

4. Student Services

Goal 4A. Develop policies for student services, and to help implement them for the students who are engaged in their studies from off-campus. Facilitation of joint admissions with community colleges and OSU, financial aid, advising, and other electronic and Web based services will be supplemented with this funding.

Summary

Goal 4A. Facilitate Student Services for Students who are Engaged in Their Studies from Off-Campus

Progress in enrollment and students services has been impacted, both positively and negatively, by personnel turnover. A new Director of Ecampus Enrollment and Student Services was hired in August, 2002. Despite many changes in this area over the project period, Ecampus did make significant headway in becoming more integrated with campus operations (i.e., campus mainstream), especially OSU Enrollment Management (i.e., Registrar, Admissions, and Financial Aid) and has built strong and productive relationships to support student services for OSU distance education students.

Significant achievements have been made and goals reached over the past year as a direct result of this project. They are:

- Integration with university-wide enrollment management (both residential and non-residential students).
- Distance education student access to library materials and reference assistance.
- Online course information and schedules.
- Availability of online student course materials.
- Degree program pre-advising and other student services.
- Online student assessment of courses.
- Online student services (e.g., online requests for exam proctors, math placement, and live-chat development).

Integration with University-wide Enrollment Management

- Ecampus Enrollment and Student Services unit has worked with OSU Enrollment Management (i.e., Registrar, Admissions, Financial Aid) to further integrate distance courses and students into the university SCT Banner system. The Banner Recruit module will be used beginning Fall term 2003 for prospective students, which brings their information directly into the OSU system and allows tracking, timely communications, and appropriate responses.
- The Registrar has enabled Web grading for all OSU courses. Grades may now be directly uploaded from Blackboard gradebooks directly into the Banner database greatly increasing efficiency for distance instructors and students.

- At Ecampus' request, the Registrar implemented a pop-up box during registration to alert students when they were choosing a distance course. This was done to reduce registration confusion over such issues as tuition/fee rates.
- Extensive discussions were held about using SCT Banner for Ecampus non-credit professional development programs and K-12 Online programs. This implementation is expected to occur in winter 2004.
- The Admissions Office has gone to a web-only application for non-degree status, an enrollment status used by Ecampus students who only want to take a few courses for personal or professional development.
- Admissions are completing work on a "transfer course calculator", which will enable students to estimate how their courses will transfer into OSU prior to paying for formal admission. This tool will be of great assistance to all distance students, who are often unsure that the university will honor their previous coursework. Instead of doing time consuming "unofficial transcript evaluations", Ecampus will be able to direct students to this tool and then directly into admissions, once again increasing efficiencies.
- Ecampus cooperated with a project through OSU Enrollment Management to use "Virtual Advisor", an intelligent search capability for OSU websites, including Ecampus. This tool increases efficiency by assisting prospective students with quickly locating desired information.
- Distance students have now been uniquely coded in Banner, allowing them to be identified and officially counted in the university's total FTE. Distance education students can now be tracked and reported accurately to continuously improve student service systems and other university-wide processes.

Library Access

Working with the OSU Valley Library over this project year has brought further improvements to the web-based system that automates document delivery to students and faculty and easier access to library materials. These new processes allow the library to handle more distance education requests more quickly. Over this project year the OSU Library served distance education students in the following ways:

- The Libraries delivered approximately 1,700 library and non-library items to distance learners to support their curriculum.
- The project also supported staff time for an Extended Campus Librarian, whose purpose is to assist distance services through instruction, reference assistance, coordination with Extended Campus and Library faculty, and coordination of services with library departments.
- To facilitate the speed and delivery of materials, the Libraries implemented the ILLIAD system, which automates the document delivery process, benefiting both the user and the library by providing rapid responses to requests.
- The library has initiated a statewide virtual reference system, making use of live-chat and co-browsing capabilities, in addition to email and phone support.

- New web-based tutorials have been developed to allow for self-directed learning on advanced Internet and database searching, library research methods, and evaluating information for validity.

Course Information and Schedules

- The Schedule of Classes (SOC) for OSU has been programmed online for efficient distance student reference. Having the SOC online has proven to be extremely helpful to distance students as schedule updates are instantaneous, students can find out seat availability, and are alerted when classes have been canceled without having to meet with a program advisor. Ecampus has also established a subset of this entire SOC on the Ecampus website.
- Course syllabi are also linked directly from the online schedule of courses to give students information about the course, major projects and exams, course materials and format information.
- In addition, Ecampus publishes an inventory of online 'generic' syllabi (i.e. not date-sensitive), which students can use for continual reference as they plan for future terms and completion of their degrees.

Availability of Course Materials

OSU Bookstore access has been facilitated by putting a live link directly from the desired course in the Schedule of Classes to the ordering information for that course at the Bookstore (an example of this online process can be seen at:

<http://ecampus.oregonstate.edu/ECatalog/ECourseDetail.aspx?subjectcode=FW&coursenum=317&termcode=200401>)

As a result of this project, distance education students now also have access to academic pricing on software through the OSU Bookstore.

Program Advising

- The Ecampus Advising Center operated through the 2002 year of the project and is now being converted to a Student Services Center. Each degree program now provides degree advisors from the academic units and no longer depends upon Ecampus staff for degree advising. Student service needs are supported by the Ecampus Student Services Center, and close working relationships with degree advisors and program leaders will be nurtured and continued to insure that distance education students are advised about their degree programs directly from their academic advisors.
- With the upgrade of Blackboard to version 6.0, program advisors will now be using the "community function" of the system to group their advisees and to better address their questions about completing their degree programs.
- As a direct result of this project, "Interactive Advising Guides" are now in the design stage and will be implemented by winter 2004.

Student Assessment of Courses

The OSU course evaluation instrument has been put online for use by Ecampus faculty and students. Benefits of the online system are decreased expense to administer the course assessment instrument as compared to the paper format, and the information from this assessment is used by university departments to assess the quality of instruction in all distance education courses and is used for promotion and tenure justification by tenure-track faculty. This project-directed idea and system has resulted in financial saving to the university of over \$20,000 per year in physical and human resources).

Online Student Services

- Live-chat is being pilot-tested and will be used extensively beginning Fall term 2004. The review of available software and coding necessary to adapt the application to Ecampus was completed by June of 2003. Live-chat will allow students to have private or group conversations with staff in the Student Services Center and may be used by other units of Ecampus as the functionality is explored further.
- The Student Services website has been reviewed and is being reorganized for easier access of student information.
- A new step-by-step “wizard-builder” has been designed by project staff for use in online tutorials, which will guide students through necessary processes such as registration and Blackboard access.
- Students now have an online form for requesting exam proctors, when required by their instructors. These requests are put into a MS-Access database and mail merge capabilities are used to format the communication with proctors and testing centers. (Previously this system was paper-based.)
- Online web forms have also been created for students who are requesting placement in Ecampus developmental math courses. Each form is reviewed by the developmental math program coordinator, who then recommends the proper course for each student. (Previously this system was also paper-based.)
- Preliminary discussions have been held with administrators in the OSU College Student Services Administration (CSSA) M.Ed. program to design a mentoring service for OSU distance education students.

Program Evaluation

Steps have been taken to design, develop and implement an evaluation process to assess the effectiveness of advising and student, faculty, department services provided by ESS. A preliminary phone questionnaire is being designed to survey faculty and departments on satisfaction with service. Activity Reports, generated by analyzing inquiries to the Advising Center 800# and email, were refined and graphed for trends. *Appendix C* shows examples of the Ecampus Student Services Activity Report.