

Strategic Plan for Distance Education  
Purdue University North Central  
2009 - 2014

A. Mission Statement

The mission of Distance Education at Purdue University North Central is to complement the Mission and Strategic Plan of the campus. The goal of the plan is to expand online and hybrid learning opportunities to better meet the needs and preferences of today's tech-savvy students in ways that are cost-effective, time-effective, and more convenient for their life circumstances in an environment of a growing student population and limited campus facilities. Using the technology of online learning, both students and faculty will benefit from enhanced experiences in learning, discovery and engagement.

- Through **Learning**, the primary mission of this university, the campus offers all students access to quality distance education programs and services that foster student success and goal attainment in a nontraditional environment.
- Through **Discovery**, distance education opportunities encourage the creation of new pedagogies, knowledge, products, processes and applications through research and scholarship. The cooperative efforts of students, faculty, and staff are essential for success.
- Through **Engagement**, web-based activities will broaden the opportunities of the campus to partner with and assist alumni, community members, businesses and organizations. These activities involve all members of the campus, including students, through transfer of knowledge, consulting, service learning, volunteers, economic development and related activities.

B. Vision

Using the most current technological tools and in the tradition of a land grant university, distance education is used to reach the diverse student population that makes up our university, whether they are local students, those who live far from our campus, military personnel, working professionals, or anyone in the community who would like to take college courses but who cannot come to campus on a regular basis. Helping students reach their educational goals is the most important mission of our campus and distance education can be used as an alternative method of course delivery to assist students in completing their degrees in a timely manner. Distance education provides educators with the opportunity to provide students with one-on-one instruction as well as allowing students to complete a course with more flexibility in scheduling.

Our education system is based on a system where all students are taught the same material during the same time frame and proceed along the path to a degree using the same materials. Studies have shown that not all students learn the same way. Individualized instruction is one way to enhance instruction and allow students to learn at their own pace. Using on-line learning communities, students can take courses at a different pace than those in a traditional classroom, and may be able to take courses more suited to their learning style than the traditional classroom. PNC can take advantage of web-based learning to help all students reach their goals.

### C. Trends in Distance Education

Nationally, enrollment in online courses has increased in the time period of 2002 to 2006 from 9.7% to 19.8% of total enrollments nationwide. According to Pisel (2008), this trend is expected to continue until at least 2012. While the biggest increase in distance education courses occurred in the 1990s, there are still universities that wish to add to their on-line offerings (The Sloan Consortium, 2007). Reasons for increased enrollments in on-line courses range from lack of on-campus facilities to handle the increasing number of students who wish to attend college, lack of funding to build new buildings, a demand by tech-savvy students to have on-line learning, and the need to pattern higher education to meet the needs of students with constraints on the time because of family and employment demands (Howell, Williams, Lindsay, 2003).

PNC is poised to take great strides in offering on-line and hybrid courses. In the spring 2006 semester, the campus had 150 online enrollments, including 21 which were students from other institutions taking courses at PNC through the Indiana College Network (ICN). By the 2008-2009 school year, PNC had 420 online and hybrid enrollments during the fall 2008 semester and 834 online and hybrid enrollments during the spring 2009 semester. This rapid increase in student enrollment is attributable to the growing need for such courses. This trend will most likely continue for the foreseeable future.

### C. PNC Strategic Plan for Distance Education

#### 1. Student Access and Success

- Increase the number of online and hybrid courses offered from 5% to 10% of the total number of courses offered at PNC.
- Create a mandatory distance education orientation program for students to familiarize them with how an online course works.
- Develop online courses for all new academic programs.
- Redesign a minimum of 3 freshman courses to enhance the student experience through the use of technology.
- Increase the percentage of students being taught by full time faculty through the redesign of freshman classes.

- Recruit and retain students who would not currently have access to the university through online course offerings.
- Create interdisciplinary courses that are taught in non-traditional ways.
- Develop a minimum of 3 online certificates and degree programs.
- Collaborate with Ivy Tech Community College and the Indiana College Network in the development of new online degrees.

## 2. Communication and Collaboration

- Redesign the campus distance education web pages to provide more information about the distance education initiatives that are ongoing at PNC.
- Use faculty meetings to present details of the current distance education activities.
- Develop relationships with P-14 schools to inform them about PNC's online programs.
- Use faculty meetings and other venues to present details of the current distance education activities and encourage expansion of online offerings.
- Develop relationships with P-14 schools and area businesses to inform them about PNC's online programs.

## 3. Community Involvement

- Provide online courses and certificates of interest to the local community.
- Expand online resources for career development.
- Standardize the online course information listed by each department so that high school counselors and others have an easier time learning about PNC's degree/course offerings.

## 4. Resources

- Create a Faculty Resource Lab to be used to provide assistance with technology and alternative forms of course delivery.
- Provide training for faculty in the pedagogy of online learning.