

## 6. INFORMATIONAL ACCESS

Informational Access. While many programs are currently available through DCE at Oregon State University, place and time bound Oregonians are not aware that they have access to higher education resources offered through OSU.

**Goal 6A.** Develop printed and Web based materials and broadcast information to make the citizens of Oregon aware of these program and course opportunities.

### **DCE Marketing, Advertising, and Promotion**

Over this reporting period, OSU Distance & Continuing Education has engaged in a variety of marketing activities to promote its four distance degree programs tow graduate programs. Included in this report section are summaries of 1999-2000 activities in the following categories: publications, media plan, regional marketing, Website/Internet marketing, other promotional activities, and marketing awards.

### **Publications**

Annual Handbook. DCE's first annual Handbook (run of 25,000) was published in August 1999. It replaced a bulky catalog that had been published and distributed each term. The Handbook is a companion piece to the Term Schedule and highlights all Distance & Continuing Education degrees and programs as well as course descriptions. It contains other important programmatic information, including overviews of the following: advising, admission, tuition, fees, financial aid, student services, general policies and procedures.

Distribution of the Handbook includes a fall term mailing to approximately 10,000 current and prospective students in our database. It is also mailed to a variety of statewide organizations, including community colleges, businesses & agencies, and K-12 schools. The remainder is mailed out individually to prospective students and distributed at educational fairs, trade shows, and advising sessions.

University Publications does the design for free. They are printed for \$.67 each. Focus Group testing (see Needs Assessment & Evaluation) yielded positive results for this publication. We will continue with this format in 2000-2001.

Term Schedule. DCE began its new tabloid format in the summer of 1999 in an effort to more broadly distribute the publication. The Term Schedule lists all DCE credit courses, which averaged out to over 100 courses in more than 30 subjects each term during 1999-2000. To promote regional access to our programs, we also inserted the Term Schedule in the *Bend Bulletin* for fall, the *Bend Bulletin* and *Coos Bay World* for winter and the *Bulletin, World* and *Salem Statesman*

*Journal* in the spring. In the spring, we printed 100,000 @ \$.09 each. They are also distributed on campus and mailed to our mailing list.

The Term Schedule tested well in focus groups, and we will continue with this format during 2000-2001. In the future, we may want to evaluate whether or not inserting them into newspapers is the most effective way to promote DCE degree programs in print.

Advising Guides. Advising Guides for three of the degree programs (Liberal Studies, Environmental Sciences, and Natural Resources) have been completed and revised during 1999-2000 based on adviser and student feedback. These are used during on-site and phone advising sessions and mailed to prospective students stating interest in these areas.

The General Agriculture Guide, the final degree program guide, was created in June 1999. We will reprint and revise these publications on an annual basis in the fall of each year. All advising guides are also online at:

<http://statewide.orst.edu/degrees/>.

Because these guides are more of an advising tool, but are also used as a marketing piece, we will create individual degree program brochures in 2000-2001 to promote degree programs without giving all the specific course information so prone to change and revision.

### **Media Plan -- TV, Radio and Newspaper Ads**

Promoting Regional Access. In fall 1999, DCE began investing in media advertising in Central Oregon, Coos Bay and Salem, areas in which OSU area offices and on-site advisers impact regional access to courses. We work with OSU's advertising agency of record in Portland to develop the creative for the ads and purchase time/space. During 1999, we ran radio spots, TV spots, and print ads to target our distance degree programs and tagged them regionally with the phone number for each area office and term start dates.

Results. The three area offices were asked to track responses from the ads and were given tally sheets for this purpose. We have been encouraged by the number of calls, and comments in those communities about ad visibility. Coupled with newspaper inserts, local activities from offices and our Area Advisers promoting DCE degree programs in their communities, the ads reinforce our presence in these areas and boost the visibility of our programs.

Future/Goals. In 2000-2001, we will modify the media mix based on feedback and tracking from 1999-2000, which indicated that radio yielded the most effective results.

## **Regional Marketing**

Area Advisers in all three areas (Central Oregon, Coos Bay and Salem) promote regional access of DCE degrees and courses through advising, participation in educational fairs and tradeshow, and general relationship-building in their respective communities.

