Hartnell College Distance Education Plan

Philosophy

As demand has increased for online education, it is incumbent on Hartnell College to provide quality online instruction to students coupled with quality professional learning for professors. To achieve this goal, the Distance Education Committee seeks the support of the District, the Academic Senate, and the Hartnell College Faculty Association (HCFA) for the allocation of time, space, and incentives that enable faculty to teach online. Therefore, the Distance Education Committee recommends the following:

Plan Objectives

The objectives of this plan are to:

- Create an infrastructure for online teaching and learning
- Ensure equitable online student support
- Create a processes and standards for online instruction
- Build a culture of mentorship and support for faculty related to online instruction

There are three high-level areas related to distance education that will be addressed in this plan: Administration/Infrastructure, Student Services, and Faculty Support and Responsibilities.

Administration/Infrastructure

There are components and positions needed for a successful and sustainable distance education program at Hartnell College. This program should fall under the Vice President of Student Success & Teaching Excellence (VPSSTE). These are outlined below:

- Distance Education Dean – a Dean of distance education would have the oversight with online learning initiatives at Hartnell College. The Dean would track which professors have met the criteria to teach online and hybrid courses, and would act as a liaison to departmental deans for scheduling purposes, as well as Information and Technology Resources (ITR) for online technical support.
- Support Staff – there is a need for several support positions to complete this work:
    - Instructional Technologist – this position would handle the technical aspects of Canvas and technical training for faculty (existing position).
    - Distance Education Coordinator – this position would serve as a representative at CVC Consortium and DECO meetings, etc., and support the Dean and faculty with online learning (a 195-day faculty position needed, currently 10 hours per week during the school year).
    - Pedagogy Support – this position would train faculty on the pedagogy of teaching online and course design (faculty at 20-40% reassign, or special assignment position stipend). This position would support all faculty, including those who are not completing the course review process with design and UDL/Accessibility.

    - Certified Peer Online Course Review (POCR) Team - these positions would support faculty with training, online teaching and learning mentorship, facilitation of course design, and course reviews–including regular and substantive interactions (RSI) and UDL/accessibility. These positions would specifically work one-on-one with faculty to complete course design and reviews. (Six are currently certified.)
    - Online Help Desk Support – support is needed to serve the campus community, faculty, students, and staff requiring help with Canvas or online teaching and learning. Aspects of this support currently exist in segmented areas including IT, the Computer Center on the main campus, and a pilot DE Hub that is in place at the King City Center. Will coordinate efforts for efficiency and more consistent support.
    - UDL/Accessibility/Instructional Technologist – this position would support faculty with accessibility for course design and development.
- A Teaching and Learning Center for distance education training and support. We require a dedicated center that invites faculty to utilize online teaching and learning services. While some of this is existing, it would need to be reorganized to provide adequate support and house the above-listed staff as needed.
- Student Support Services – providing technical assistance, bandwidth, and equipment for students who need these services.

As the center grows, positions would be added or expanded as needed.

Student Services

To have an equitable, fully-functioning distance education program, the college must provide online students access to the same services as those provided to in-person students. Below is a list of the key programs that must have readily available online access for students. Most of these have some online offerings, but should be more robust and roughly equivalent to the in-person services.

- Enrollments/Admissions & Records (A&R) – students should be able to access all enrollment and Admissions & Records information and forms online without having to visit A&R on campus.
- Financial Aid – workshops, forms, and support for completing the forms should all be available online.
- Student Onboarding/Orientation – a more thorough component or module should be added to the onboarding process to specifically address online learning.
- Online Counseling – this currently exists, but processes and policies, as related to online counseling, should be reviewed to ensure that the services offered meet student needs.
- Online Tutoring – some online tutoring services are offered by the College, but it should be a complete program in order for students to get the same help online as in person.
- Library – many services are available online right now. Processes and services offered should be examined to optimize the offerings.
- Bookstore/Textbooks – some online services are already available. Verification should be made to ensure that students can view required instructional materials and supplies online including Open Educational Resources. Students should also be able to purchase online everything they need for a course.

- Online Help Desk for technical support – students should be able to access technical support online and receive help to address their issues promptly.
- Student Support Specialist – access to a specialist for online students must be available.
- Department of Supportive Programs & Services (DSPS) – learning disability support, including accessible content, must be available for online students.

