NORCO
COLLEGE

*D*ISTANCE *E*DUCATION *P*LAN

Norco Senate Distance Education Committee
5/21/2014

DISTANCE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The Distance Education Committee was formed as a standing committee of the Norco Academic Senate in Fall 2012. Interested faculty, administrators and staff met as a committee for the first time on September 19, 2012.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Distance Education Committee develops guidelines for distance education courses and recommends to the Senate policies and procedures for distance education training of faculty and students. The committee advises strategic planning committees on institutional needs and best practices for distance education.

MEMBERSHIP

Deborah Tompsett-Makin, Chair, Professor of Political Science
Carol Farrar, Co-Chair, Dean of Instruction
Melissa Bader, Associate Professor, English
Sharon Crasnow, Professor of Philosophy
Vivian Harris, Assistant Professor, Library Services
Marissa Iliscupidez, Counseling
Lyn Greene, Associate Professor, Political Science, President of the Academic Senate
Gail Zwart, Professor, Business Administration
Abbey Eddy, Associated Students, Norco College

INTRODUCTION

In 2010, a Sloan Consortium poll reported that one half of all students in higher education said they would *like* to enroll in online courses. This can be taken as a contrast between the current state of distance education enrollment (30%) and an upper potential student demand (50%). Thus, the demand for distance education may continue until approximately *half* of all classes in higher education are offered in a distance education mode.

Distance education offerings have become the focus of both the federal and state government as well as the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges. For a recent example, all require some form of regular, effective and substantive contact between the instructor and the students, as individuals or as a group. *(See Appendix for Best Practices Documents and Regulations on Distance Education.)*

For Title 5 §55204, focusing on **Course Standards**, the section addresses the subject of instructor contact:

> In addition to the requirements of section §55002 and any locally established requirements applicable to all courses, district governing boards shall ensure that:
>
> > (a) Any portion of a course conducted through distance education includes *regular effective contact between instructor and students, through group or individual meetings*, orientation and review sessions, supplemental seminar or study sessions, field trips, library workshops, telephone contact, correspondence, voice mail, e-mail, or other activities. Regular effective contact is an academic and professional matter pursuant to sections 53200 et seq.

In response to this renewed focus of government and college accrediting bodies and even more so to align distance education with the college's goal of strengthening student learning, Norco College has undertaken the effort to provide our diverse community of students with an excellent online experience while helping them achieve their educational goals. To steer that effort to success, Norco College has put together a team of administrators, faculty, staff and students dedicated to developing a plan of action and implementation.

HISTORY OF DISTANCE EDUCATION AT NORCO COLLEGE

The history of distance education at Norco College dates back to the opening of Norco Campus in April 1991. Since the 1970s, well before the advent of online education, Riverside Community College District had been offering distance education classes. These early DE classes were only offered in video (telecourses) and radio formats. After Moreno Valley and Norco Campuses opened officially, faculty choosing to teach at the two satellite campuses continued to provide the telecourse instruction they had already taken on when they were still sited at the Riverside Campus.[1] After Norco College was accredited in January 2010, the Schedule of Classes began to reflect the "ownership" by Norco College of all online course sections taught by Norco faculty.

In 1999, RCCD began offering the first online courses, and the distance/online education program has been expanding every year since that time. Beginning with a single instructor and two classes in spring 1999, the District colleges, through the district-wide coordination of Open Campus, now offer more than 300 online sections of more than 156 different courses each semester. According to the *RCCD Online Factbook 2012*, "…in line with the national trend, currently, nearly 30% of RCCD students take at least one online course. Open Campus sections alone (fully online and hybrid courses) account for nearly 15% of all instructional activity in the district." In Fall 2012, approximately 20% of all classes offered at Norco College were online or hybrid with a DE course offering of 93 online sections. This is an increase from 86 sections in 2011. (Source: RCCD Open Campus Distance Education Fact Book 2013. pg. 16) Of all DE students at Norco College in 2012, 63% were enrolled in online courses and 37% were enrolled in hybrid courses. This is a decrease from 2011 when 69% were enrolled in online courses and 31% were enrolled in hybrid courses. (Source: RCCD Open Campus Distance Education Fact Book 2013. pg. 21)

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[1] By 1999, over 28 telecourses were offered, on average, every 18-week semester. This number dropped gradually until Spring 2009, when telecourse offerings were completely phased out by the District.

COURSE OFFERINGS

Online course instruction began in Spring 1999 with two online courses offered at Riverside Community College. By Fall Semester 1999 the number of online sections had increased to 14, with one section offered by Norco. A year later (Fall 2000) the number of online sections had increased to 37, and four of them were being taught by Norco faculty: art, CIS, math, and real estate.

Both online and hybrid courses were first offered in Spring 2001; web-enhanced (WE) face-to-face courses were introduced in Fall 2002.[2] From Fall 2001 to Spring 2004, the number of OL/HY courses offered in the District as a whole tripled, from 40 to 124 sections. In the first 5 years of online instruction, trained Norco Campus faculty regularly taught at least 20% of the total in a variety of disciplines, from math, English and CIS/Office Administration to real estate, sociology, art, music and philosophy. By Fall 2011, more than 14,000 students across the District were taking over 300 sections of online or hybrid courses, which accounted for "14% of the district total FTES for Fall 2011" and supported 92 FTEF (full-time equivalent faculty) (RCCD Online Factbook 2012).

DISTANCE EDUCATION TRAINING

In Summer 1998, the first cohort of 10 faculty finished a one-week summer course called the Online Teaching and Learning Academy, which trained faculty in the development of HTML pages for uploading lessons and in the functions and use of Web CT, the learning management system purchased for use by RCC. Ten more were trained during Winter term, and a total of 73 faculty district wide had received online training (10 per term) by Fall 2002. Sixty of that number began offering online classes in a variety of disciplines. It became clear from the exponential growth and high popularity of online classes that the District needed to speed up the training process for faculty wanting to teach online. (RCCD Online Factbook 2012).

In 2003 the original one-week Online Faculty Academy was restructured into a one-day Hybrid Academy with tutorials and additional support provided by the newly created Faculty Innovation Center, designed to assist online faculty with on-the-spot course analysis and technical assistance with a variety of problems, and workshop instruction in techniques to improve faculty expertise in the online environment. This one-day Hybrid Academy facilitated speedier online training of greater numbers of faculty. A series of online training "modules" was developed gradually until Fall 2009, when these modules, called the Online Blackboard Academy, became "fully online training which is mandatory for instructors who have not previously taught online" (Factbook 2012). Today prospective online instructors must complete the required modules in the Online Blackboard Academy, while additional help is provided by (1) District Open Campus staff; (2) Faculty Innovation Center personnel at each college; and (3) workshops and individual tutoring by a small group of Online Faculty Mentors at each college, who "provide support and guidance on the use of Bb 9.1 and best practices" to their colleagues (Factbook 2012).

