

# ***EAC Distance Learning Task Force***

## ***Team 1 Progress Report***

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### **Team One Members**

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### **Overview**

Team one was assigned the list of topics related to student services. We felt that the original gap analysis was a bit outdated and in some cases incomplete. Some of the issues listed in the original analysis have since been resolved, while others seemed to be missing. We spent significant time re-evaluating the list of topics assigned to us, and eventually emerged with a revised list that we feel better reflects the current gaps in student services for online students. The revised list includes:

- Advising
- Testing and proctoring services
- Course schedule
- Student help desk
- Disability services
- Student clubs and groups
- Retention

Initially the members assigned to the group were not all familiar with the current state of affairs regarding student services for distance learning. Subsequently, we spent a great deal of time getting everyone up to speed. As a group we worked on several drafts of a document to accurately portray the current practices for each service considered, the specific gaps and limitations of each, and the problems that

arise as a result. As part of this process we acquired new group members from various student service areas which greatly improved our knowledge base and ability to fully understand the issues and possible solutions.

To develop complete and adequate recommendations for solutions, we felt it was necessary to fully understand the problems with each service and the conditions that had led to them. At this point in our group process, we have described the limitations for each service in question in greater detail. We have an vastly improved understanding of what led to the current state of affairs, and which potential solutions are likely to work at PCC. For each topic considered we have summarized a list of limitations for that service and offered a list of potential recommendations. We are not prepared to offer specific technologies or prescribed solutions, though we have identified some categories and types of solutions which merit further research and investigation.

## **Topics Considered**

### **Advising**

#### **Current limitations in advising services for online students include**

- Lack of clarity regarding options for advising from a distance
- No online synchronous opportunities to interact with an advisor
- No non-business hour services available
- Student service culture that caters more to in-person, business hours
- Lack of budget to expand advising services; heavy demand for in-person services
- Lack of exploration of reallocation of current resources to distance/alternative hours services
- Lack of understanding of how online students are currently getting their advising needs met

#### **Potential recommendations**

- Offer more asynchronous self-advising tools (forms, worksheets, timelines, GRAD Plan etc)
- After hours or by appointment "Ask an Advisor" chat advising
- Clarify program specific advising info - perhaps create a usable/findable web repository for all program specific advising materials (linked to the general [www.pcc.edu/advising](http://www.pcc.edu/advising))
- Communicate best times to visit an advisor (i.e. the "off" season)
- Targeted DL marketing
- Improved admissions/orientation process - clarify path for DL
- Consider eCampus model

### **Next Steps**

- More research re: models and best practices

## **Testing/Proctoring Services**

### **Current limitations on testing services for online students include**

- Lack of pre-registration information about on campus requirements
- Lack of standards for acceptable testing proctors when a student cannot come to a PCC campus
- Lack of guidelines for instructors regarding appropriate assessment methods for online courses
- Availability of proctoring sites
- Lack of clarity about "hybrid" course definition
- Unclear guidelines for instructors about how to proctor tests for online students (Is the testing center an option for proctoring all online student exams, or simply an alternative for the few students who cannot attend an instructor monitored exams? Are online instructors administering exams for DL students or do they rely on the testing centers to manage exams?)

### **Potential recommendations**

- Notary public option - a new model that uses notaries to proctor exams at a distance
- Web cam asynchronous proctoring - probably a future solution though one company is currently offering this service to several colleges
- Student identified proctor within prescribed guidelines
- National registry of accredited proctoring agencies - this exists but proctoring sites are extremely limited
- Provide on campus requirements within course description
- Pre-registration agreement to course terms pop-up - force students to agree to "terms of course" prior to enrollment
- If a SAC determines proctored, on-campus exams are required, they need to have a clear and consistent plan for how testing services will be provided

### **Next Steps**

- More research re: models and best practices

## **Class Schedule**

### **Current limitations on scheduling services for online students include**

- Lack of clarity regarding on-campus requirements for distance courses (such as test proctoring)
- Intended method of communication is the Course Information Page (CIP) - these aren't updated regularly
- CIPs aren't findable - web usability issue
- Online instructors aren't currently required (only encouraged) to communicate on-campus and special requirements in the class schedule
- Lack of communication about textbook requirements and costs
- Possible concerns about financial cost (tuition, fees, books, etc) and payment options

### **Potential Recommendations**

- Provide on campus requirements within course description
- Pre-registration agreement to course terms pop-up
- Improve visibility of the CIP
- Implement standards for instructors - re: updating CIP on time and being available to answer pre-term questions
- Offer a breakdown of the cost of classes (tuition, fees, books) and payment options at point of enrollment. Be clear about deadlines and consequences.

### **Research recommendation**

- Check with other schools

### **Next Steps**

- More research

## **Student Help Desk**

### **Current limitations on help desk services for online students include**

- Limitations on what student employees are allowed to do (student records, passwords, etc)
- Limited knowledge base of student employees
- Lack of training for SHD staff - both technical and regarding student services
- Bulk of calls are informational, not support
- Location of campuses makes training/meetings difficult to coordinate
- A physical desk is of little use to the online student
- Desk is overstaffed for the work load

- Bulk of "work" is to satisfy the services of other departments: (i.e. Library, Reg, Info, and TSS)
- After hours support has the same limitations that the student help desk has - no access to crucial student information, no permission to change account info.
- Contracted after hours support company tends to be Blackboard focused - may be of limited utility for a new LMS

### **Potential Recommendations**

- This service is currently being restructured. We recommend revisiting this service at a later date.

### **Next Steps**

- Wait until changes to help desk for the new LMS are made and revisit the issue.

## **Disability Services**

### **Current limitations on disability services for online students include**

- Lack of clarity regarding options and procedures for disability services from a distance
- Lack of funding to support captioning of media used in online courses
- Need for specialized staff to support captioning functions
- Need for standards/guidelines to ensure instructors are using high quality media that is worth our investment in captioning services

### **Potential Recommendations**

- Clarify procedures for online students
- Offer fully online version of the campus orientation to DAS
- Defer judgments re: media and captioning to existing group tasked with addressing this

### **Next Steps**

- None - our recommendations are complete

## **Student Clubs & Groups**

### **Current limitations on student clubs and groups for online students include**

- Lack of interest among online student population

- Lack of leadership for population segment that is potentially interested
- Need to communicate possibility and procedures for starting clubs to students
- No system of support (both staff and technology) for online student clubs

### **Potential Recommendations**

- Consider a distance branch of the ASPCC and/or invite DL representation at district level
- Clarify procedures for developing clubs for online only students
- Explore new tools for connecting with distance students

### **Next Steps**

- More research

## **Retention (*overlap with Team 2*)**

*\*Note: Team 1 focused on retention solutions related to the student experience and student success initiatives. Team 2 will most likely address the instructional perspective.*

### **Current limitations effecting retention for online students include**

- Lack of clarity regarding student perspectives about retention and student success
- Lack of study skills workshops for online students
- Unclear communication about student/instructor expectations prior to enrollment
- Possible need for learning styles assessment prior to online course enrollment

### **Potential Recommendations**

- Need to expand and promote online CG course offerings centered on student success
- Tutoring center workshops in DL form (study skills, reading comprehension, learning styles, etc)
- Consider mandatory orientation or prerequisite course to improve technology and study skills
- Inform faculty about best practices
- Incorporate info into LMS navigation re: study skills

### **Next Steps**

- More research