Joint Meeting of the
District Distance Education Committee and DE Stakeholders
May 29, 2009 Meeting
Board Room, District Office

Present: David Beaulieu (President, DAS), Paul McKenna (ITV), Gary Colombo (Vice Chancellor), Jorge Mata (District), Ed Pardo (District), Joe Perrett (ISST, Co-Chair), Pamela Atkinson (City), Wendy Bass (East), Richard Moyer (VP, East), Bob Richards (Harbor), Alma Johnson-Hawkins (VP, Mission), David Jordan, (Mission), Michael Cooperman (Pierce), Mark Pracher (Pierce), James Hicks (Southwest), Linda Delzeit (Trade), Yasmin Delahoussaye (VP, Valley), Syed Hussain (Valley), Mark Lampert (Valley), Jim Marteney (Valley), Laurie Nalepa (Valley), Michelle Priest (Valley), Eric Ichon (West), Robert Sprague (VP, West).

1. The meeting was called to order at 9:40 AM.

2. David Beaulieu, President DAS welcomed the participants commenting that this was the first meeting of its kind, bringing together most of the District stakeholders in distance education together with the District Academic Senate. He spoke of the renewed interest by the Academic Senate in distance education and expressed the desire for additional meetings. David discussed distance education in the District, commenting that at West LA College almost 25% of the enrollment is in distance education classes. He reviewed the agenda, relating the topics to the District student access and success initiatives, basic skills and course quality. He acknowledged the work of the Distance Education Coordinators in this area. Paul McKenna, Chairperson, District Distance Education Coordinators Committee, provided a brief history of the growth of distance education nationally and in the District. He recognized the strong relationship the DE Coordinators have with their local Academic Senates and local Curriculum Committees in the course approval process. He commended the work of the DE Coordinators in maintaining academic quality and providing student technical support. Participants then introduced themselves describing their role on the campuses.

3. From the Agenda: Questions to Consider and Responses

   a. What are the District Goals for Distance Education? There do not appear to be any “district goals” at present. There are individual college goals, to provide quality DE classes (all colleges), certificates (Mission, Valley), and at some colleges, full online degrees (West, Trade, East, with Valley submitting one shortly). The accreditation requirement for substantiate change documents and student support services was discussed. A suggestion was made to leverage support services. The difference between centralized services and coordinated services was emphasized with a clear preference for coordinated services. West LA College has many classes with online components using an ADX system. Faculty training at West is initiated by departments.

   b. What should be coordinated district-wide? Issues such as a 24/7 help desk for students and faculty, and the identification of routine, mechanical, time-consuming tasks performed by the DE coordinators were referred to the DE Committee for further discussion.
c. What logistical/staff support is currently available for DE at the colleges? Most colleges have a DE coordinator. The size of the DE staff and funding level varies significantly by campus, from no reassigned time at Southwest to several people at West LA. Training is cooperative and coordinated among the campuses. The District DE Coordinators Committee is a forum for the regular identification of best practices and sharing of information and training opportunities.

d. What student support services are available for DE students? It varies greatly among the campus. This was identified as a significant need, including library resources, tutoring, testing and academic advising.

e. Program growth potential and international students. All the colleges indicated that there is significant room for program growth. That said, the online classes fill rapidly and most are at capacity. Without additional commitment from the colleges, including funding, program growth is limited. Large DE programs in other states were discussed. Some felt that the DE Program is behind those in other states. It was pointed out that other states have technology fees which support DE; California regulations do not allow such a fee. Because the classes are full there isn't an incentive for broad program promotion, nor space for a large influx of international students.

f. Why are there multiple platforms (Course Management Systems) used? The advantages include “not having all your eggs in one basket.” CMS platforms have been going through extensive transitions. Blackboard no longer exists, and Angel was recently purchased by WebCT. There are also disadvantages to using two systems within a district that also should be explored.

Four of the nine the colleges City, East, West and Valley) use Etudes, Four use Moodle (Pierce, Trade, Southwest and Mission). Harbor seem to use a mixture. There is extensive faculty training available for both Etudes, and Moodle. Most campuses having a certified Etudes trainer to provide ongoing support for faculty, and extensive technical support is provided by Etudes. Moodle has a on campus training as well as a CAOT course available to train faculty. Finally, students are directly uploaded into the course shells, complying with student confidentially regulations and faculty preference. The need to make the case for multiple platforms was reiterated, however. Currently, few outside of DE understand the rationale.

g. The issues of class size and coordination of DE with basic skills and student success initiatives were not covered due to time.

4. The meeting was adjourned at 12:20 PM.