The online instructor training also provides critical support and strategies to ensure all distance education courses, instructional materials, and resources are accessible to students with disabilities. "Both state and federal law require community colleges to operate all programs and activities in a manner which is accessible to qualified individuals with disabilities (also referred to in federal law as "qualified handicapped persons"). (29 U.S.C. § 794, 20 U.S.C. § 1405, 42 U.S.C. § 12101, Gov. Code § 11135.) The operative federal laws referenced above are commonly referred to as Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. (29 U.S.C. § 794, 42 U.S.C. § 12101.)" Furthermore, "the California Board of Governors has adopted Title 5 regulations setting forth the general requirements applicable to the requirements specific to distance education courses (section 55370 et seq.). Section 55370 expressly states that the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act are applicable to distance education courses." ("Distance Education Accessibility Guidelines for Students with Disabilities", Distance Education Accessibility Task Force, 2011.)

Distance Education falls within the Mission Statement of both the District and Norco College, providing unique opportunities with an innovative approach to learning for our communities.

Norco College Mission Statement

Norco College serves our students, our community, and its workforce by providing educational opportunities, celebrating diversity, and promoting collaboration. We encourage an inclusive, innovative approach to learning and the creative application of emerging technologies. We provide foundational skills and pathways to transfer, career and technical education, certificates and degrees.

Norco College Vision Statement

Norco College—creating opportunities to transform our student and community for the dynamic challenges of tomorrow.

Norco Distance Education Committee (DEC) Mission Statement

The mission of the Distance Education Committee is to recommend policies, procedures, and distance education training in order to institutionalize best practices of a quality distance learning environment at Norco College.

RCCD Mission Statement

Riverside Community College District is dedicated to the success of its students and to the development of the communities it serves. By facilitating its Colleges and learning centers to provide educational and student services, it meets the needs and expectations of its unique communities of learners. The District provides the Colleges with leadership in the areas of advocacy, resource stewardship, and planning.

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[2] Definitions of online, hybrid and web-enhanced distance education modalities can be found on page of this report.

DISTANCE EDUCATION FALL 2013

Open Campus: Purpose and Structure

Open Campus is a Riverside Community College District Structure that serves the three colleges and their students by providing information and resources for online, hybrid and web-enhanced courses for the 30,000 students attending courses on the three campuses.

The stated purpose of Open Campus is to facilitate learning at a distance[3]. Open Campus provides the following in support of distance education:

- Educational technology to the colleges, faculty, and students
- Facilitation of training for students and faculty
- Expertise and experience in management, production, and problem solving

For Students…

An online skills workshop is provided for students using WebAdvisor as the portal. Students can also access a full range of tutorials on each segment of Blackboard from a "Sample Class" link on the Open Campus login screen for Blackboard. They can access short tutorials that show them everything from logging in to taking tests to finding their grades. They are short, simple and accessible 24 hours per day.

For Faculty…

Given the popularity of online classes, Open Campus shifted from direct training to a "performance support" approach. Rather than focusing on the activity of training, a performance support model focuses on the end goal of successful performance. Performance support models decrease training time via *just-in-time* support materials such as tutorials, job aids, and targeted post-training one-on-one "mini-tutorials". Using this approach, the training was revised into a day-long *Hybrid Academy*. As a result, the number of faculty trained to teach technology-mediated courses increased, as did the number of post-training visits by faculty to the district's Faculty Innovation Center.

Since then, more changes have occurred and faculty development has two components. The first is a set of training modules, known as Online Blackboard Academy (OBA). This fully-online training which is mandatory for instructors who have not previously taught online, began in June 2009 and since then, approximately 360 full time and associate faculty have participated in the training. The Academies take place monthly throughout the term. In addition to the OBA, each college has a number of "Online Faculty Mentors" who have received specialized training and information about Blackboard. These individuals are available on a limited basis to faculty peers to provide support and guidance on the use of Bb 9.1 and best practices. Additionally, the Open Campus staff is available to assist faculty with course set up issues.

Assistance for students and faculty….

RCCD, in tandem with the California Community College System Office, provides four layers of help and support for faculty and students involved in technology-mediated classes:

- A phone and Internet-based help system, outsourced to a company called **Blackboard Student Services**, formerly Presidium, that offers help desk services to students and faculty, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.
  - Answers over 200 calls per month.
  - 80% first-call problem resolution rate.
  - Two-thirds of all calls come during hours when the district's help desk is closed.

- A **District Help Desk** whose personnel are trained to serve as a second "escalation layer" should help desk problems exceed the capabilities of Blackboard Student Services staff.

- **Open Campus employees** who serve as a third "escalation layer" should district help desk staff be unable to resolve student or faculty concerns.

- On rare occasions, the problem proves to be with the Blackboard software itself, whereupon Open Campus staff coordinate with Blackboard for problem resolution.

Open Campus Staffing

The staff of Open Campus is relatively small consisting of 4 full-time members and one half-time member. The District Director of Distance Education is responsible for day-to-day operation of Open Campus. The Director reports to the Associate Vice Chancellor of Educational Services.

One Analyst/Programmer is responsible for the Open Campus website which serves as the portal to the learning management system and its associated computer infrastructure. Two Distance Educational Support Specialists maintain the infrastructure for Blackboard 9.1, the district's learning management system for distance education. One half-time Administrative Assistant to the District Director is provided.

[3] Open Campus Factbook 2012, p. 11.

ONLINE STUDENT SERVICES

Counseling

Currently students request their online counseling appointments via WebAdvisor. Thirty minute synchronous online counseling appointments are available for student enrolled in distance education courses. Counseling is facilitated in a chat format using Blackboard.

Students can ask questions and request a student educational plan. If a student educational plan is completed for the student, a PDF of the hard copy of the student educational plan is emailed to the student after the appointment.

Counseling is looking at various software packages that facilitate fuller services for both the counselor and the student. RCCD has purchased Adobe Connect and can be used for Online Counseling. Adobe Connect, or comparable platform, would allow the student and counselor to connect online in a more engaging format. Adobe Connect can provide the opportunity for Counselors to use the following features in an online counseling session: Videoconferencing, Audio capabilities, Desktop sharing, and File Sharing.

As of Fall 2013, Counseling is using Blackboard through Open Campus for online counseling but plans to pilot online counseling appointments using Adobe Connect in the near future.

Financial Aid

Students can apply for financial aid using the FAFSA online. Students are able to view their financial aid award letter and required documents by year through WebAdvisor. Financial Aid forms are available to download but must be submitted in person.

