

Costing Distance Learning: Lessons Learned from the Kent State University Pilot
Project
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Presenters:

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In 2002 Kent State University participated in the OLN-sponsored pilot project to cost distance learning using the Technology Costing Methodology developed by WICHE. Kent's pilot project evaluated its BBA, which is delivered to all 8 KSU campuses and Lorain County Community College. Some of the knowledge gained about the process of costing DL will be shared, and thoughts about how the results may be used will be presented. Recommendations for how to organize record keeping and data collection will be offered. Related resources will also be shared.

Learning Outcomes:

Participants will

- Appreciate the process involved in gathering data
- Understand how cost information may be used for decision making
- Comprehend the level of commitment needed to carry out a costing project
- Understand the type of people needed to make up the cost study team
- Learn about how to plan for data collection

The Technology Costing Methodology Project

- Tool for analyzing educational technology costs
- Includes standard definitions of cost categories
- Allows institutions to analyze the costs of instructional approaches that make heavy use of technology and compare cost data for different instructional approaches.
- Not a cost/benefit analysis. Since definitions of "quality" and "benefits" vary widely, these determinations are left to the campus.

The model recognizes:

- Course-related costs—the (capital and operating) costs associated with offering the course, regardless of the numbers of students enrolled in the course.

- Student-related costs—the (capital and operating) costs that vary in accordance with the numbers of students enrolled in the course.

Part of statewide and national effort

Joint endeavor between the Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications (WCET), the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) and the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS). Funded by FIPSE.

States participating

- University of North Carolina System
- Higher Education Coordinating Board of Massachusetts
- Florida Virtual High School
- Kentucky Community and Technical College System
- Ohio
 - Ohio Learning Network
 - University of Akron
 - Bowling Green State University
 - Columbus State Community College
 - Hocking College
 - Kent State University
 - Owens Community College
 - Ohio State University
 - Ohio University
 - Sinclair Community College
 - Wright State University

Kent State departments participating

- Academic Technology Services, Information Services Division
- University Budget Office
- College of Business Administration (CBA)
- Regional Campuses

Kent State focus: pilot study: cost of delivering the Bachelors Degree in Business Administration program to all 8 campuses and Lorain Community College using distance learning technologies (VTEL and web).

Data provided by CBA:

- List of courses offered in distributed BBA program, Fall 1996 to present
- Enrollment data

- Delivery methods by course
- Additional FTE generated by this program
- Projected yearly course schedules
- Lorain Community College teaching expenses

Questions asked:

- how much time is being spent by faculty and staff to develop and maintain distance courses?
- what resources are being used and how much do they cost?
- what costs are borne by others?

Information collected from the following sources:

- spreadsheets kept by College of Business Administration
- budget information from University Budget Office
- enrollment data from Student Information System
- interviews with CBA faculty teaching in the program
- interviews with Distributed Learning staff working with these faculty

Timeline for pilot project

March

Statewide training in Columbus

Planning meeting with College of Business Administration and University Budget Office

April-May

Data gathering and analysis for 2001-02 AY

June

Preliminary report to WICHE

July-Sept.

Prepare reports and explanations for 2001-02 AY

Process data for other years

December

Telephone evaluation with TCM consultant