

RESOLUTION ON THE UCC REPORT ON DISTANCE LEARNING  
(#06-95/96-EP)

- WHEREAS, The Humboldt State University Academic Senate passed a resolution (#32-92/93-EP) which requested that the University Curriculum Committee (UCC) consider the curricular implications of distance learning (DL) on the nature and structure of academic programs at Humboldt State University; and
- WHEREAS, The resulting February 7, 1995 UCC Distance Learning Report concludes that "Given the complex and unpredictable implications of DL programs for the university and its curriculum we believe that it is premature to erect a body of policies that will shape and limit DL in the future"; and
- WHEREAS, The definition of DL as "interactive educational activities that link teachers, students, and/or their educational resources . . ." has broad institutional implications; therefore, be it
- RESOLVED: That the Academic Senate of Humboldt State University recommends that the UCC be designated as the body responsible for oversight and review of educational quality in distance learning programs; and be it further
- RESOLVED: That the Academic Senate of Humboldt State University recommends that the UCC make recommendations on distance learning policy as the need arises to the Senate and the Provost.

**University Curriculum Committee  
Report on Distance Learning  
February 7, 1995**

**Humboldt State University  
Arcata, CA 95521**

In April, 1993, the HSU Academic Senate passed a resolution (#32-92/93-EP), which requested that the University Curriculum Committee (UCC) consider the curricular implications of distance learning on the nature and structure of academic programs at HSU. This charge specifically requested that the UCC "develop a policy for the selection of faculty and courses, peer and student evaluation of faculty, and outcomes assessment under technology-mediated learning."

In our consideration of issues related to Distance Learning, we have also considered a resolution from the Academic Senate of the CSU (AS-2133-93/FA, March 4, 1993) which raises a number of issues in addition to those addressed in the HSU Senate resolution. This report is the result of our attempt to respond to these documents in the most thorough way possible.

Introduction. Though Distance Learning (DL) has been a part of both K-12 and higher education for a generation or more, the advent of computing and telecommunications technology has given it a new prominence. As information technologies improve their ability to transmit two-way video and multi-media, various forms of DL will almost certainly become permanent fixtures of higher education. As various forms of DL take their places in educational institutions, they will certainly shape not only the way education is delivered but the way we conceive of education itself as regards its substance, goals, student body, faculty, and (above all) the classroom and community in which it occurs.

The educational environment that will be defined under the influence of DL programs is yet to be charted because it is yet to be created, and this is the single most significant problem that we face as we attempt to prepare curricular guidelines for the regulation of DL courses. On the one hand, we should not regulate the creation of DL courses in such a restrictive fashion that genuinely creative attempts at providing quality education are stifled. On the other hand, we must be careful that the emergence of new technologies does not allow for a deterioration in the quality of education that we rightly expect in traditional college classrooms.

In what follows we have attempted to outline a number of the most pressing concerns that confront us as we attempt to regulate the creation of DL courses and programs on campus, as well as to indicate the broad range of potential DL activities that offer exciting new possibilities for enhancing our offerings at HSU. However, we stress at the outset of this discussion that the suggestions we make here are preliminary and subject to revision. We hope that the role of the UCC will be as a catalyst for broader discussions among students, faculty, administration, and staff, and that it will serve to focus this discussion by providing for input from all sectors of the campus community.

Distance Learning: A Definition.

The following definition, adapted from a discussion on the Internet, might serve to characterize the array of educational activities that can be classed under the broad category, "Distance Learning."

Distance Learning refers to interactive educational activities that link teachers, students, and/or their educational resources, when any one of these three is separated from any other by space and/or time.

This definition attempts to include correspondence courses, courses offered on television to a local community, those offered through computing technology, others accessible on satellite programs, and perhaps even off-campus courses taught by a faculty member who drives to a remote site. Since the range of DL activities is broad, such a brief definition of Distance Learning must be so general as to be practically non-informative. Hence, in what follows we provide a tentative list of the range of activities that might be classed as distance learning, so as to give substance to this umbrella definition.

