

5.0 and 6.0 Needs Assessment and Informational Access

Goal 5A. Conduct needs assessments in selected communities. These assessments will be conducted through interviews and surveys with the community leaders, surveys of professions, and interviews and surveys of business leaders. Where possible, surveys will be Web based for efficiency of data collection and analysis.

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

Summary

Goal 5A. Needs Assessment in Selected Communities

This area targeted at conducting needs assessment in selected areas to enable DCE to make strategic decisions about which distance education programs to deliver and to identify other educational needs and program opportunities. At the same time efforts were made to promote awareness of OSU Distance and Continuing Education and its offerings to Oregonians, and to other national and international audiences, where appropriate.

DCE has made great progress in the area of needs assessment and informational access and continues to work toward achieving the goals of this project. In the past year DCE has successfully completed a variety of market research projects. The information gained has helped in formulating DCE's strategic plan. A result of these marketing efforts is the identification of areas where DCE need to create strategic partnerships with OSU departments. The data has also helped in evaluating the current degree programs and identifying new degree program opportunities.

DCE contracted with Riley Research Associates of Portland, Oregon and conducted two different studies regarding distance and continuing education in the state of Oregon. The first was a statewide consumer study to learn more about statewide distance education needs. Through this study DCE better understands what distance degrees are needed and the preferred distance delivery methods. The research also assessed the OSU brand for Distance and Continuing Education. The second study was a Business and Government Agency study surrounding the Oregon I-5 corridor. A part of this study focused on what business and government agencies felt about distance education for their employees and in what fields they felt there were needed courses and programs. These studies are directing DCE in planning what type of distance degree programs need to be offered by OSU.

Through the Riley Research Associates consumer study DCE gained a better understanding of what needs there were in Oregon for non-credit Professional Certificate programs. DCE used this study to evaluate a potential new learning program for retired persons. DCE also used the Business and Government Agency study to identify trends in educational/training needs of the private sector.

This study has assisted DCE with determining the preferred delivery methods, potential future educational needs, and brand recognition of OSU and other educational providers. This data is assisting this project with program planning details ranging from preferred length of educational programs and frequency of training to preferred days of the week and time for classes, to how far one would be willing to travel for training/education. DCE is currently in the process of evaluating the Riley Research Associates studies and compiling the results. These data and their interpretation will guide the planning for all new and/or revised credit and non-credit programs DCE will develop during the project year 2001-2002.

DCE has focused project resources on the creation of an internal marketing plan (i.e., marketing and advertisement to departments within OSU). To define the internal marketing plan and the departments to initially focus on DCE needed to first conduct specific research. During May/ June 2001 DCE conducted an OSU faculty survey. Over 800 OSU faculty members participated in this survey. This survey helped DCE gauge impressions, opinions and awareness of OSU faculty members on a variety of issues such as: 1) the concept of distance education, 2) opportunities or educational needs that should be addressed through distance and continuing education, 3) barriers they perceive in teaching distance education courses, 4) impressions and experiences of working with DCE, 5) familiarity with what courses and programs DCE offers, 6) familiarity and comfort with teaching with technology, and 7) attitudes and opinions on willingness to adopt the use of teaching technologies in their courses/programs. DCE is now taking this data, evaluating it, and developing the results and recommendations. It is the goal of DCE and this project to implement the OSU/DCE internal marketing plan fall 2001/Winter 2002.

Goal 6A. Printed and Web Based Materials

In promoting awareness of DCE and its offerings, DCE has worked to better communicate with our students, staff, faculty, and departments within the University. DCE has evaluated the effectiveness of project-sponsored publications and made strategic changes as needed. One result of this evaluation had shown a need for DCE adding a Web Coordinator position in order to develop value-added features on the web and to help improve DCE's Internet marketing strategies. DCE evaluated last years project supported media campaign and have made adjustments in that campaign to increase both the number of students taking DE courses and the number of courses and degree programs offered through DCE.

This project had established a goal of evaluating the effectiveness of current print course and program advertising materials by conducting a survey of the current printed Term Schedule in April and May of 2001. Results indicated that students use the Web and a printed schedule equally as their primary source for getting course information, and that 83% went to our Website to get more course information. Responses helped DCE marketing to plan for a Web-only schedule of DCE classes for winter or spring of 2002, eliminating the time and resources that go into producing a printed schedule each term.

DCE also made progress in developing a yearlong course schedule by including a spring and winter 2002 course preview, the first ever, in the OSU Fall 2001 printed Term Schedule (developed in June 2000). An online preview of this schedule was also developed as a part of this project.

DCE also initiated and conducted a search for a Web Systems Coordinator. This position, unfilled for a year, has been determined as a critical one for DCE and will be involved in further developing our current Website, this project, and leading a number of other internal and external Web-based priority projects (e.g., developing an Intranet for improved staff communication).

DCE Marketing also tracked the results of the 2000-01 media campaign to promote these projects goals. These campaigns were primarily comprised of radio in Central Oregon, Salem and Coos Bay, and Term Schedule regional newspaper inserts. Data from this tracking indicated that radio advertisement for DE courses and degree programs is a more effective marketing medium than TV spots (1998-2000). Tracking of newspaper inserts didn't obtain a significant return on investment and will no longer be included for 2001-02. Collecting demographic information on current and prospective students has indicated that our target audience is 70% female with an average age in the mid-thirties. Therefore, DCE will use regional radio campaigns with a 60-second spot targeting women who are juggling work; family and many other priorities will be the main media focus in 2001-02. This year, DCE is prioritizing regional campaigns in Central Oregon, the Mid-Valley of Oregon (a new media market starting Fall 2001), Portland in Winter 2002 (a new market), and a continued presence in Salem and the Southern Region.

As a result of this project, DCE has formed a Distance Education Advising Center staff. Marketing has been involved in developing marketing-specific data and reporting systems that will be incorporated into the Advising Center Plan. Examples of the marketing-specific data that are currently being developed into the database include a rating/coding of inquiries, marketing referrals to better track the success of our media campaign, demographic information (i.e., gender, age, etc.), and tracking of volume of calls and converted inquiries into registration (i.e., sales ratio). Developing a marketing calendar of promotional activities for 2001-02 and writing a Marketing Communication Plan (e.g., scripts, letters, etc.) are currently in progress of being developed.

Over this last project year Marketing has coordinated with all Degree Program Leaders. Specific degree-program brochures will be developed during the next reporting period to more effectively target the development and delivery of degree program areas that have been identified as those that should be offered by OSU/DCE.