To enable their promotion, DCE provides each office with the following standardized marketing services:

- Term Schedule and Handbook distribution
- Media campaign each term (see previous section)
- Listings in regional community college schedules
- Fliers, advising guides and support for advising activities
- Promotional materials – bookmarks, pencils, pens, etc.

Central Oregon Status. Unlike Coos Bay and Salem in which Area Advisers are housed within the region's community college, Central Oregon has its own stand-alone building (in addition to Area Adviser and instructor offices at the Central Oregon Community College) to promote DCE degrees and programs. The grand opening of this office took place in fall 1999 and our marketing staff managed the promotion and publicity for this university-wide event.

Because OSU is vying for a branch campus in Central Oregon, there has been significant and ongoing activity in this region. Distance & Continuing Education has a commitment to market along with Athletics, Admissions, Alumni, and Extension and thus are part of a larger "picture" there. However, because DCE is the focus of the university's activity in Central Oregon due to its history (LS degree first offered there in the early 1980s), and because of its staff, students and graduates, this region involves the most labor-intensive marketing effort of the three regions. Until a director of OSU Central Oregon was hired in late fall 1999, DCE also provided leadership and administrative oversight of this office, and thereby absorbed significant costs in the process.

Coos Bay Status. Most start-up marketing expenses and promotion for this region occurred during 1998-1999 when DCE hired an Area Adviser who currently resides on the Southwestern Oregon Community College campus. During 1999, on-going promotional activities included the standard services mentioned above.

Salem Status. DCE hired a Salem Area Adviser in the fall of 1999 who is based on the Chemeketa Community College campus in Salem. In addition to the media campaign and standard marketing services mentioned above, DCE organized and promoted an Open House, and information/advising sessions.

## **Website/Internet Marketing**

New Website Site. During this reporting period, the marketing team designed and built the DCE Website.

<http://statewide.orst.edu>

DCE also hired a .5 FTE graduate student to assist in this task. Previous to the new site, the DCE or "Statewide" Web presence was essentially an online catalog maintained by WebWorks, an on-campus unit within Information Services. In building this new site and gaining in-house expertise to maintain it, DCE makes changes and constant improvement to the site based on direct user feedback. In addition to excellent feedback from focus group testing, DCE won a "Best Website" award from the University of Continuing Education Associations (UCEA).

Individual Course Web Pages. Starting in fall 1999, DCE featured individual course pages for each course listed in the Term Schedule. Prior to this, interested students would access course information through the University's Banner system, which was not a user-friendly interface. Faculty in the OSU Communication Media Center (CMC) designed these Web pages, also called "splash pages." CMC uploads course information from a DCE in-house Access database managed by our front office. Splash pages reside in a different directory from the rest of our Website and any changes that are made on these pages go through staff in the Communication Media Center. Therefore, there is limited control over this section of our site and thereby an opportunity to create a clearer Memo of Understanding (in the next reporting period) to ensure that these pages are consistent with the rest of our site.

OSU E-News. In April 1999, DCE launched an electronic newsletter to help bridge the communication gap experienced by distance students. Issues are e-mailed to subscribers via a listserv twice a term (eight issues during the 1999-2000 reporting period). The newsletter motto is "helpful tips for OSU distance students" and editions feature student services available at a distance as well as general promotion of degree programs and courses, including instructor interviews, course previews, etc. Subscribers include current and prospective students, DCE instructors, and OSU faculty and visitors. As of June 2000, E-News had 450 subscribers, up from the pilot group of 50 in June 1999. Potential subscribers learn about this service in the course packet letter, the prospective student letter, and on our Website, where they can auto-subscribe and read archived issues.

E-News rated highly in an online survey DCE conducted in the spring of 2000 that asked individuals to rate student services. It also tested extremely well in our spring 2000 focus groups in Central Oregon and in Salem. Other departments

have recognized the value of E-News and consulted with DCE staff to develop a newsletter for their constituents.

Our goal is to have 90% of all DCE students who have an ISP and e-mail address subscribe to OSU E-News. We are also exploring an html format that could either complement or replace the current "plain text" e-mail format.

Internet Marketing (General Website Promotion). With the launching of our new site in January 2000, the remainder of this reporting period promoted the DCE Website in the following ways:

- A button on the main menu of the OSU homepage <osu.orst.edu>
- Feature articles in E-News, our electronic student newsletter
- Online advertising through Petersons' *Distance Learning Guide*
- National recognition in winning a "Best Website" award by UCEA (University Continuing Education Association)
- Registering with 30+ search engines
- Cross-linking with other distance education portals, external partner institutions, and on-campus departments and units.

