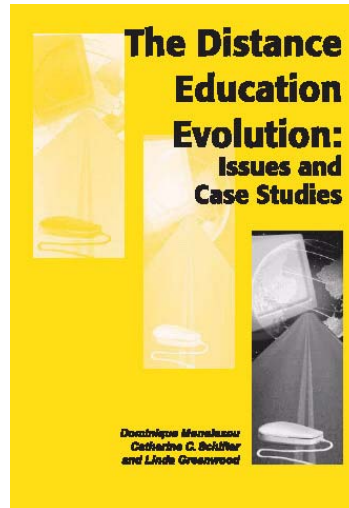# The Distance Education Evolution:
Issues and Case Studies

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Written almost entirely by Temple University's OLL faculty members, this book provides theoretical guidance and best practices for a pedagogically sound adoption of technology in distance education courses and programs.

Table of Contents

Sandy Kyrish

Chapter 2: Faculty Participation in Distance Education Programs: Practices and Plans
Catherine Schifter

Chapter 3: Can a viable DE program stay behind the technology wave
John Sorrentino

Chapter 4: Universal Design for Online Education: Access for All
Rosangela Boyd and Bonnie Moulton

Chapter 5: Certain about Uncertainty: Strategies and Practices for Virtual Teamwork in Online Classrooms
Stella Shields, Gisela Gil-Egui and Concetta Stewart

Chapter 6: Education mirrors industry (reprise); the not-so revolutionary rise of the virtual classroom
Donald Hantula and Darleen Pawlowicz

Chapter 7: Tools in use to evaluate an online program
Catherine Schifter and Dominique Monolescu

Closing Remarks: Online Teaching, copyrights, and the need for concerted solutions
Gisela Gil-Egui

<div align="center">

Part 2: Case Studies in Distance Education

</div>

Chapter 8: Creating and using multiple media in an online course
Maurice Wright

Chapter 9: Teaching a studies in race course online: The challenges and the rewards
Karen M. Turner

Chapter 10: Media Enterpreneuship as an Online Course: A Case Study
Elizabeth Leebron

Chapter 11: The uses and impact of academic listservs in university teaching
ulie-Ann Mcfann

Chapter 12: Design and Evaluation of an Internet-Based Personalized Instructional System for Social Psychology
Erica Davis and Donald Hantula

Conclusion:
Dominique Monolescu

. . . .

Distance education (DE) has a long, rich history of over 100 years. The beginning of DE was correspondence study. In 1892, Penn State University was one of three universities to initiate a new way of reaching out to students capitalizing on the newly developed system of Rural Free Delivery (RFD). While RFD has been credited with many outcomes, the role of RFD in establishing DE is not well known.

RFD provided a vehicle for mail to reach out to the people who were the American pioneers, the folks who moved away from the big cities in the Eastern United States to live in the heartland of America and beyond—the farmers who often lived far from schools of higher education but wanted an education just the same. Before RFD was established by the U.S. Postal System, people were required to go to an institution of higher education; after RFD was established, some institutions like Penn State recognized an opportunity to take higher education to the public.

Since the advent of RFD and paper-oriented correspondence study, newer technologies came into play to offer unique opportunities for DE: the radio (1920s), instructional television (1950s), satellite downlinks (late 1970s and early 1980s), cable TV (1970s), and videoconferencing (VDC) through interactive compressed video (1980s). Each of these delivery methods was considered to be revolutionary in reaching out to the population of people who could not afford to come to higher education institutions. The one characteristic that all of these forms of DE had in common, with the exception of VDC, was that instruction was one-way out to the student, or asynchronous. Interaction between the student and the instructor was difficult and time consuming using the U.S. Mail. VDC was the only medium for DE where the instructor and students were connected in real-time or synchronously, using T-1 telephone lines to send compressed video and audio between sites, and it was the first DE delivery mode to begin to mimic the traditional classroom interaction that was clearly missing from previous distance education delivery methods.

Today the Internet and World Wide Web have revolutionized DE once more. The biggest difference between DE online and the preceding methods is the opportunity to exploit the multimedia and interaction capabilities of the Web. While many online DE courses are asynchronous, interaction with instructors is faster with electronic mail, which can be almost instantaneous.

Most institutions of higher education in the United States have some form of an online DE program or initiative. Many of these programs were started because administrators and faculty thought they "should" include online DE options for their students or be behind the curve in higher education. Others approached online DE methodically, looking at long-standing models and taking steps to insure support for both faculty and students. This book is our attempt to provide a large case study of one institution of higher education that has moved slowly and deliberately into online DE. The audience for this book is administrators and faculty in institutions of higher education looking for guidance in developing and expanding online DE initiatives, faculty who are looking for case studies of how online DE might be useful in their disciplines, and students studying the phenomenon of distance education.