### Distance Learning: The Breadth of Possible Offerings.

We might classify DL in terms of two general categories. First, all DL offerings depend on particular "Modes of Delivery" that allow teachers, students, and their resources to interact in some way other than that typical of the traditional classroom. Thus, DL helps to overcome the barriers of space and time that are implicit in curricula of traditional design. Second, depending on the Mode of Delivery, a variety of different courses and programs might be designed that could supplement or replace traditional offerings. Advances in DL promise to allow universities to market their services to populations who have not been able to participate in traditional on-campus programs, to offer services to on-campus students that have not previously been available, and to enable faculty to involve themselves in forms of teaching and scholarship that will enhance the curriculum.

### Forms of Distance Learning Grouped by Mode of Delivery.

1. Traditional Correspondence Courses. Student receives materials in mail, returns written work through the mail to instructor. Little or no personal contact.
2. One-Way Transmission of Instruction with Radio, TV, Mailed Video/Audio Cassettes, or Surface Mail or Visit to Campus. Course instruction is transmitted one-way, student work is returned through surface mail or visit to campus.
3. One-Way Transmission of Instruction with Radio, TV, or Cable, with Live Telephone Call-in Telephone. Instruction is one-way, but students can call to teacher during instruction with telephone.
4. Two-way Video. Allows for live interaction between teacher and students in multiple locations. Could include classroom to classroom hook-up, or campus instruction could conceivably be delivered to multiple student homes simultaneously using desktop videoconferencing software. Student work could be shared live, or could be transferred over a network (such as the Internet or the CSU-Net).
5. Use of Internet or Other Computer Network. Course materials can be accessed through a network, and student work is returned in a similar way. Live access to teacher would require a phone call, a campus visit, or access to two-video technology. Internet might also be used to supplement a more traditional class, so as to enhance access to the teacher and learning resources, or to facilitate student discussion and collaboration outside of class.
6. Access to Information, Multimedia, and Specialized Equipment or Operations. There may be many specialized operations that can be performed over a distance using computing and telecommunications software. For example: CSU Hayward promises remote access to its electron microscope using the CSU-Net; many libraries now offer access to bibliographies, on-line catalogues, and journal abstracts over the Internet; and some professors now utilize Mosaic to provide their students with course materials and multimedia resources at a distance.

7. *Kiosk, CD-ROM, or Other Stand-Alone Instructional Package.* Educational programs are now used to instruct people in the complete absence of a teacher by simply following instructions encoded in a machine. Useful, perhaps, for learning basic skills or specialized skills for advanced, self-motivated learners.
8. *Hybrids of the above Methods.* These various modes of delivery can be combined in a variety of ways yet to be imagined.

Forms of Distance Learning Grouped by Market and/or Curricular Considerations.

1. Provide instruction to traditional students as supplement to normal on-campus, in-class curriculum. That is, for those students who are registered locally in the traditional manner, and who attend classes on campus, additional offerings may be made available through DL. Examples:
  - a. A student takes a distance class at home in addition to traditional on-campus classes. (For example, working parents or others with restrictive time commitments might fill out their course schedule with one or more distance classes offered over cable TV.)
  - b. Students gain access to classes offered on another campus. (For example, a student might study particle physics with professor at MIT, Berkeley, or another CSU campus through a two-way video hook-up between campuses. Teacher-student consultation could take place over the Internet.)
  - c. Allows professor on one campus to collaborate with professor on another campus, and requires students in different geographical/cultural regions to communicate and collaborate. (For example, an HSU instructor could collaborate with a teacher at an urban campus in classes dealing with race relations in the US. Student discussions could be facilitated simply by the use of the Internet, or two-way video might make joint classes possible, thus allowing for greater ethnic/racial diversity in class population.)
  - d. Distance course offered on campus in a specialized area, or with unique resources (equipment, data, outstanding teacher) to teach students from other institutions. (For example, HSU could offer a course that makes resources uniquely available on our campus available to others in the system, as in Forestry, Wildlife, or Engineering.)
  - e. Provide stand-alone system for instruction in basic or advanced skills. (For example, produce a CD-ROM program for instruction on the use of basic computer skills that students could complete in order to demonstrate computer literacy/competence.)
2. Provide instruction to non-traditional students.
  - a. To businesses: writing, accounting, marketing, technical, stress management, computing, and other skills. A variety of programs might be offered over 2-way video, cable TV, video cassette, or other modes of delivery.
  - b. For certificates: specifically for medical, educational, and other professions that require continuing education. Often such students find it inconvenient to come to campus, and are highly motivated learners.