Results. Of over 1000 tracked inquiries derived from prospective student intake forms in 1999-2000, "the Web" yielded over 50% of the responses to the question, "How did you first learn about OSU distance education?"

Future/Goals for Website and Internet Marketing. Currently, the DCE staff lacks the advanced programming expertise that we used to outsource through contractors (during site development in the fall of 1999). Additionally, the .5 FTE Internet Marketing Coordinator left in the summer of 2000, and no one has filled this position. As of June 2000, DCE had a part-time undergraduate student who, in addition to several other marketing duties, was responsible for updating and maintaining the entire DCE Website.

To be competitive with other leading national distance learning providers, DCE will need to allocate resources (and staff) to continually maintain and upgrade our Website. Some of these activities and developments include hiring and designating staff for the following: improving usability of the "Courses" section of the Website; continuing to develop online student services; creating an online communication and customer service plan; and engaging in routine Web statistics, visibility check-ups, and tracking. Additionally, there are a variety of Internet advertising activities that could further promote DCE distance degree programs, such as paid listings and contracts with distance learning portals (ex. EduPoint, Hungry Minds, etc.).

## **On-Campus Marketing & Public Relations**

DCE takes advantage of numerous opportunities throughout the year to market DCE degrees and courses to our on-campus community, including:

- DCE Display in Kerr Administrative Building (May 2000)
- Articles in *OSU This Week* (faculty newspaper)
- Ads for summer courses in the *Barometer* (student newspaper)
- Marketing presentation to Distance Faculty Workshop attendees.

Results. DCE has witnessed an increase in on-campus student enrollment in DCE courses over the past few years. Summer term yields the highest number of on-campus students taking DCE courses because students are often home for the summer, working or studying abroad, or because, in one way or another, they benefit from the flexibility in taking distance courses.

### **Marketing Changes/Goals Proposed for 2000-2001**

Restaffing/Reorganization. During 1999-2000, DCE experienced a dramatic change in leadership and staffing, which affected the entire department. The hiring of a new Dean (2/00) and Distance Education Director (4/00) and the fact that these positions were vacant for several months (Distance Ed Director since 9/99, Dean since 11/99) imparted a sense of limbo in all staff and inability to “move forward” with major initiatives.

Market Research. Marketing was aware that part of this grant had been allocated to Needs Assessment (\$138,889), but was unable to move forward during the reporting period due to the staffing changes noted above.

2000-2001 Goals. In June 2000, administrators and current marketing staff developed a re-staffing plan to address the upcoming changes in marketing FTE that would be effective July 1, 2000. These changes included the following: the 1.0 Marketing Coordinator was about to take a 2-month leave, the .5 FTE Internet Marketing Coordinator was leaving for another job in September 2000, the .75 FTE Marketing Coordinator was also leaving DCE for another job.

As part of the marketing re-staffing for 2000-2001, a new position description emerged for an Assistant Director of Marketing (1.0 FTE). Responsibilities for this new position focused on directing market research in the upcoming year. The advertised job description included the following duties related to needs assessment and market analysis:

- Design instruments and strategies for determining program needs for state, national, and international audiences.
- Implement procedures to analyze market needs, and provide data about competitors.

- Prepare projections for future program development, concerning costs, potential number of customers, preferred delivery methods, etc.
- Develop relationships with business, industry, agencies and other educational providers in order to learn more about their education and training needs.

Market research is a critical goal for the second year of this project (2000-2001).

Tracking/Consistent Reports. In order to measure DCE's successes and opportunity areas, understand trends and the demographics of our students, better target market and understand our customers and their needs, and evaluate advertising effectiveness, DCE has proposed a new system for creating the following reports:

1. Enrollment:

Unduplicated and duplicated headcount:

- By term
- By year
- By major
- By location
- By type of course/delivery mode
- By subject
- By college
- By program (which certificate program)
- By various demographic aspects (gender, age ranges, income level?)

2. Student satisfaction statistics

3. Student course and program completion rates

- % students who complete their course within the term for which they register
- % students who complete their course within five terms (winter, spring, summer, fall, winter) of registration.