Section 1: Distance Education Issues in Higher Education

The first section of this book will take the reader through a series of discussions that describe, analyze, explain, and hypothesize about online DE programs in higher education. Each chapter will provide insight and advice for various stages of planning and development of an online DE program.

In Creating an Online Program, Sandy Kyrish notes that good planning is key to the development of a successful online DE. Initial planning should primarily center on two issues: identifying the educational goal of the program, and identifying the practical issues of implementation. Planners must recognize that while online learning is a technology-based activity, it must be organized around clear educational goals — and these goals must be strongly aligned with one or more key areas for the institution. She suggests common tools and strategies that can be used to help identify key goals.

In Chapter 2, Faculty Participation in Distance Education Programs: Practices and Plans, I present research into two questions for administrators of online DE initiatives. Faculty must be involved for a DE program to be successful. What motivates or inhibits faculty participation in online DE on any one campus? Campus culture is one factor to be considered. One practice nationally has been to compensate faculty in some way other than regular pay, except on those campuses where participation in DE is a condition of faculty appointment. But what models of compensation are used and in what settings? Research on both of these questions is presented with suggestions on how to apply the results.

In Chapter 3, John Sorrentino asks Can a Viable DE Program Stay Behind the Technology Wave? He questions whether distance education programs should strive to be on the cutting edge of information technology. Using economics as a heuristic, the general perspective taken is that of the Value Net to discuss and explain the education process. Dr. Sorrentino then discusses and compares the mechanics of an online course he taught to MBA students to the same course he taught in a face-to-face format. He concludes by suggesting a cost-benefit analysis to determine whether DE programs should be behind, with or ahead of the technology wave.

An important issue in online DE is accessibility to information. Rosangela Boyd and Bonnie Moulton discuss accessibility issues related to online education in Chapter 4, Universal Design for Online Education: Access for All. They present an overview of the challenges faced by students with disabilities in accessing and interacting with online course materials and activities. In order to address the potential barriers to full participation, national and international guidelines are examined, with particular emphasis on their implications for specific course components. The authors provide advice for validating website accessibility and a list of resources for those interested in obtaining further information about the impact of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and IDEA.

Stella Shields, Gisela Gil-Egui, and Concetta Stewart present a compelling case for team work in online DE in their chapter entitled Certain about Uncertainty: Strategies and Practices for Virtual Teamwork in Online Classrooms. They make the clear distinction that virtual teamwork, not virtual group work, is the goal since the team has a common purpose while the group is more amorphous. They discuss the importance of trust and community of practice within the online DE experiences and provide several provocative suggestions for those considering including virtual teams in their online DE courses.

In Chapter 6, Donald Hantula and Darleen Pawlowicz propose that Education Mirrors Industry: On the Not-So Surprising Rise of Internet Distance Education. Online DE is analyzed as a natural consequence of end of the century industrial

transformations. From this perspective, previous distance and technologically based educational innovations are discussed, not as having failed, but as not matching prevailing economic and social conditions. Implications for adapting educational practices to new economic realities away from the industrial model of the twentieth century are presented, especially in terms of matching instructional technology to educational outcomes, virtual collaboration, and how "natural" the media effects are to the consumer.

In the chapter Evaluating a Distance Education Program, Dominique Monolescu and I discuss the importance of ongoing evaluation of DE programs. With a brief description of why program evaluation is important for any education program, key questions for online DE programs are identified. A case study of the Temple University Online Learning Program's ongoing evaluation process is presented as one example of how evaluation can lead to important programmatic and institutional change.

Lastly, through some closing remarks for the issues section of this book, Gisela Gil-Egui makes the case for developing clear copyright policies within institutions wishing to embark in online education endeavors. She illustrates her point by providing a brief narrative of the challenges faced by different actors at Temple University in their attempt to generate a consensual intellectual property policy — one that considers new aspects emerging in light of new technologies for content creation and distribution.

Section 2: Case Studies in Distance Education

In Section 2 of this book, a series of case studies are presented from a number of different disciplines. Each chapter presents insights, issues to be considered, and suggestions for future course developments.

