Chapter VIII

Online Courses: Strategies for Success

Linda Cooper
Macon State College, USA

A number of post-secondary institutions are looking more seriously at offering online courses to meet the educational needs of a fast-paced, computer-literate society.

In 1998, Macon State College (MSC) began offering an online Business Computer Applications course, and since its inception, approximately 250 students have enrolled in the 16-week (one-semester) course. Business Computer Applications provides instruction in basic computer concepts and terminology as well as instruction using the software program, Microsoft Office. It is one of the core courses required of all business majors; however, many other students also enroll in the class.

This chapter provides instructors who are interested in offering online classes with various strategies used and found successful in the instruction of an online Business Computer Applications course. Topics such as the importance of an initial class meeting, providing diverse instructional materials, the value of student course evaluations, and the dilemma of student assessment procedures will be addressed.

Although a course management system (CMS) is used to manage the online Business Computer Applications course discussed in this chapter, many of the procedures incorporated can be effective in the facilitation of any online course. The advantages of using a CMS to implement and manage online courses will also be discussed later in this chapter.

INTRODUCTION

With working adults becoming an increasingly large percentage of the college population and with greater numbers of students having computer and Internet experience prior to entering college, a number of post-secondary institutions are looking more seriously at offering online instruction to meet students' educational needs.

In fact, according to International Data, "the e-learning market, which includes Internet and Intranet courses, will grow from $4 billion to $15 billion worldwide in the four years ending in 2002" (Jones, 2000); and Market Data Retrieval recently reported that 72% of colleges responding to its Higher Ed Technology Survey offer distance-learning programs that involve online resources of some kind (Technology News, 2001).

This chapter provides instructors who are interested in offering online classes with various strategies used and found successful in the instruction of an online Business Computer Applications course. Topics such as the importance of an initial class meeting, providing diverse instructional materials, the value of student course evaluations, and the dilemma of student assessment procedures will be addressed.

Although a course management system (CMS) is used to manage the online Business Computer Applications course discussed in this chapter, many of the procedures incorporated can be effective in the facilitation of any online course. The advantages of using a CMS to implement and manage online courses will also be discussed later in this chapter.

PLANNING THE ONLINE COURSE

Online instruction can be offered in a variety of formats, and the process selected by instructors will depend on such factors as whether they are encouraged and supported by the administration, have the technological infrastructure available at their school to support online instruction, have access to technical support, or have technical knowledge and expertise themselves.

Once a decision is made regarding the technological format that will be used, the instructor can begin with the course design and planning and developing the course. During the planning stage, it is important that the instructor define course goals and objectives, identify interaction procedures to be used in the class, decide on instructional materials or course content, and determine how the course content will be organized and made available to students online (Cooper, 1999).

14 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/online-courses-strategies-success/30290

Related Content

Chinese Brush Calligraphy Character Retrieval and Learning

Yueting Zhuang, Xiafen Zhang, Weiming Luand Fei Wu (2009). *Methods and Applications for Advancing Distance Education Technologies: International Issues and Solutions (pp. 96-105).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/chinese-brush-calligraphy-character-retrieval/26395

Narrowing the Digital Divide: Technology Integration in a High-Poverty School

June K. Hilton (2008). *Online and Distance Learning: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications (pp. 2385-2399).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/narrowing-digital-divide/27558

Diverse Models of Distance Teaching Universities

Sarah Guri-Rosenblit (2009). *Encyclopedia of Distance Learning, Second Edition (pp. 727-733).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/diverse-models-distance-teaching-universities/11829

Building Online Knowledge Societies for Lifelong Learning: The Democratic University-Community Partnerships in Turkey

Gulsun Kurubacak (2007). *Online Education for Lifelong Learning (pp. 208-227).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/building-online-knowledge-societies-lifelong/27756

The Influence of Constructivist E-Learning System on Student Learning Outcomes

Thanakorn Wangpipatwongand Borworn Papasratorn (2007). *International Journal of Information and Communication Technology Education (pp. 21-33).*

www.irma-international.org/article/influence-constructivist-learning-system-student/2327