This information

- by individual course
- overall for all DCE distance courses

4. Graduation statistics

- By program
- By location

5. How many of our students are on financial aid?

- Tuition assistance from a company
- Self support

## 6. Financial statistics

- Development cost per course
- Delivery cost per course
- Income generated by course, by program, by year, by location

## 7. Faculty statistics

- Total Number by term, by year, by program
  - Academic Rank categories for above
  - Number of adjuncts by above categories

## 8. Course schedule statistics

- List of courses and what terms each was taught and how delivered (frequency offered)

## 9. List of faculty names

- Phone numbers, e-mail etc.
- Course numbers
- Course offering start and finish

## 10. How many inquiries are we receiving?

- By phone
- By Web
- By e-mail
- Where did they learn about our programs?

## 11. Web statistics

- How many hits to our Web page?
- From what domains etc.?

## 12. Report of Non-credit Activity

- Sponsor and (Co-sponsor if applicable)
- Delivery method (If on-site, which location)
- Number in attendance on non-credit basis
- Certificate provided (CEU's, certificate, etc.)
- Fee charged to individuals
- Contract amount
- Total gross income
- Total net income

We are proposing a significant change in our reporting system for year two of this project. This would entail creating statistical reports that will be updated on a regular basis. These reports will be viewable internally on a web page so that our on- and off-site staff can get the latest report from anywhere at anytime. The set-up and maintenance of this system will be assigned to staff member(s). The whole staff will then be working with the same reports with the same numbers, instead of each individual creating his or her own reports which is cumbersome

and allows room for error. This will create a starting baseline and will allow us to constantly track and have our results at our fingertips.

Communication Plan/Customer Service. DCE needs to develop a more sophisticated Communication Plan that clearly defines points of contact to recruit students *and* to track/serve current students. Currently, DCE sends out Course Packets to current students prior to the beginning of each term. For prospective students, a packet is sent out that includes a letter, Handbook, Term Schedule, degree program advising guide (if interest is indicated), and the Step-by-Step flyer for getting started. This is the extent of DCE's Communication Plan. Unless students e-mail or call DCE with follow-up questions or problems, our staff had no plan or resources in 1999-2000 to proactively follow-up with them.

The plan needs to address inquiries from field offices and to incorporate those names into our central database/communication plan. Additionally, with increased Internet marketing activities, it is critical to implement an online customer service plan that is integrated with the overall communication plan. Ideally, DCE will piggyback with OSU admissions to determine how we can share their communication plan, or modify it for DCE use.

Targeted Marketing of Degree Programs. In 2000-2001, DCE plans to engage in more "targeted" marketing of individual distance degree programs and cluster courses to boost enrollment. During 1999-2000, marketing staff were absorbed with developing a new Website and with broad promotion of all DCE programs and courses, not having enough time to engage in more focused, targeted marketing of Environmental Sciences, Liberal Studies, General Agriculture, graduate and other distance programs. The Marketing Coordinator's job description was rewritten in June 2000 to include targeted marketing of these programs.

Targeted Marketing Steps. In coordination with future needs assessment & departmental strategic plans, targeted marketing will involve the following:

- Develop a marketing plan for identified degree program
- Oversee plan's implementation, including:
  - Development of printed materials, Web pages, etc.
  - Coordination of targeted mailings (print and electronic)
  - Liaison with OSU Ad Agency for Media Campaign, including ad creation and placement into professional journals, magazines, newspapers and newsletters.
- Tracking
  - Enrollments
  - Marketing effectiveness (what worked in reaching that target audience)
  - Program evaluation (focus groups, online surveys, etc).

DCE will be working more closely with degree program advisers and department chairs in promoting these distance degree programs during the second year of this project.

Internal Marketing. DCE realizes that there is a need to increase the amount and type of classes that support its degree and non-degree programs. In order to do this we must build stronger relationships with our partnering departments and faculty. We must show them the value in working with and offering classes through DCE. Doing this will be a part of our internal marketing plan, which will be a key component to our overall marketing plan.

We also hope to work closely with our partnering (and other) departments, and find out what potential growth areas they can offer our DCE students. We then plan on taking those potential growth programs and testing them to find out if they match customer needs. When we find potential growth areas that there are significant needs for, we will continually try to grow and enrich our program offerings.