evangel. To become certified to teach a fully online or hybrid course, faculty members must complete a four week online course that addresses online pedagogy, theories, and practices. In addition, faculty must meet with an instructional designer a minimum of three times for guidance in creating an online course. The end result of the certification is an understanding, by the faculty member, of the course creation process and the creation of an online or hybrid course ready for students. Since its start in the spring of 2008, the certification program has been given once each regular semester and summer with a total of 45 instructors completing the process. Further, practical guidance (in the form of training sessions, printed guides, and video tutorials) is still given on a regular basis to full time and adjunct faculty members, staff personnel (administrative assistants, etc.) and student works studies in the use of the ANGEL LMS. 5. Full integration of all support services into the organizational structure, including, but not limited to, registration, advising, library services, and technical support The past academic year has seen the creation of the Support Services Council. Representatives of all support services meet to discuss campus planning and priority issues. Sub-committees are formed to address key issues that include support service personnel and faculty members. The creation of the Council has expedited the communication process and has helped pinpoint issues.

Over the past year, Evangel has constructed online application, registration, and financial payments for campus students. All with the help of the Support Services Council. Evaluation by standardized indicators Number six is probably the one goal that has not been fully addressed in relation to online education. We have modified the current seated course evaluation to the online educational environment (wording and delivery), but it is not given comprehensively to all online courses (undergraduate, graduate or degree completion). Whereas the evaluation is given regularly to online students (via ANGEL) in the summer, it is only given sporadically during the regular semester. Degree Completion and Graduate Studies give the evaluation sporadically, have developed their own, or do not give one at all. Reasons for the sporadic nature: different course schedules that are difficult to keep up with, lack of centralized oversight, little time to be given to central oversight, and no coherent plan for the entire campus (one evaluation or an agreed upon delivery method and content). Other online assessments (individual online course content assessments) will be analyzed during the General Education Redesign.

***Review (09-20-09):***

Over the course of the last year, your group has made significant and steady progress in moving your institution towards developing an online program that reflects the evangel mission and vision. This includes the development of an Online Education Committee which spearheaded much of the development of your action plan. Committee membership was from a broad stakeholder group, demonstrating the aqip principle of collaboration. One component which is especially impressive is your institution's development of a hybrid course instructor certification program. This professional development opportunity highlights your institutions agility to meet the needs of a changing pedagogy and mode of delivery for students. Additionally, the development of a Support Service Council is equally impressive. This mechanism allows for improved communication and creates an efficient way to sharing information among key support services around the development of your online programs. Your institution also understands the need for assessment and is well aware of the need to focus on online evaluation in the next steps of your action project. It is possible that your institution might benefit from looking at other comparable college with a longer standing Online model. Faculty, administration and support staff could visit other models or have a consultant from another college conduct a series of trainings for your institution on their own experiences with online program development.

**B. Describe how the institution involved people in work on this Action Project.**

The Action Project has seemingly been kept on the institution's priority list by the involvement of administration leaders in on-going committee work for both the academic and support services areas. The Vice President for Academic Affairs (Academic Dean) has been included in the development of the hybrid MOL program and has attended planning meetings while coordinating efforts through his office. He is also a standing member of the Online Education Committee. Weekly meetings are conducted between the Academic Dean and the quarter time director of eUniversity to discuss online developments, issues, and progress. The Vice President of Finance has been actively involved with the support services council and any activities it has been involved with concerning the development of campus online services. Awareness of the importance and progress of the Project is maintained through the weekly and monthly meetings of various committees and groups. As a portion of the project is realized or eventually assigned, members are actively involved until completion or termination. All faculty and support services members involved in the Project are dedicated to the Action Project's completion. They understand the importance of such an opportunity to the future of Evangel.

**Review (09-20-09):**

Your institution has shown a genuine commitment to this action project through engaging in practices which follow aqip category 6 (supporting institutional operations) and category 5 (leading and communicating). The development of committees with stakeholder groups that represent faculty, administration and staff leads to greater involvement and buy-in from a broader range of personnel. The frequent communication and meetings help to keep the project moving forward. One area to consider is how to communicate to the broader college audience including faculty, staff and students who are not involved in the project directly to overview the committee's progress to date and to seek ongoing feedback on the project leading towards continuous improvement.