Petitions and Forms

Matriculation forms and petitions are only available in hard copy format in Counseling and may only be submitted in person

Some forms are downloadable but must be submitted in person to the appropriate department.

Application for Graduation is completed online via WebAdvisor

Admissions and Records

Students apply to Norco College via CCC Apply. Students can schedule their assessment appointment online but must come in person to complete the assessment exam. The orientation and first semester education plan is completed online via WebAdvisor. Registration, payment of fees and parking pass, transcript requests are completed online via WebAdvisor.

Information regarding the application process, important deadlines, and Frequently Asked Questions are published on A&R's website.

Students can access WebAdvisor for online registration for classes, all dates, adding classes, dropping classes and finding real-time all open classes available for the semester. They are also able to do online payment of tuition and fees.
WebAdvisor provides students access to student email. Students can access their grades, fill out and submit transcript requests and enrollment verifications.

Transfer Center

The Transfer Center's website provides information on transfer requirements, AA-T/AS-T degrees, and open campus events. Transfer Center Services that are provided on campus but NOT offered online are University Representative appointments and Transfer Workshops.

Special Programs

Disability Resource Center (DRC) - Distance education students with a documented disability may be eligible for academic accommodations through the DRC. Students must first complete the intake process with DRC staff in order to access approved accommodations and services. Students can contact the DRC via email: drc@norcocollege.edu or by phone at (951) 372-7070.

ONLINE LIBRARY SERVICES

Live chat reference service with an academic librarian is available 24 hours a day to provide ongoing instruction and support for library users. Distance education students, as well as all other Norco College students and faculty, may access the online reference librarian service on site or remotely during both open and closed hours including holidays. This service can be accessed from the library's homepage.

The library's website is accessible from any computer with Internet access (on or off campus). Books, ebooks, multimedia, and streaming video are available via the virtual library catalog (http://library.rcc.edu/norco/). More than 50 electronic subscription databases are available for library users (http://library.rcc.edu/norco/eresources.htm). Norco College students, faculty, and staff can access library databases remotely with an ID number and password.

Online library research guides (LibGuides) are also available on the library website. Library users can access the virtual research guides both on and off campus from any computer with internet access; no login is required (http://norco.rcc.libguides.com/index.php).

Faculty librarians can be reached via email at norcocollegelibrary@norcocollege.edu phone at (951) 372-7115 during operating library hours. LRC staff can be reached at (951) 739-7896 or lrc@norcocollege.edu.

Net Tutor

Distance education students who are enrolled in online and hybrid courses have access to the NetTutor Online Tutoring Service through a direct link in the Blackboard learning management system. This service enables students to enter a live NetTutor session (where they are tutored one-on-one), submit a question to the mail center, and come back later for the tutor's response; or upload a paper and come back later for the tutor's feedback. Tutors do NOT give out answers, but emphasize the Socratic Method to solve problems. These subject matter specialists hold Bachelor's Degrees (many hold Master's and PhD's) and have extensive teaching/tutoring experience in their fields of expertise. NetTutor tutors are trained in best practices, as well as learning theory, and seek to provide a customized tutoring experience to help students succeed. They also offer a published faculty guide and regular webinar opportunities to help inform, instruct, and train faculty how to efficiently and effectively maximize the service to benefit their distance education students.

NORCO DISTANCE EDUCATION EFFICIENCY

Distance Education sections include online and hybrid courses. Norco College has maintained a consistently higher efficiency rate in all modes of instruction than the District for the 2010--2012 period. Norco efficiency rates for hybrid courses are much higher than online courses. Online efficiency rates in 2012 (547.26) have declined from 2011 levels of 604.73. Hybrid efficiency has also declined from 668.55 to 609.19 . All instructional modes at Norco College are above the state efficiency level of 525. (See chart below)

Norco / District Distance Education Efficiency

Course mode	Norco 2012	District 2012	Norco 2011	District 2011	Norco 2010	District 2010
Online	547.26	511.73	604.73	545.72	595.24	575.34
Hybrid	609.19	572.33	668.55	564.93	613.37	545.36
Face to Face	676.37	556.35	663.86	544.97	707.18	562.42

(Source: RCCD Open Campus Distance Education Fact Book 2013. pgs 31-32.)

NORCO DISTANCE EDUCATION SUCCESS AND RETENTION RATES

Success Rates

Hybrid (Blended) Distance Education success rates (57.38%)for the 2012 academic year declined from the previous 2011 academic year (60.55%). The 2012 rate however was higher than the 2010 rate (54.36). The hybrid success rates remain lower than face-to-face lecture rates (70.38%) in 2012. Online, hybrid and face-to-face rates continue to remain higher than district rates. (See chart below)

Norco /District Success Rates*

Course Mode	Norco 2012	District 2012	Norco 2011	District 2011	Norco 2010	District 2010
Hybrid	57.38	55.37	60.55	56.55	54.36	52.10
Online	58.06	56.43	55.77	54.48	56.10	53.94
Face to Face	70.93	69.23	69.04	67.73	68.40	67.74

*(Success represented in percent)
(Source: RCCD Open Campus Distance Education Fact Book 2013. Pgs. 35,37,42 and 44.)

Retention Rates

Hybrid (Blended) Distance Education retention rates for 2012 academic year strongly are higher (84.89%) than the previous 2011 academic year (82.58%). Hybrid retention rates remain lower than face-to-face rates, but are higher than 2012 district retention rates for all course modes. Norco hybrid (blended) retention rates for 2010-2012 academic years show a continuing increase from 79.22--84.89%. Online Distance Education retention rates are lower (80.30%) than hybrid retention rates and face-to-face retention rates (86.81%). However, online retention rates have increased from the 2011 level of 77.10%. Norco hybrid and online retention rates continue to be at higher levels than district rates. (See chart below)