c. Returning students, or students who need to get a few outstanding requirements for a degree. Such students may want access to college credit that is more suitable for a life-style (including work and kids) that is not easily integrated with on-campus learning.

d. Advanced high-school students who can't make it to campus, but who might benefit from a college course. Such courses might be offered directly to the high school, or to the student's home.

e. Regularly enrolled students on other campuses. We might be able to attract students from other colleges and universities to take courses from us, either because our courses are better than those offered on their own campus, or because we have offerings unavailable to them.

f. Pure learners: education for education's sake. For example, older people or working parents who want to develop skills or knowledge in a particular area without leaving the comfort of their home. Such courses might be offered as a form of community service by the University.

3. Establish or Extend Programs that would not otherwise be possible. Benefits can work both ways: we might attract distant students to our campus programs because of our strengths, or our students might take advantage of another institution's resources while remaining on our rolls. This might be done for any combination of the following reasons.

a. There might not be enough students on this campus to create a program, but it might be possible to attract students from other campuses to make the degree worth while. (Similarly, students on this campus might be able to complete a program in cooperation with another campus.)

b. There might not be enough faculty on this campus for a certain program, but in cooperation with other campuses, enough faculty might be assembled to serve students on the participating (and even additional) campuses.

c. Equipment, laboratories, data might not be available on this (or another, or a single) campus, but it could be made available through computer network. (For example, Hayward intends to make its electron microscope available for distance users; there is now underway in the CSU a collaborative project among a variety of sports medicine programs to construct a multimedia sports medicine database that could not be assembled by any one campus.)

d. Allow students to complete a major, second major, or minor in an area not available on their home campus. This might be controversial, and would almost certainly require serious thought. An example: A student is living in Humboldt county, and cannot leave the area for family reasons. The student does GE and elective coursework here, but completes a major (or a special emphasis within a major) offered only on another campus. (For example, a physics student might complete a concentration in electricity and magnetism not available here.)

e. Establish GE courses that would have broad appeal throughout the CSU. Students might like to fulfill GE or elective credits in an area not available on their campus. (For example, a student majoring in biology would like to do GE in Women's Studies in the CSU, but no such course is offered on that campus. Student takes a distance course from another campus in the system.)

**Problems and Opportunities Associated with the Growth of DL Programs.**

The charge of the HSU Academic Senate to the UCC regarding Distance Learning(#32-92/93 EP) was somewhat limited in scope, and we have discovered in the course of our deliberations that many issues other than those specified in Senate Resolution need to be discussed. While it is not possible for us to anticipate every problem associated with DL, there are a number of general issues that are already beginning to surface as matters of general concern. We anticipate that many others will become apparent as developments in this area proceed.

The Problem of Class Size. The technology associated with DL could allow for the explosion of class size. Whereas traditional classes have been limited in size by the number of chairs that would fit in a room, telecommunications technology places no physical limits on the number of students that could be enrolled in a class. Especially in these days of decreasing budgets, when administrators and legislators call for increased "productivity" in education, it will be necessary to place limits on the size of DL classes. This is, of course, a complicated matter. It may be possible to transmit certain sorts of courses to large numbers of people with no serious curricular implications. Other DL courses may require small class sizes for the same curricular reasons that are used to determine enrollments in traditional classes. Our main concern is that issues arising from class size be monitored closely so that pressures for increased enrollments do not diminish the quality of education we have traditionally delivered to our students.

New Models for Course Offerings. One of the benefits to be gained from DL offerings is that they can be offered to people whose lifestyles do not allow them to attend normal college courses. Part of this advantage is, of course, that a variety of students will not have to suffer the inconvenience of actually coming to campus. But in addition to this, many potential students could benefit from offerings that are not cast into the mold of the traditional 16 week semester, since frequently the scheduling of courses is as much an impediment to educational opportunities as the distant location of the campus. Since in the University as a whole we should be considering ways to structure our curriculum so as to suit the needs of students, DL programs could be a catalyst for innovation and reform of our curriculum. For example, DL programs might facilitate ways of granting credit for prior learning, for service learning, for workshops and other short-term intensive modes of learning, and according to outcomes-based assessment (rather than "seat time" measurements).

