Chapter II

Faculty Participation in Distance Education Programs: Practices and Plans

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Abstract

Universities around the globe are putting Distance Education (DE) in place, often through administrative choice. However, if a DE program is to be successful, faculty must be involved. This change is multidimensional in that established systems may need to change to support development and delivery of courses through DE technologies. This chapter presents results from two related studies that attempt to answer two questions that should be asked and answered before starting a DE program: (1) What factors are considered motivating or inhibiting to faculty for participating in DE? and (2) Which compensation models support DE make sense?

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Introduction

As has been noted throughout this book, distance education is not new to higher education. Correspondence programs have served higher education students since the nineteenth century. What makes distance education different today — to universities, colleges, and corporations — is the use of interactive, computer-mediated communication systems for Distance Education (DE). Indeed, universities and colleges around the globe are putting DE in place, and the decision to do so is often an administrative one with faculty consulted after the fact.

However, if a distance education program — asynchronous or synchronous — is to be successful, faculty members must be willingly involved; that is, they need to reconsider or redefine their perception of the teaching and learning process. This change is multidimensional in that established systems may need to change to support development and delivery of courses through distance education technologies. And faculty members will need to modify their teaching and to adopt innovative technologies and teaching strategies to take advantage of the resources afforded by technology-mediated pedagogy. Given the need for learning how to teach in a different environment (i.e., DE), there are two questions that arise for administrators to answer. First, what motivates faculty members to want to embrace this new teaching environment and to change their teaching strategies? And second, what assistance, incentives and compensation policies support faculty in this educational metamorphosis?

The literature on DE describes the students as older, mature, self-initiators interested in outcomes (Field, 1982; Hiltz, 1994; Knowles, 1970; Sewart, Keegan, & Holmberg, 1983) who are taking time away from family and careers to go back to school (Keegan, 1986; McIntosh, Woodley, & Morrison, 1980); less likely to be female (Blumenstyk, 1997; Canada & Brusca, 1991; Faith, 1988); and less likely to be from a minority population (DeVillar & Fallis, 1991; Gose, 1997; Sanchez & Gunawardena, 1998). There are articles on “how-to-do” distance education (Berge & Collins, 1995; Forsythe, 1996; Khan, 1998; Melton, 1997) addressing such issues as distance learning environments and course design (multimedia, CD-ROM, etc.), and case studies of successful DE courses similar to those described in this book. What is missing from this literature is a significant discussion of the faculty, full- or part-time, who teach the courses and why some faculty members participate while others do not. In
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