Norco/District Retention Rates*

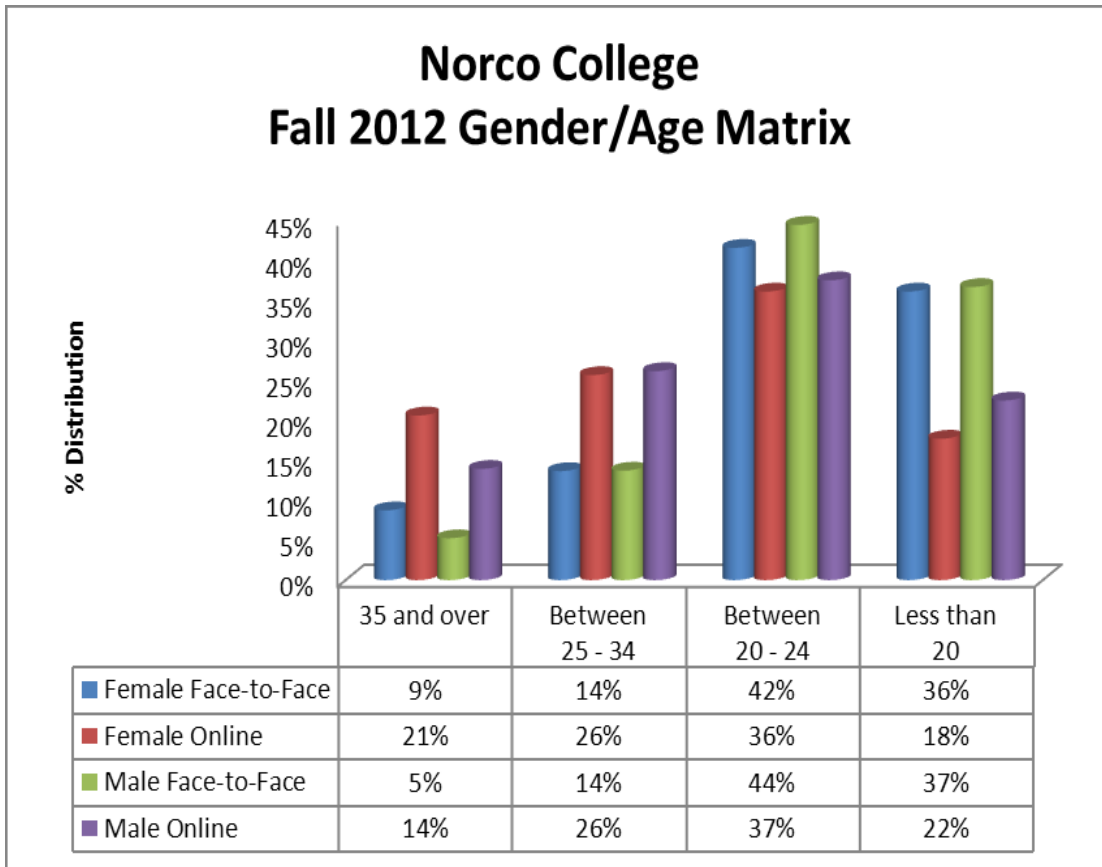| Course Mode	Norco 2012	District 2012	Norco 2011	District 2011	Norco 2010	District 2010
Hybrid	84.89	80.19	82.58	78.94	79.22	78.28
Online	80.30	79.15	77.10	75.85	79.96	76.50
Face to Face	86.81	85.83	84.93	83.99	85.29	84.79

*(Retention represented in percent)
(Source: RCCD Open Campus Distance Education Fact Book 2013. Pgs. 36,38,43,and 44)
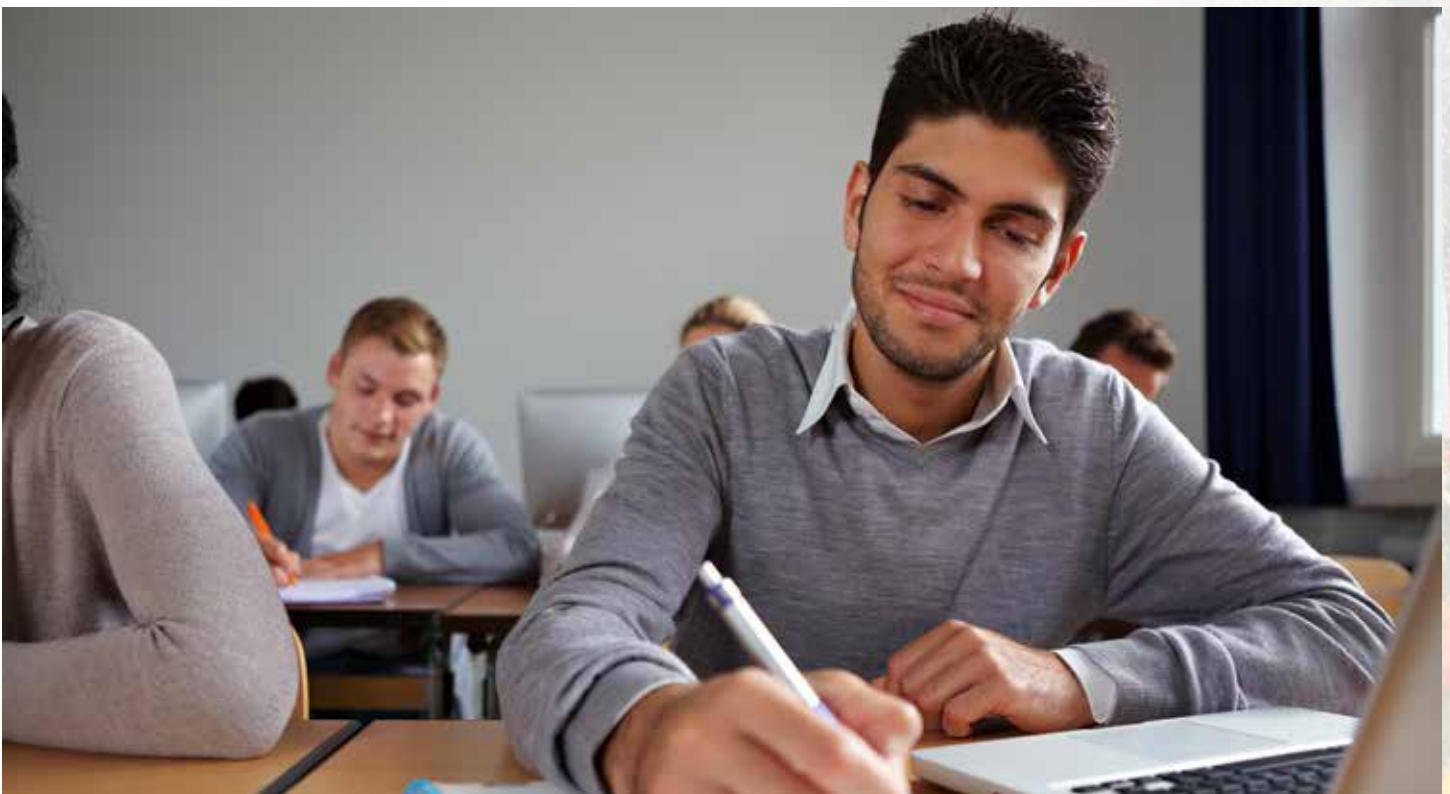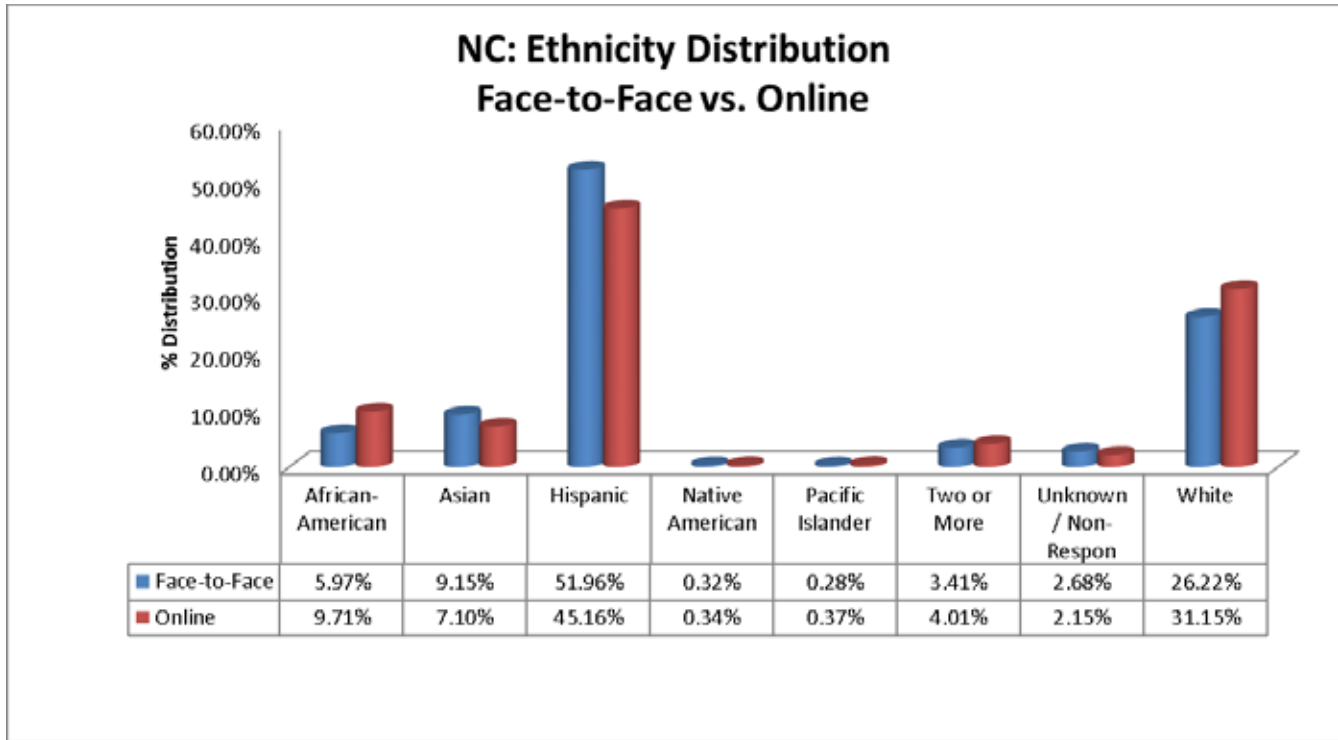
DEMOGRAPHICS