The Problem of Cheating: How to Guarantee the Authenticity of Student Work. Since DL courses will frequently allow students to study at a considerable distance from the HSU campus and the faculty who teach here, the opportunities for students to cheat on exams and other assignments will be magnified. In fact, the better the technological infrastructure for distributing instruction to multiple locations (as with desktop teleconferencing software), the more difficult it will be to determine who has actually done the work at the other end of the distance network. Some of the problems of security can certainly be dealt with through technology; others could be solved by insisting that students take exams in monitored labs. Still, it will be necessary to reflect on the nature of such safeguards in order insure the integrity of credit-bearing courses.

The Problem of Intellectual Property. Since many DL courses will be delivered electronically (e.g., in video format over cable TV), it will be a simple matter (technologically speaking) to record these courses and rebroadcast them without the active participation of the faculty members who created them. Of course, this is a matter of concern to faculty, because it has implications for their livelihood, academic freedom, etc. But this is an important curricular concern, as well, for at least two reasons. First, without the active participation of the faculty in the areas of their specialization, there is no way of guaranteeing that a course offered at one date will be up-to-date at a later date. In a world where currency in every academic

discipline changes rapidly, we will almost inevitably have an inferior curriculum if we allow courses to be offered as mere video-taped performances. Second, quality education depends on the availability of faculty to the students in their courses for consultation, either during class time or outside of it. As in the matter of class size, there is certainly some latitude in the way that we would want to apply rules about the use of pre-recorded classes for the delivery of course content. However, as the curriculum is under the purview of the faculty, all recordings of class offerings must remain the intellectual property of the faculty who created them. Only in this way can we guarantee that the use of such recordings will be consistent with the current state of a given discipline, and that the use of such recordings will not diminish the availability of a live faculty member to students in a course for consultation.

Of course, this is a complicated matter, and we have not attempted to explore all the implications. We are obviously not suggesting, for example, that faculty members should necessarily be allowed to offer taped courses whenever or as often as they choose. What we are suggesting is that no one be able to demand that such a recording be used over the objections of the faculty member who created the course.

The Problem of Infrastructural Decision Making. The creation of successful DL programs will depend heavily on the computing and telecommunications infrastructure on campus. What sorts of equipment are purchased, how and where it is installed, who gets access to it, and many other related questions are inseparable from the creation and maintenance of a quality curriculum. Again, since the curriculum is under the purview of the faculty, decisions involving the computing and telecommunications infrastructure on campus must involve the full participation of the faculty. And, since such decisions will have a profound impact on the quality of the community in which students receive their education, every effort should be made to include student input in the decision making process.

The Problem of Access to DL Technology and Personnel: Who Gets Access to What? As DL facilities become available on campus, there will arise a number of issues involving access and availability. We will need to establish a means of selecting those faculty, discipline areas, courses, and students who will be able to make use of the limited facilities available.

For example, a group of physics students wants access to a Magnetism class originating from Stanford. This class is offered at the same hour as another course on Political Theory that comes from Berkeley. Furthermore, if it is decided that the Magnetism class will be offered through the DL classroom, will the physics faculty at HSU be expected to help HSU students with problems on work that originates from the Stanford course, or will students be expected to consult only with the actual teacher of the course from Stanford? Some of these decisions may be dictated to us from Long Beach (for example, scheduling of the CSU Net), but others will be local decisions.

Or, by what criteria will we decide which faculty get access to the DL classrooms for originating classes or for establishing collaborative courses/programs? This will include not only the main DL classrooms equipped with 2-way video, but eventually classrooms equipped with fiber optic networking and computer projection capabilities. It is clear, for example, that certain disciplines (e.g., CIS or Business) absolutely must have access to computing equipment, including the fiber optic technology that makes much advanced DL possible. For other disciplines (e.g., Ethnic Studies or History) technology may not play such an indispensable role, but students and faculty who work in these areas will also benefit by access to technology. How do we measure the technological needs of one program against another in order to guarantee that all programs have a fair share of the resources necessary to deliver quality modern instruction?

