Chapter 29
Project Management for a University–Sponsored Online High School:
An Evaluation of the First Year of Implementation

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this book chapter is to illustrate the effective use of online learning design in project management for a fully accredited online high school. This online high school was developed through a partnership of a national-accredited online K-12 educational institution and a prominent university located in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. Within the high school, a course was created to measure the value of this online high school experience through the focal lens of its main stakeholders, the online high school students. The authors discuss the implementation and management that was used for the design of that online course. Drawing on a description of an online preparatory course and survey data from 3 participants, the objectives of this chapter are to highlight mission and goals of the online high school and the advantages/disadvantages of attending a synchronous online high school (Quillen, 2010). Findings illustrate the labor intensive commencement of an online high school through its first year.

URBAN UNIVERSITY OVERVIEW

Urban University[1] (hereafter referred to as UU) is a forward-thinking leader in harnessing the power and possibility of the digital age. UU honors its mandate to provide the highest quality academic experience by using the latest technologies and best practices to expand opportunities for every student—on campus and around the world. UU has taken a leadership role in online learning and has achieved national recognition with leaders in educational organizations.

Top Online Public and Private School Overview

Top Online Public and Private School[2] (TOPPS)—a pioneering, technology-based education company—is the nation's largest provider of proprietary curriculum and online education programs to students in kindergarten through high school. TOPPS provides high quality, customized education solutions to states, school districts, schools, and families. Through a range of offerings, TOPPS provides fully managed virtual and blended (such as online and on-site) classroom solutions for public and private schools.

Partnership between UU and TOPPS

To date, there has never been a partnership like the one between UU and TOPPS. UU is a top-tier university with a long-standing reputation for a strong education program and cutting-edge research. TOPPS is a pioneer in virtual K-12 education and has been recognized for high quality online delivery. The goal of the partnership between UU and TOPPS is to prepare a new generation of high school students in a way that respects educational tradition while leveraging the power of technology to elevate learning.

The partnership between UU and TOPPS was formed gradually over many years. High-level members of TOPPS worked with UU administra-tion, negotiating the terms of the future venture. TOPPS is a leader in online learning for grades K-12. A great deal of TOPPS resources are devoted to developing its curriculum. The curriculum TOPPS produces is highly regarded, and believed by many as being the best available online. The School of Education at UU has partnered with public and private schools for many years. Since UU is a private institution, its partnership with TOPPS was a nice fit. At the time of writing this chapter, the partnership between UU and TOPPS is approaching its one year anniversary. This book chapter will discuss the successes and challenges that have accompanied this new online high school called Urban University Online High School during its implementation from a project management standpoint.

Goals of Urban University Online High School (UUOHS)

The mission of Urban University Online High School is to educate and inspire academically talented and motivated students who seek membership in a school community that values and cultivates hard work, integrity, appreciation of diversity, love of learning, compassion and high personal expectations. Through intensive, interactive online collaboration, the UUOHS experience prepares students to contribute significantly, responsibly, and respectfully in a global society.

-UUOHS Mission Statement, 2011

Introduction

The epigraph above is the Urban University Online High School's (hereafter referred to as UUOHS) mission statement. UUOHS was designed to meet the unique educational needs of motivated students. The following data used in this study comes from a sample of participating students in the inaugural UUOHS class. Online education has gained currency lately because education is being

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