Norco demographic data help to inform the faculty and staff of the student population served through Distance Education.

Norco Distance Education Gender/Age Distribution

Norco College
Fall 2012 Gender/Age Matrix

	35 and over	Between 25 - 34	Between 20 - 24	Less than 20
■ Female Face-to-Face	9%	14%	42%	36%
■ Female Online	21%	26%	36%	18%
■ Male Face-to-Face	5%	14%	44%	37%
■ Male Online	14%	26%	37%	22%

(Source: RCCD Open Campus Distance Education Fact Book 2013.pg. 60.)

Norco College Distance Education Ethnicity Distribution

NC: Ethnicity Distribution
Face-to-Face vs. Online

	African-American	Asian	Hispanic	Native American	Pacific Islander	Two or More	Unknown / Non-Respon	White
■ Face-to-Face	5.97%	9.15%	51.96%	0.32%	0.28%	3.41%	2.68%	26.22%
■ Online	9.71%	7.10%	45.16%	0.34%	0.37%	4.01%	2.15%	31.15%

(Source: RCCD Open Campus Distance Education Fact Book 2013.pg. 66.)

DEFINITIONS

Face-to-face courses

This term refers to the traditional "on ground" or "brick and mortar" classes held at colleges and universities throughout the country. Both faculty and students come to the college where the class is held according to set day(s) and times for meeting.

Web-enhanced courses

In recent years, some face-to-face courses have incorporated the use of instructional materials, resources, and assignments that require the use of the Internet. In effect, this is the modern-day version of sending a student to the library to do research, study, or complete assignments with the exception that these activities are spent in "cyber space" and not in a physical classroom. No seat time is replaced in a web-enhanced class; instead, the instruction has been supplemented by the use of the Internet.

Online courses

Online courses may take two different forms.
- Fully-online courses: In these courses, the instruction is delivered fully online in a manner in which the faculty and students may not be required to report to a physical locale for any part of the course.

- Hybrid courses: In these courses, some percent of the course is replaced by instruction which is delivered fully online and the remaining percentage is delivered in a face-to-face environment.

Note: *For the purposes of this report "online" refers to both fully-online and hybrid courses, unless otherwise noted. All online courses (fully online or hybrid) require separate curriculum committee approval. The three colleges schedule and staff all courses including online courses. The distance education office, known as Open Campus, provides training, assistance, and facilitates the offering of the courses.*

PLAN PURPOSE AND GOALS

GOAL 1: To help improve DE student persistence, retention and success, expand online student support services.

1.1 Enhance the online orientation to assist DE students with access to:
- online student services
- online instructional services
- technical support services
- tutorial services
- online library resources

1.2 Develop an online student tutorial for Blackboard use.
- Includes a readiness assessment

GOAL 2: Provide initial and ongoing professional development and mentoring to support effective online teaching and student support.

2.1 In the area of faculty professional development, develop a tiered approach to faculty training to match faculty needs.
- Software best practices
- Compliance best practices
- Advanced Online Academy
- Develop a distance learning best practices manual for faculty use.

2.2 In the area of staff professional development, develop a tiered approach to staff training to meet staff needs.
- Software training to support the student services, library services and tutoring services areas.
- Compliance training

2.3 Expand the online expert mentoring system.
- Expand support for instructional faculty.
- Expand support for student services and library staff.
- Develop online modules to support mentors.

GOAL 3: Develop a regular procedure for assessment of the DE program to stimulate improvement over time.