Similarly, there are problems involving how DL courses will first be offered. For example, if a class with a large on-campus enrollment is to be offered as a DL course, certain adjustments

would be required. Its on-campus enrollment could be lowered in order to accommodate the number of students who are enrolled at distant sites. But this would have a negative impact on traditional HSU students. A faculty member could do an additional section as an overload, but this would mean building DL on the backs of the faculty. Otherwise, additional allocation would have to come from the college dean or from the central administration in order to accommodate the additional section. How are such decisions to be made?

Finally, we might reflect on the problem of how we encourage faculty to develop DL courses. When the development of new DL courses might put pressure on limited DL resources. We need to be careful not to allow those who first develop DL courses to monopolize the facilities. But we must also be watchful that the proliferation of DL offerings not supplant those who have developed effective courses and programs from regular access to the facilities they need to deliver them. The difficulty of this problem is not to be underestimated.

Problem of Course Articulation with other Institutions. When students take a course on the HSU campus that is offered remotely from another campus, certain problems of articulation might arise. For example, whether a course taken from another institution in a student's major area will articulate neatly into the major program on this campus is by no means clear, and, thus, into to CIS at another school might not do the same things that we do with into to CIS here. This is not a new problem, strictly speaking, since problems of articulation arise now for a variety of reasons. But the ease with which students are able to acquire course credit from other schools might require us to formulate our policies more clearly as regards specifically the acquisition of credit from remote institutions.

Centralization vs. Decentralization. The problems of infrastructure and access are both related to the structure of decision making on campus and throughout the CSU. HSU has a history and tradition of decentralized power, whereby many decisions involving the curriculum, computing, and the allocation of resources generally have been within the domain of the colleges. This has certainly had both positive and negative consequences. Considering especially the expense of mounting DL programs and the need to avoid duplication and non-coordination of resources, ways of centralizing some aspects of DL on campus must certainly be considered. Moreover, as DL programs expand across the CSU system, we will need increasingly to coordinate our efforts with other campuses within the system, so that students can deal with problems of registration and degree requirements with a minimum of complications. There are no simple solutions here, but if DL programs are to be successful, we will have to facilitate collaboration and coordination among administrative units at every level.

The Problem of Virtual Communities. HSU has long prided itself on being a residential campus that offers close contact between faculty and students. While DL offers us the capability of reaching out to a wider world, and while DL can offer quality education to people who are removed from people they want to study with, we must remain ever mindful that human beings learn together in real-time flesh and blood encounters. We must be mindful, therefore, that DL programs at HSU should be *suppative* of the traditional curriculum, and that they never serve to deprive this university of its institutional character.

Peer and Student Evaluation of Faculty, and Outcomes Assessment. We do not anticipate that there are any special problems associated with the evaluation of faculty and courses in DL programs that would not be associated with normal courses. There will be, of course, certain technical questions, such as how to insure confidentiality and full participation of all students involved in a distance course. But these are matters of book-keeping rather than issues that reflect seriously on any theoretical differences in assessment between traditional and distance classes. However, should problems in assessment arise, they should be addressed in the periodic review recommended below.



A Proposal for Monitoring Distance Learning Programs at HSU.

Given the complex and unpredictable implications of DL programs for the university and its curriculum, we believe that it is premature to erect a body of policies that will shape and limit DL in the future. Instead, we suggest that all DL courses and programs be monitored closely over the next few years to ensure that advances in educational technology enhance the quality of our offerings.

Towards this end, we suggest that the UCC be designated as the body responsible for oversight and review of educational quality in distance learning programs at HSU, subject to the following provisions:

1. The responsibilities of the UCC as regards distance learning are not to include any new policy making authority, but merely to organize and facilitate deliberations about the impact of distance learning on the HSU community as a whole.

2. The responsibilities of the UCC as regards distance learning should include:

a. Solicitation of input from various sectors of the campus community on matters involving distance learning.

b. Review of distance learning courses and programs offered from or received on the HSU campus. Such courses and programs should be reviewed both before and after they are first offered using HSU facilities, especially to insure that conversations about distance learning among faculty, students, and staff can enhance our understanding of distance learning within our community of scholars.

c. Regular and timely reports to the Academic Vice-President, the Dean for Undergraduate Studies, and the Academic Senate (Educational Policies) about the state of distance learning on the HSU Campus, including any recommendations for the institution of policies involving distance learning.