**C. Describe your planned next steps for this Action Project.**

The next steps for this Action Project are unclear. There has been talk of moving forward with the recruitment of high school and home school juniors and seniors for online education. However, before this can be accomplished, a thorough outline, a general plan and specific policies are needed to coordinate support services and academic handling off-campus, completely online students. As far as the completely online educational program, no specific direction has been given to develop a fully online educational program for any academic unit on campus. eUniversity: eUniversity (with its part time faculty director) will continue to develop on-going training and support of faculty and students. We will also focus on increasing not only summer online course offerings, but regular semester online offerings for undergraduate students (in anticipation of the high school student push). In an effort to further EU's online capabilities, eUniversity will also help in the coordination of the online student policies and procedures for application, registration, and payment.

**Review (09-20-09):**

The institution clearly understands the challenges of setting priorities to move an institution towards continuous improvement. Evaluation and assessment can provide an institution needed feedback to target next steps for improvement. Once data is received on this, your institution appears to be nimble and able to respond efficiently and effectively to the needs of faculty, staff and students. In the event the next focus for your project becomes targeting an audience high school students, potentially your institution might consider having a high school teacher or administrator and a high school student participate as a member of your committee. Their insight and perspective would be valuable as you begin to gear a program targeting this audience.

**D. Describe any "effective practice(s)" that resulted from your work on this Action Project.**

Effective practices used for this Action Project include: 1. The online and hybrid course instructor certification for teacher and course preparation and standardization 2. The creation of the Support Services Council to better communication between the Academic Council, related committees and the support services for the expediting of technical and procedural issues.

**Review (09-20-09):**

The development of both the online and hybrid instructor certification process and the Support Services Council demonstrate your institution's commitments to valuing people and building collaborative relationships. Investing in people will continue to have a strong impact on your institution.

**E. What challenges, if any, are you still facing in regards to this Action Project?**

Whereas there has been much progress made toward the completion of the six stated Project goals, overall, there is much confusion as to where all of this is leading. The best way to define our progress is fragmented. While there has been some coordination led by eUniversity, the OEC, and the Support Services Council, much of the action has come from faculty and staff members with little guidance from administration. The perception is that the administration has not accepted online distance education as being strategically important to Evangel's mission or goals. Thus, while there is some notion of online education's growth and prominence, there has not been a mandate or target placed before us. Since online education is not of strategic importance, there appears to be an unwillingness to provide funds so that Evangel can sufficiently support current activities and future, potential growth. As part of the presentation given to the BOA in the spring of 2009, Evangel's online education development was divided into a three stage timeline. Stage one identified accomplishments achieved since 2001: WebCT LMS purchase and eventual transition to ANGEL LMS, OEC creation, eUniversity creation (an academic support department charged with coordinating and managing Evangel's online educational ventures – quarter time faculty director), online and hybrid course instructor certification, expansion of summer, degree completion and graduate online course offerings, the development of the hybrid MOL, and progress in the areas of support services such as campus student online application, enrollment, registration and financial services. Stage two (2009 to 2011) recognized opportunities such as the hybrid MOL, the possibility of an online degree completion program and target constituency, the increase of summer and regular semester online course offerings, the recruitment of high school and home school students through dual credit, online course offerings, and a common term campus for support services. Stage three (2011 and beyond) opportunities included the expansion and inclusion of hybrid graduate programs, online degree completion programs, online continuing education and professional developments programs, denominational partnerships for online missionary training and church district education programs, and the possibility of an online high school program. Stage two and three identified critical needs for current and future growth: the hiring of a full time online education (eUniversity) director, the hiring of a full time instructional designer, online program accreditation progress and acquisition, the acquisition of distance education faculty (along with their training and support), student training in online education, an action plan to integrate spiritual emphasis and the Evangel ethos into online education, marketing strategies, and logistical concerns (common term, ANGEL access, bookstore, library, technical staff, student retention, etc). While initial response by the BOA to the presentation was positive, very little administrative direction has been given towards its ultimate acceptance or implementation. Without sanction and a clear university plan, efforts toward online education will continue to be fragmented with slow growth.

**Review (09-20-09):**

Your institution understands the challenges of needing funding and a college directive to move your Action Project to the next stage of development. There has been measureable progress in this work. Through broadening the communication to the entire college community regarding this project and the data you have, can create next steps for your project and build institutional buy in necessary to keep this action project an institutional priority.

F. If you would like to discuss the possibility of AQIP providing you help to stimulate progress on this action project, explain your need(s) here and tell us who to contact and when?

**Review (09-20-09):**