3.1 A student survey
3.2 An instructor survey
3.3 Work with NAC committee to confirm assessment of DE courses

IMPLEMENTATION GRID AND TIMELINE

GOAL 1: To help improve DE student persistence, retention and success, expand online student support services.		
Objective	**Activities**	**Timeframe**
Develop an online orientation	Access to student services. Access to online instructional services: login, assessment. Access to technical support services. Access to tutorial services. Access to library services.	Spring 2015
Develop an online student readiness assessment for Blackboard skills.	Check open campus skills workshop	Completed

GOAL 2: Provide initial and ongoing professional development to support effective online teaching and student support.		
Objective	**Activities**	**Timeframe**
Using our Professional Development structure, develop a tiered approach to faculty training to match faculty needs.	Software best practices; compliance best practices, Advanced Online Academy (See Appendix)	Completed 2013
Develop a distance learning handbook for faculty use.	Include district distance education materials	2014-2015
In the area of professional development, develop a tiered approach to training to meet needs.	Software training to support student services, library services, instructional, and tutoring services areas. Compliance training.	2014-2016
Succession planning of the online expert mentoring system.	Maintain support for instructional faculty. Expand support for student services and library staff. Develop online modules to support mentors.	2014-2018

GOAL 3: Develop a regular procedure for assessment of the DE program to stimulate improvement over time.		
Objective	**Activities**	**Timeframe**
Student assessment of program	Survey	Spring 2014
Instructor assessment of program	Survey	Spring 2014
Staff assessment of program	Survey	Spring 2014
Confirm DE Course Assessment	Coordination with NAC	Spring 2014

MAPPING DISTANCE EDUCATION GOALS TO THE STRATEGIC PLAN

	Increase student achievement and success	Improve the quality of student life	Increase student access	Create effective community partnerships	Strengthen student learning	Demonstrate effective planning processes	Strengthen our commitment to our employees
To help improve distance education student persistence, retention and success	X		X		X		
Provide initial and ongoing professional development and mentoring to support effective online teaching and student support	X		X		X		X
Develop a college-based center to implement, maintain and expand the success of distance education	X		X		X		X
Develop a regular procedure for assessment of the DE program to stimulate improvement over time	X		X		X	X	

THE FUTURE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION AT NORCO COLLEGE

The Norco Distance Education Committee came into being because the committee for Student Success recommended the formation of such a committee to the Academic Senate. The primary motivation for the committee's existence is student success, and thus has been a primary motivation for the development of the Distance Education plan.

Distance Education at Norco College will continue to grow to meet student needs for school, family and work. Pressures from the federal and state governments to provide distance education via menus dictating size, scope and delivery are on the horizon. Institutions that include Distance Education as a means of serving their student populations, as Norco College does, will need to stay abreast of changes in requirements and the needs of the students they serve. It is the job of higher education institutions to maintain the distance education environment and aim for student success: persistence, retention and most importantly successful student learning.

In an effort to create an environment of student success, the Distance Education Committee (DEC) has developed a plan that will help improve distance education today and assess and improve distance education for the future at this college. Many of the goals, indicated in the above document, would

be accomplished with the assistance of the Norco Technology Committee and are embedded in the Norco Strategic Planning Goals and Objectives for Norco College as mapped above. The mapping of the college's strategic planning goals and objectives supports mutual cooperation with the Norco Assessment committee as well. As we work towards achieving these goals, the DEC committee will explore the possibility of a faculty position supporting DE: a DE coordinator. We are aware that many colleges with strong Distance Education programs have such a position. The question of whether a dedicated space or center would best support faculty and students engaged in Distance Education will be addressed by the committee and administration in the future.

Distance education infrastructure is currently the responsibility of the District. Within the current structure, Norco faculty, staff and students need to work within that structure in order to create and participate in a learning experience that uses best practices in delivery and presentation. Increasing opportunities for faculty participating in Distance Education to communicate their concerns and successes in our current environment seems like a natural first step in this process. We have learned a lot in the many years that we have been engaged in Distance Education and the DEC will work to create a community in which that knowledge can be shared and expanded. Responsibilities rest with all participants to make the learning experience as technologically seamless yet academically rigorous as possible.

RCCD GUIDE TO RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICES IN DISTANCE EDUCATION (DE)

Definitions of Terms

Instructor-Initiated Interactions:
Unlike correspondence education, in which students are responsible for initiating contact with the instructor, instructors using DE are required to actively initiate interaction with their students as a group and individually.

Frequent and Timely, i.e., Regular Contact/Interactions:
The measure of "regular contact" is based on a standard that is at least the same as it would be in a traditional face-to-face class. Instructors may exceed this minimum at their discretion. The number of asynchronous or synchronous hours that an instructor is available to students enrolled in a DE class must be at least equal to the number of hours of availability as required for face-to-face classes of the same courses. Instructor contact with DE students is understood as distributed over the course of the "instructional week" (seven days) and the term of the course (expressed in weeks). Instructor-initiated contact will occur as often as appropriate for regular contact, as defined by regulation.

Effective/Substantive Contact/Interactions:
Effective/substantive contact with students and delivery of course content includes instructor interaction with the entire group of students in the course section based on a well-defined schedule of availability, deadlines, feedback, and exchanges that are included in the instructor's Syllabus. Instructors define their schedules in the Syllabus and in other appropriate locations within the course management system.

Course sections taught using DE are considered the virtual equivalent of face-to-face classes, although many online or hybrid course sections may exceed the minimum requirements of the Course Outline of Record (COR) with effective use of current technologies inherent in the mode of delivery. Based on the notion that "a student cannot hide in the back of the room" in an online or hybrid class, effective/substantive contact between students and the instructor is, in many cases, more likely in an online class than in a traditional lecture room.

Examples of Recommended Best Practices for Achieving Regular Contact (Interaction) for Distance Education Course Sections

Note from the DCC: This list of Best Practices should be reviewed carefully and edited in the initial review process.

Means of achieving "regular" contact include, but are not limited to:

- Threaded discussion forums with regular and appropriate instructor participation based on course topics and specific content of the course addressed to all students and/or to individuals publicly.

- E-mail and/or messages within the course management system.
- Regular "Announcements" posted in the class.
- Regular deadlines, distributed throughout the term of the course, for assignments and other student participation.
- Regular, timely, appropriate feedback and evaluations of student work.
- Virtual online office hours in real time, such as chat, during announced periods of time, and/or asynchronously during announced days and hours.
- Instructor-prepared online e-lectures, podcasts or other forms of addressing course content and topics, presented in an appropriate format for the subject, such as written documents, audio and/or video files, and/or introductions and explanations for any publisher created materials (written, audio and/or video, etc.) that, combined with other course materials, creates the "virtual equivalent" of the face-to-face class.
- Instructor-prepared Syllabus, specific to each distance education course section, to document how regular contact between the students and the instructor is achieved.
- Guidelines for frequency of contact at least equivalent to contact in face-to-face classrooms.
- Defined response time for student questions and assignment feedback.
- Establishing an active presence in the class.
- Frequent and substantive feedback throughout the course.
- Course policies defining regarding student-initiated contact, such as, where to post questions certain types of questions, in the instructor's Syllabus.
- Assignments and assessment deadlines that are spread throughout the term of the class.