In Chapter 8, Creating and Using Multiple Media in an Online Course, Maurice Wright discusses the adaptation of a traditional, fundamentals course of the science of musical sound and the methods used to code and transform musical sound using digital computers for online delivery. Practical choices for technology, which reflect the conflicting benefits of choosing simple versus more sophisticated technology, are outlined. He presents an anecdotal comparison between an online and a face-to-face course section, along with ideas for future development.

Karen Turner, in the chapter Teaching a Studies-in-Race Course Online: The Challenges and the Rewards, presents a case study of whether a course dealing with the potentially volatile issue of race can be effectively taught in an online environment. This course was developed to effectively incorporate online instruction with race studies aimed at teaching racial sensitivity to journalism students. Dr. Turner presents student evidence from her course of the success of teaching a sensitive issue online. She projects the potential impact of her approach to a course on race-related issues in the news on students' understanding and dialogue about race.

Transformation of a traditional face-to-face course to an online DE course is the subject of Elizabeth Leebron's chapter entitled Media Entrepreneurship as an Online Course: A Case Study. She discusses the importance of reconsidering pedagogical issues like requirements, assessments, participation, and more. This

case study, unlike the others in this book, presents a hybrid model of DE. While the majority of the course discussed in this chapter is online, the final requirement is an oral presentation. Dr. Leebron discusses the importance of retaining this requirement for this course, and how face-to-face encounters enhance the DE experience overall.

One of the most commonly used forms of interactivity in online DE courses, as well as face-to-face courses, is the academic listserv, and yet the impact of these listserv discussions is assumed to be positive without much proof. Julie-Ann McFann presents a case study of academic listservs in Chapter 11, The Uses and Impact of Academic Listservs on University Teaching: An Exploratory Study. While her research was not limited to online DE courses, the outcomes of her work and the overall case study are directly related to understanding the importance and purpose of online discussions through listservs by all who participate.

Based on the process of Personalized Systems of Instructions (PSI), Erica Davis Blann and Donald Hantula present a case study of a social psychology course in Design and Evaluation of an Internet-Based Personalized Instructional System for Social Psychology, Chapter 12. They discuss how the course was designed to capitalize on the unique advantages of the PSI system while using the Internet to overcome some of its noted administrative drawbacks, including how the asynchronous nature of the Internet and the automated features built into Blackboard made it possible for students to attend lectures, take assessments, and communicate with the instructor and other class members from any where, at any time. Their case study demonstrates that the combination of PSI and the Internet produce an effective instructional.

In the Conclusion, Dominique Monolescu discusses the lessons learned through initiating and developing the Temple University Online Learning Program and how the book chapters illuminate that process and issues involved.

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The Distance Education Evolution: Case Studies addresses issues regarding the development and design of online courses, and the implementation and evaluation of an online learning program. Several chapters include design strategies for

online courses that range from the specific to the universal. Many authors address pedagogical issues from both a theoretical and applied perspective. This diverse compilation of contributions by Temple University administrators and faculty gives a comprehensive overview of the distance education experience that can serve as a guide to others interested in providing quality distance education.

About The Authors

Dominique Monolescu, Ph.D. is the Interim Director of Temple University's Online Learning Program and an Adjunct Faculty Member at Arcadia University. Her research, primarily in distance education, student and faculty interaction, online focus groups, desktop videoconferencing, and virtual conferences, has appeared in such journals as Internet and Higher Education and the American Journal of Distance Education. She holds M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from Temple University, and a B.A. in Business and a B.A. in Special Education from Mackenzie University, Brazil.

Catherine Schifter, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor in Curriculum, Instruction and Technology in Education at Temple University, USA, a Carnegie Scholar (2000-2001), and Director of the Temple Online Learning Program from 1996 through 2000. Currently, Dr. Schifter is the Faculty Fellow for the Temple University Teaching and Learning Center that was established to support faculty in all endeavors of teaching and learning in traditional and online environments. Her most recent scholarship has been in reviewing national trends for Distance Education faculty support models in higher education, and evaluation of faculty development programs for infusing technology into classrooms in K-12 education.

Linda Greenwood is a doctoral student in the Mass Media and Communication Program in the School of Communications and Theater at Temple University, USA. As an Adjunct Lecturer and Teaching Assistant, she has taught courses in public speaking, political communication, and media studies and received the International Communication Association (ICA) award for excellence in Graduate Assistance Teaching. Linda graduated summa cum laude from Rutgers University with a B.A. in English and earned an M.A. in rhetoric and communication from Temple University. She is currently writing her dissertation on the effects of virtual desktop environments and computer-mediated communication on political attitudes and behavior.