Faculty Support and Responsibilities

Standards and Best Practices

Online education includes both hybrid and online classes, as defined by Title 5 and Article 22 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA). It is recommended that all faculty teaching a hybrid, or fully online course, be certified by the District, as follows:

All **new** professors, *prior to their first distance education assignment*, shall complete:

- Training in Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI) addressing student-to-student and faculty-to-student interactions, according to curriculum standards
- Training in the use of the online learning management system
- Training in accessibility standards and requirements

In accordance with the 2022-25 HCFA Contract Article 22.D.3, a professor who currently teaches online "must provide, at least once every three years, evidence of current knowledge and use of tools, strategies, and best practices in online teaching." Professors with prior online teaching experience may:

- Provide evidence of equivalent prior training; *and*
- Demonstrate mastery or competencies in the above-outlined areas through a course review of the orientation and two weekly modules

All professors teaching online have the opportunity to participate in:

- Training in online standards and best practices, as determined through the shared governance process

Additionally, faculty whose online courses have been badged may receive a minimal review that specifically addresses Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI).

The Distance Education Coordinator and/or certified Peer Online Course Review (POCR) team members will review course content, verify training, and make recommendations to the Dean, or designee, regarding certification of faculty to teach online.

Last-minute faculty assignments, or hiring of new faculty to teach a hybrid or fully online course, should be avoided to ensure that standards and best practices are met. However, should an emergency occur, a faculty member may be allowed to complete concurrent training while teaching a hybrid or online course. This exception will be for one semester only, after which certification must occur to qualify the faculty to teach a hybrid or online course.

Codification of language

The course training and review process as outlined in the Distance Education Plan will set guidelines for online teaching and learning at the College. The current language is recommended, and non-binding as the Distance Education Committee works with the Academic Senate and the HCFA to codify language in the upcoming 2026-2029 contract.

Until such time as the language for the Distance Education Plan is codified, the District will be required to incentivize faculty to participate in the course review process and approved training.

Web-Enhanced Courses

It is recommended that all faculty utilize their LMS course shell for each of their fully face-to-face courses (referred to herein as web-enhancement). It is recommended that faculty use the LMS to distribute the course syllabus, take attendance, provide access to the assignment calendar and grades, and allow for communication through Announcements, Inbox, and Zoom (if needed), as well as access to available student services such as A&R, counseling, library, tutoring, and disabilities services.

Online Faculty Resources

Faculty wishing to teach hybrid or online courses will be provided with access to a course template. Faculty may choose to use any or all portions of the template, or may choose to design a course without the use of the template. Academic freedom will not be infringed when teaching any portion of a course online.

Faculty will be provided with access to the Distance Education Coordinator, certified POCR team members, District standards and best practices training, video content, and materials for:

- Web-enhancing a course
- Hybrid course design
- Fully online course design
- RSI and accessibility
- Quality badging a fully online course through the peer-review course design process

Faculty wishing to begin the process of having a course reviewed prior to codification of contract language will be incentivized to do so, as follows:

- Faculty with a current hybrid or online course will be paid to prepare for, and have a course reviewed by the Distance Education Coordinator or a certified POCR team member. Funding will be provided for each course reviewed.
- Faculty working to “badge” a course for quality will be paid to complete a full design of the course aligning it with the CVC Quality Course Design Rubric.

Course Review Process

A checklist aligned with District standards and best practices, as well as the Equity Rubric, will be used to evaluate all non-badged online and hybrid courses. Courses will be reviewed by the Distance Education Coordinator or a certified POCR team member. A faculty whose course does not pass will be referred out for requisite training and preparation to teach online.

Additionally, courses will be re-reviewed following the same process every three years to ensure standards and best practices remain in place as part of the course review process.

Full-Time Teaching Load Online

The increase in desire for online courses provides opportunities for some full-time faculty to work fully online. In order to meet these needs and address these challenges, the following criteria for teaching fully online is suggested:

- The faculty must complete badging of ***one*** of their fully online courses.
- For scheduling purposes, faculty teaching a badged course will be given preference.
- It is recommended that full-time faculty also *actively* participate in shared governance.
- The faculty's discipline will determine the adequate mix of in-person, hybrid, and online courses to meet the needs of the students. More sections may be offered fully online if there is sufficient student demand. Discipline discretion will be considered.
- Faculty teaching 100% online may agree to share office space in compliance with the Hartnell College Office policy.

Distance Education Curriculum

In order to build standards and best practices in online teaching, the Distance Education Curriculum Addendum should be reviewed and updated to follow the Quality Course Design Rubric, emphasizing RSI. This project can be undertaken by the Distance Education Coordinator in conjunction with the Curriculum and Distance Education Committees.

Tenure/Faculty Observation Process

The current Faculty Observation process for online and hybrid courses lacks relevance with regard to the online aspects of the observation and review. The documentation should be updated to better reflect the standards and best practices as set forth by the District. The Equity Rubric can also be implemented in this process.

Peer Reviewers and Deans must be trained to evaluate online classes to ensure that they understand what to look for, as well as how to evaluate competency.

Additionally, faculty whose online courses have been badged may receive a minimal review that specifically addresses Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI).

This Plan will be reviewed yearly in the Spring semester, beginning Spring 2026.