In Case of Interrupted, Regular Contact:

Interruptions in instructor contact as defined by the instructor's Syllabus (such as illness or an emergency that takes the instructor offline) require notification to students via class announcement, email, and/or Discussion Board, or another course tool, stating the duration of the interruption. In the event that "regular" contact cannot be resumed according to the definitions of regular contact on the Syllabus, the Dean of Instruction should be notified.

Examples of Recommended Best Practices for Achieving Effective/Substantive Contact (Interaction) in Distance Education Course Sections

Means of achieving "effective/substantive contact" include, but are not limited to:

- Instructor-guided introductions, especially at the beginning of the class, or at important intervals.
- Daily or weekly assignments and projects that promote collaboration among students.
- Questions posed on the discussion board that encourage critical thinking skills and promote interaction among all course participants.
- Regular participation by the instructor in discussion activities with students, perhaps to provide a summary, to

correct errors of fact, to keep the discussion on topic, and/or to add expertise to the content of the discussion.
- Monitoring student interaction and activity to ensure that they participate fully.
- Create a specific forum for questions regarding course content.
- Asking students for feedback about the course on a regular basis and revising the content as needed to address issues identified.
- Varied types of interaction, such as instructor-student, student-student, student-content, and student-instructor, and other interaction between and among the students and the instructor as part of the course design.

Other Suggested Options for Communications with Students

1. Optional Synchronous Interaction
By utilizing available technologies, such as Blackboard Collaborate or CCC Confer, DE instructors can maximize face-to-face, synchronous interaction with students, if needed, to achieve the objectives of the course. CCC Confer is a web conferencing tool that is free to the California Community College System (http://www.cccconfer.org). Contact your college Instructional Media Center for assistance with implementing this technology. Contact Open Campus for assistance with implementing Blackboard Collaborate.

2. Examples of vital or essential Standards of Regular, Effective/Substantive Contract within a Course (these are all suggestion for the type of information that make expectations clear):

Regular Contact:
Example of an email statement indicating an estimated time for response to student emails:
- "Your instructor will respond to emails within 48 hours. Emails received after noon on Friday will not be responded to until Monday morning"
Example of a feedback expectation statement:
- "Assignments are due on Sunday night at 10 pm. Your instructor will begin grading them on Monday and all grades will be posted by Wednesday evening"
Example of a discussion board post expectation:
- "Your instructor will respond to discussion board questions within 48 hours. Questions posted after Friday at 12 pm will not be responded to until Monday morning."

Effective/Substantive Contact:
Example of an email statement to correct an error of fact or comprehension:
- "The point you made in the last discussion post was accurate, but the dates of the conflict were slightly later, perhaps around 1776. Read the earlier posts of the first group to get a better sense of the issues surrounding the conflict and the time period required for completion of the war."

APPENDIX

[1.] RCCD Guide to Recommended Best Practices to Achieve Regular and Effective/Substantive Contact in Distance Education Introduction

Regular and effective/substantive contact, as described in the accompanying [1.] *Summary of Regulations* document, is required as outlined in those regulations for in all course sections taught using Distance Education (DE) within the Riverside Community College District, that is, any course section where "seat time" is replaced by other forms of contact with students, including completely online and hybrid course sections. The tools described below represent examples of practices compiled by DE faculty at all three colleges that achieve regular and effective contact. Faculty are encouraged to share with each other new best practices as they develop in the future from available technologies.

RCCD recommends that DE instructors use the ideas contained here, or others that are similar, to initiate and sustain contact with students, being mindful that all course materials must be ADA, section 508, compliant and pre-certified by the district through the curriculum approval process as being accessible to all students, including closed-captioning on video content, where appropriate, and other compliance requirements.

This best practices document was developed through collaboration with the District Curriculum Committee, the College Curriculum Committees, among other groups, including the RCCD Online Advisory Committee, college distance education committees, administrators, and Open Campus personnel.

The responsibility for constructing, maintaining and updating this list of best practices resides with the college curriculum committees, each a standing committee of the college Academic Senate. The college curriculum committees will review this document regularly and make recommendations to the Academic Senate as significant changes are required. The college curriculum committee is also responsible for assuring the public that the "same standards of course quality [are] applied to any portion of a course conducted through distance education as are applied to traditional classroom courses…" *from Title 5 §55202.*

Just a reminder: **"Correspondence Education is not Distance Education."**

In Correspondence Education, the institution provides instructional materials by mail or electronic transmission, including examinations on the materials to students who are separated from the instructor, and the following conditions also exist: (1) Interaction between the instructor and the students is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student. (2) The course is self-paced.

RIVERSIDE COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT SUMMARY OF REGULATIONS FOR REGULAR AND EFFECTIVE/SUBSTANTIVE CONTACT FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION

Code of Federal Regulations – Title 34: Education #602.3 Also adopted by the Accrediting Commission of Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC), *see ACCJC 2013 Guide, pp. 2-3.*

Definition of Correspondence Education
Correspondence Education (CE) means:
(1) Education provided through one or more courses by an institution under which the institution provides instructional materials, by mail or electronic transmission, including examinations on the materials, to students who are separated from the instructor;
(2) Interaction between the instructor and the student is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student;
(3) Correspondence courses are typically self-paced; and,
(4) Correspondence education is not distance education.

Definition of Distance Education (DE):
"Distance Education is defined, for the purpose of accreditation review, as a formal interaction which uses one or more technologies to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and which supports regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor, either synchronously or asynchronously. Distance education often incorporates technologies such as the internet: one-way and two-way transmission through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices; audio conferencing' or video cassettes, DVDs, CD-ROMS, in conjunction with any other technologies." *(ACCJC 2013 Guide, p. 2)*

The Commission (ACCJC) recognizes and embraces distance education as a convenient, flexible, and effective means of providing quality education. Many working students with multiple demands on their time find that distance education meets their needs better than campus-based education.

California Regulations:
California Code of Regulations, Title 5 and Chancellor's Office of the California Community Colleges, Distance Education Guidelines (2008)
Title 5 §55200. Definition and Application.
Distance education means instruction in which the instructor and student are separated by distance and interact through the assistance of communication technology. All distance education is subject to the general requirements of this chapter as well as the specific requirements of this article. In addition, instruction provided as distance education is subject to the requirements that may be imposed by the Americans with Disabilities Act (42

U.S.C. §12100 et seq.) and section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, (29 U.S.C. §794d).

