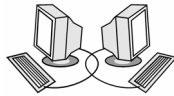


Chapter XII

Course and Program Management



Abstract

Now that we have covered technology knowledge and skills, it is time to review other issues that can impact success in a distance course or program. A major consideration is course or program management. This is an area with a variety of policies and guidelines. Course and program policies, procedures, and management may be coordinated by a centralized unit within an institution, but instructors and instructional designers need to be aware of the applications of management issues. What are the policies and procedures that should be implemented to ensure that best practices are met?

Introduction

Distance training and education is desirable for working adults and others who want flexibility and control over their own learning. The mobility of today's

workforce, the needed skill upgrades, and a generation reared on interactive media and various technologies help to promote its acceptance.

Distance learning programs that are highly successful do not just happen overnight; they are a result of careful planning and management. There are many ways to structure management for distance learning programs. This chapter will discuss the keys to success in the planning and implementation of distance programs: conducting a needs assessment, distance learning as a way to revitalize existing programs, using multi-area evaluation, focusing on learning and not the technology, marketing the program, and using technicians. Also, academic policies, fiscal policies and budgeting, faculty policies, copyright and fair use guidelines, and student support issues will be discussed.

Keys to Successful Distance Learning Programs

Chute, Thompson, and Hancock (1999) provide keys to successful management of distance learning courses and programs. These keys, and others we will discuss as well, can be adopted in for-profits, nonprofits, governmental organizations, and the military, both in the United States or in other countries.

Conduct a Needs Assessment

The first key to a successful distance learning program is to determine why the program is needed and who the potential audience is. It is imperative that a proper assessment of needs by potential learners and institutions to be served be completed before the first class or training program is offered. This could include soliciting information from individuals (key informants) whose testimony or description of what exists or what is needed for the client population is available and credible. You could also host a community forum to take the pulse of the community and to garner grassroots support for the training need. Another practice is to develop case studies in which greater in-depth analyses of training needs could be done. Convening a focus group of employers in the field to determine gaps in the preparation of their employees can also help program planners design for a match between content delivery and need of participants. Convening a focus group of employees to determine their needs

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