CCCCO Guideline for Section §55200.
Ensuring that distance education courses, materials and resources are accessible to students with disabilities is a shared institutional responsibility. Faculty need to receive appropriate training in order to ensure that they understand what constitutes accessibility, and institutions must provide faculty with both the necessary training and resources to ensure accessibility. The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12100 et seq.), section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. Sec. 794d), and California Government Code section 11135 all require that accessibility for persons with disabilities be provided in the development, procurement, maintenance, or use of electronic or information technology by a community college district using any source of state funds. (See Legal Opinion M 03-09). Title 5, section 55200 explicitly makes these requirements applicable to all distance education offerings.

Title 5 §55202. Course Quality Standards.
The same standards of course quality shall be applied to any portion of a course conducted through distance education as are applied to traditional classroom courses, in regard to the course quality judgment made pursuant to the requirements of section 55002, and in regard to any local course quality determination or review process. Determinations and judgments about the quality of distance education under the course quality standards shall be made with the full involvement of faculty in accordance with the provisions of subchapter 2 (commencing with section 53200) of chapter 2. NOTE: Authority cited: Section 66700 and 70901, Education Code. References: Sections 70901 and 70902, Education Code.

CCCCO Guideline for Section §55202.
This section emphasizes the extent to which course quality depends upon the full involvement of faculty in the design and application of DE courses. It discusses course quality standards for distance education and combines language formerly found in sections 55207 and 55209 that it replaces. Language is added to clarify that normal course quality standards apply to any portion of a course conducted through distance education.

Title 5 §55204. Instructor Contact.
In addition to the requirements of section §55002 and any locally established requirements applicable to all courses, district governing boards shall ensure that:
(a) Any portion of a course conducted through distance education includes regular effective contact between instructor and students, through group or individual meetings, orientation and review sessions, supplemental seminar or study sessions, field trips, library workshops, telephone contact correspondence, voice mail, email, or other activities. Regular effective contact is an academic and professional matter pursuant to sections 53200 et seq.
(b) Any portion of a course provided through distance education is conducted consistent with guidelines issued by the Chancellor pursuant to section 409 of the Procedures and Standing Orders of the Board of Governors. NOTE: Authority cited: Sections 66700 and

70901, Education Code. Reference: Sections 70901 and 70902, Education Code.

CCCCO Guideline for Section §55204.
This section defines what contact must be maintained between instructor and student. It is virtually identical to section 55211 that it replaces, except that language has been added to clarify that rules related to conduct of distance education and effective instructor contact apply to any portion of a course conducted through distance education. Subdivision (a) stresses the responsibility of the instructor in a DE course to initiate regular contact with enrolled students to verify their participation and performance status. The use of the term "regular effective contact" in this context suggests that students should have frequent opportunities to ask questions and receive answers from the instructor of record.

The last published *Distance Education Guidelines*, March 2004, issued by the Chancellor pursuant to section 409 of the *Procedures and Standing Orders of the Board of Governors*, as referenced in subdivision (b), establishes the principle that for DE courses there are a number of acceptable interactions between instructor and student, not all of which may require in-person contact. Thus, districts and/or colleges will need to define "effective contact" including how often, and in what manner instructor-student interaction is achieved. It is important to document regular effective contact and how it is achieved. Since regular effective contact was declared an academic and professional matter, this documentation must include demonstration of collegial consultation with the academic senate, for example through its delegation to the local curriculum committee. A natural place for this to occur is during the separate course approval process (see section 55206) as well as during faculty evaluations, student surveys, and program review. Documentation should consist of the inclusion of information in applicable outlines of record on the type and frequency of interaction appropriate to each DE course/section or session. Local policies should establish and monitor minimum standards of regular effective contact.

Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC)—*ACCJC Guide to Evaluating Distance Education and Correspondence Education, June 2013 edition.*

Note: Some of the questions posed in the ACCJC Guide 2013 are addressed through these four RCCD/College documents [1 – 4]. Questions below are extracted as samples of the level of scrutiny the college needs to maintain to be compliant. Distance Education faculty are encouraged to read the ACCJC Guide 2013 in its entirety:

Standard I.B.1. Questions: What parties are involved in the institution's [ongoing, collegial, self-reflective] dialog about the continuous improvement of student learning through DE mode and how it compares with student learning in traditional programs? How is this dialog organized and communicated?

Standard I.B.3. Questions: Does the college have separate processes for the planning, approval, evaluation, and review of courses offered in DE mode…? …How are these processes integrated into the college's overall planning process? In the college knowledgeable about current federal regulations related to DE?

Standard I.B.7. Questions: What mechanism does the institution use to gather evidence about the effectiveness of DE learning programs and related student learning and support services? Are they different from the mechanisms applied for review of traditional programs and services? How effectively do evaluation processes and results contribute to improvement of DE programs, related library and other student support and learning services?

Standard II.A.1. Questions: How does the institution ensure that its DE programs and services are of high quality, comparable with the institution's face-to-face offering, and appropriate to an institution of higher education?

Standard II.A.1.a. Questions: Is there a policy that defines "regular and substantive interaction" for DE courses? (C.F.R. § 602.3)

Standard II.A.1.b. Questions:…Is the level of effectiveness for facilitating student learning different from traditional delivery modes?

Standard II.A.1.c. Questions: If the institution uses course materials developed outside the institution for its programs offered in DE format, how are these materials assessed, and how does the institution ensure that the academic standards are comparable with its other programs?

Standard II.A.2.a. Questions: What is the role of faculty and how is discipline expertise or teaching knowledge and expertise in the field of DE used for establishing the quality of these courses?

Standard II.A.1.b. Questions: Has the college established advisory committees with expertise in DE, and if so, what is their role?

Standard II.A.1c. Questions: What teaching methodologies are commonly used in DE programs? How are methodologies selected? Do faculty discuss the relationship between the selected teaching methodologies and student performance?

Standard II.A.1e. Questions: How does the college evaluate the effectiveness of its courses and programs offered in DE mode? Is the process similar to courses and program offered in traditional mode? What is the rationale?

Standard III.A.5. Questions: What professional development activities relevant for DE personnel does the institution support and/or provide? How does the institution determine the professional needs of it personnel involved in DE? What professional development programs on teaching and learning methodologies in DE does the institution provide?

DISTANCE EDUCATION STATEMENT

Method of Implementation:

Will appear in WebAdvisor as part of the Teaching Assignment (TA) Approval process for faculty who have accepted assignments offered through Distance Education.

First implementation will be Winter 2014. The statement will provide a link to the Summary document and RCCD Guide to Recommended Best Practices.

☐
I have read the *Summary of Regulations for Regular and Effective/Substantive Contact for Distance Education and the RCCD Guide to Recommended Best Practices to Achieve Regular and Effective/Substantive Contact in Distance Education* which clarify regular and effective/substantive contact with students for distance education courses.

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